MODERNISM AND THE FUNCTIONAL CITY
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URBAN RENEWAL IN HAMILTON, ONTARIO AND
BUFFALO, NEW YORK
(1949-1974)

by MARGARET T. ROCKWELL, B.A., B.J., M.A.

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree

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Descriptive Note

McMaster University Doctor of Philosophy (2013) Hamilton, Ontario (History)

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NUMBER OF PAGES: viii, 301
Abstract

This dissertation examines urban renewal programs carried out in Hamilton, Ontario and Buffalo, New York, from 1949 to 1974. It shows how these projects fit within the Congrès internationaux d’architecture moderne’s Functional City paradigm and how the modernist aesthetic was reflected in these industrial cities’ planning documents and practices. Urban renewal is often examined by focusing on issues of race, politics and social upheaval. This cross-border study offers a new approach to the analysis through the modernist aesthetic. The comparative study demonstrates that modernist ideas were integral to both Hamilton’s and Buffalo’s urban renewal schemes, contributing both to the desired outcome and to the process, a commitment to action through the destruction of blocks of homes and buildings. The analysis shows how the aesthetic transcended national differences in politics and programs and offers new insight to our understanding of urban renewal on both sides of the international border.
Acknowledgements

It is with deep gratitude that I acknowledge all those who helped me understand urban renewal in Buffalo and Hamilton. First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to my thesis supervisor Professor Richard Harris who has guided my study and my writing for many years. I am also indebted to my supervisory committee members Professor John Weaver and Professor Ken Cruikshank who encouraged me to look and to delve into areas I would not have thought of on my own.

Knowledgeable and helpful librarians were key to my research. I am exceedingly lucky to have met so many fine professionals in the Grosvenor Room of the Buffalo and Erie County Library; the Local History and Archives Department of the Hamilton Public Library; the Archives and Special Collections of the E.H. Butler Library at Buffalo State College; the University Archives at SUNY at Buffalo University; the Research Library at the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society (which is now called the Buffalo History Museum); Canada Mortgage and Housing Information Centre; and the Rutherford Library at the University of Alberta. I thank them all for preserving the documents, modernist texts, photos, maps and plans, and for making my research possible.

I am also grateful to the all the individuals who shared their expertise with me, specifically: Hamilton librarian Margaret Houghton, North End community member Gil Simmons, Hamilton architect Anthony Butler, Hamilton planner Vladimir Matus, Buffalo archivist Cynthia Van Ness, Buffalo State College librarian Daniel DiLandro and his assistant Margaret Hatfield, Professor Robert Burch and author Mark Goldman. They all were generous with their time and helped me to understand their cities, in addition to modernist planning practices.

For his encouragement and support I thank Geoffrey Rockwell, my husband and my best friend. He has shown unwavering interest in this project over many years and for that reason, and for so many more, I dedicate this dissertation to him, with love.
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Declaration of Academic Achievement

This comparative, cross-border study uses the modernist aesthetic to understand urban renewal practices in Hamilton, Ontario and Buffalo New York after the Second World War. This dissertation demonstrates how European modernist architects introduced modernist planning ideas to both these industrial cities and how North American modernist planners would apply modernist ideas to their urban renewal projects. The Functional City paradigm, promoted by European modernists, would appeal to architects, planners, businessmen, city administrators and government officials who were determined to remake their cities through the government-sponsored urban renewal programs.
Introduction

Urban Renewal on Both Sides of the Border

Figure 1.1 - Hamilton Public Library, opened in 1980, as part of the city’s downtown urban renewal superblock.\(^1\) Source: Hamilton Public Library, Local History and Archives Department.

Behind the cement and glass that make up the exterior of the Hamilton Public Library there is a separate room containing Hamilton, Ontario’s archives where the history of this Canadian city is preserved. Victorian memorabilia, maps and images are displayed on the walls and in glass cases, exhibiting a past that feels oddly foreign in this industrial city where glass and steel towers, and a large shopping mall, now define the central core. During the urban renewal years, blocks of Victorian-era buildings, along with traditional street patterns, were destroyed in order to assemble land for the large

\(^1\) The Hamilton Public Library added more glass to its exterior after its 2007 renovations.
concrete complex that now houses the library, the market and the mall, known as Lloyd D. Jackson Square. While the library’s archives contain maps and photographs of what the city’s downtown looked like before the old streetscapes were demolished, most of the downtown core no longer reflects its Victorian past. Instead, the concrete mall occupying most of the superblock, represents the era of modernist city planning, when the dominant aesthetic influenced architects and planners to favour functionalism, efficiency and the straight line, and encouraged them to radically transform many North American downtowns during the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, as part of federally-sponsored urban renewal projects.

Just as the Hamilton library is not a Victorian building, the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library’s exterior (figure 1.3) does not reflect Buffalo, New York’s nineteenth century heritage. This American industrial city’s documented history is carefully kept in the Grosvenor Room inside the library’s central branch, a modernist building constructed in the early 1960s. Set back from the centuries-old Lafayette Square and clad in smooth, white marble and stainless steel, the current library is large and block-like with clean lines and a flat roof; very different from the former library building constructed in 1887, with its elaborate cornices and gargoyles (figure 1.2). Modernist architects designed functional structures, basing their designs on simple, flat planes and an efficient look. The large functional library with its flat roof and smooth lines was required to hold the combined collections of three different Buffalo libraries and, therefore, the ornate brick library was destroyed and replaced with a modernist solution.
Figure 1.2 - Buffalo Public Library. The original Victorian building was built in 1887 on Lafayette Square. Note the peaked roof and decorative details. Source: Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, Vertical Photo File, “Libraries.”

Figure 1.3 - Buffalo and Erie County Public Library. This modernist building was constructed in 1964 and set back from Buffalo’s Lafayette Square. Note the flat roof and smooth lines. Source: Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, Vertical Photo File, “Libraries.”
A shared aesthetic connects Buffalo’s modernist library building to the modernist urban renewal plans responsible for the superblock where Hamilton’s public library is located. The superblock and the modernist library both reflect aspects of the aesthetic which grew to dominate North American ideas on architecture and planning after the Second World War. Flat-roofed, streamlined and functional buildings reflect this aesthetic, as do the city planning ideas which favoured rational functionalism, superblocks and strict zoning practices. Given modernism’s influence on mid-twentieth century planning and architecture in North America, how did it shape urban renewal projects in the United States and in Canada from 1949 to 1974? This dissertation addresses this question through a comparative study of Hamilton, Ontario and Buffalo, New York, during the urban renewal years.

The modernist aesthetic, reflected in both architecture and planning, emphasized the beauty of simple forms, the desire to achieve efficiencies through the separation of functions, a determined break with the past and the drama of a horizontal straight line. It favoured technology and functional industrial forms. Driven by their quest for efficiencies, flat planes and smooth surfaces, North American planners would emulate the modernists’ Functional City model and encourage strict functional zoning as well as highway construction and the use of the automobile within the city. Architects and planners, in both Canada and the United States from the 1950s through to the early 1970s, were motivated by Functional City planning ideas which would be applied to the federal urban renewal programs that allowed a city, with up to two-thirds federal funding, to condemn city blocks, clear them and then rebuild.
Inspired by American industry, skyscrapers and machinery, modernist architecture was championed by architects in Europe in the 1920s and promoted through the Congrès internationaux d’architecture moderne (CIAM). This group of architects would develop the Functional City ideal as expressed in CIAM’s “Town Planning Chart,” also known as the *Athens Charter*. Europeans linked to CIAM, and the German Bauhaus, would cross the Atlantic in the 1930s, fleeing the fascist repression, and became highly influential in North American design and architecture schools. Their fresh, functional approach to the city and its buildings inspired and encouraged the desire for urban transformation. Planners, influenced by CIAM, would insist on strict functional separation in order to insure the renewed city worked rationally and effectively, like a well-oiled machine. The Functional City paradigm, promoted by CIAM’s members, encapsulates their ideas on how to improve the city and provides a template that can be used to assess modernism’s influence on North American cities under the urban renewal programs following the Second World War.

Urban renewal, initially called urban redevelopment, was written about extensively from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, the period when the relevant federal legislation was in force. More recently, scholars have examined the role of the state, the slum discourse, as well as the race and class politics behind the destruction and upheaval of the urban renewal years. Surprisingly in all that has been written about urban renewal, modernism is rarely the primary focus, even though planners vigourously adopted this aesthetic’s clean, efficient lines and its emphasis on functional separation to transform North American downtowns.
A cross-border study of Buffalo and Hamilton’s urban renewal projects offers an opportunity for insight on the aesthetic’s relationship to urban renewal and to learn how modernism affected city plans on both sides of the border during the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. The border provides two distinct legal and national identities from which to analyze the two cities’ particular urban renewal practices and how the aesthetic furthered their respective urban renewal agendas. Regardless of their different political, national, racial and legal contexts, both cities would embrace modernism to transform their downtowns through urban renewal. This comparative study looks at the influence the aesthetic had on these two cities, to demonstrate how modernist ideas were integral to their urban renewal schemes, contributing both to the desired outcome and to the process, a commitment to action through the destruction of blocks of homes and buildings. The cross-border study demonstrates how the aesthetic transcended national differences in politics and programs. Most significantly, it shows how modernist ideas for the Functional City were superimposed onto both cities, although it must be emphasized that Buffalo experienced significantly more urban renewal planning and destruction than Hamilton.

Modernism, as a cultural force, evolved as a reaction to the problems of industrial urban life during the early twentieth century in Europe and North America. While the ideas that resulted in the Functional City paradigm originated in Europe, there was a rich mixing and exchange across the Atlantic. American industrial buildings, and indeed Buffalo’s own concrete grain silos, were used by the European architects as examples of efficient and functional structures which would influence their own architecture and planning ideas. In the *American Vitruvius: An Architect’s Handbook of Civic Art,*
Werner Hegeman and Elbert Peet recounted what they, as Germans, liked about American urban plans in 1922 and looked forward to even greater urban developments with the American skyscraper, the zoned city and the park system.² While Europeans were awed and inspired by the American skyscraper, New York’s first regional plan was drawn up in the 1920s by Thomas Adams, a Scottish city planner who had previously worked in Canada. He would propose a “rational” plan increasing transportation corridors and creating highways to link the city with the outlying counties, foreshadowing the Functional City plans discussed in Europe in the early 1930s.³

The trans-Atlantic exchange also included ideas about housing reform. American progressives and housing reformers admired the European modernists’ efforts to help the working poor in the urban slums. The Americans appreciated the German architects’ fusion of “American engineering techniques, modernist aesthetics and social democratic politics.”⁴ Daniel Rogers traces the exchange of ideas across the Atlantic between urban reformers during the first half of the twentieth century and demonstrates the importance of this trans-Atlantic connection between modernists and housing reformers. He quotes the American Catherine Bauer as saying: “What I saw in Europe in 1930 was so exciting that it transformed me from an aesthete into a housing reformer.”⁵ Modernists would champion housing reform and vice versa. Bauer would be so enthralled by the German modernists, that she would help to organize the first American show of

³ Ibid, 106.
⁵ Ibid., 393.
European housing designs and modernist planning ideas as part of the Museum of Modern Art’s 1932 architectural exhibition, thereby reinforcing, once again, the strong connection between the aesthetic and social reform.\(^6\)

European architects in the 1920s wanted to improve urban workers’ living conditions. They envisioned and constructed new workers’ houses that were flat roofed, without ornamentation, and had strong horizontal lines. Over time, the architects responsible for this new simple and functional look began to expand their vision to include reforms for the entire city in an effort to make the industrial city more functional, more streamlined and, what they thought would be, more sun-filled and healthy for the worker inhabitants. The drive to improve the city by making it more efficient was an international phenomenon. As capital flowed over borders and industry changed lives, creative reactions to the industrialization would follow and ideas were exchanged. European architects would develop a prescriptive plan for the Functional City that reflected ideas adopted and adapted from North America. Interestingly, when European modernism was first introduced to America in 1932, as a noteworthy and fashionable style, it was called the International Style.

Aesthetic ideas continued to be shared across the Atlantic during the second half of the twentieth century. Christopher Klemek shows how proponents of liberal reform ideas and modernism together introduced functionalist urban renewal into North American and European cities. He identifies four elements common to cities on both sides of the Atlantic where modernist planning practices produced, what he calls, the “urban renewal order.” He itemizes these four pillars as: the conversion of mainstream

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tastes to modernist ideas, the professionalization of urban expertise, the adoption of urban-oriented policy at the federal (and state) level, and the triumph of reformist administrations at the city level.\(^7\) He shows how this “urban renewal order,” with the aesthetic closely linked to reform, was established in Berlin, London, Toronto, Boston, New York and Philadelphia, from 1920 to 1965. His expansive study relies on secondary sources to explain the urban renewal programs and does not go into detail of how urban renewal planning reflected modernist practices for these specific cities. He does take note of the irony behind corporate America’s adoption of the once revolutionary modernist rhetoric and describes Canadian urbanism as being “a sort of Euro-American hybrid.”\(^8\) He describes the rise of the “urban renewal order” on both sides of the Atlantic, and then its demise as citizens fought against the transformations.

In the United States, the Nixon administration would stop accepting applications for urban renewal funding in 1974. Klemek shows how Toronto’s civic reform movement, that was “spared the worst excesses of urban renewal,” would continue throughout the 1970s by rejecting high modernism for a neo-traditional approach.\(^9\) While he credits this to Canadian exceptionalism, Toronto does not represent all of Canada. Montreal, Hamilton, Ottawa and St. John all received more federal urban renewal funding than Toronto, with Hamilton receiving the most on a per capita basis.\(^10\) Some Canadian cities were enthusiastic urban renewal practitioners; for instance, Halifax would hire the internationally known modernist Gordon Stephenson to


\(^{8}\) Ibid, 43.

\(^{9}\) Ibid, 170 and 177.

come up with a prescription for its blight using urban renewal funds as documented by Jill Grant and Marcus Paterson.\textsuperscript{11} On the west coast, however, Vancouver, BC was able to resist modernist town-planning initiatives and the lure of the freeway.\textsuperscript{12} Winnipeg, Manitoba would receive only a third of the amount of urban renewal funding collected by Hamilton, although it did have ambitions for much more and is, none-the-less, recognized for its impressive stock of modernist architecture.\textsuperscript{13}

Modernist buildings and urban planning practices would continue into the 1970s in Canada despite the demise of the federal urban renewal program. Canadian Liberal Member of Parliament Paul Hellyer curtailed federal urban renewal funding in 1970, four years before the American program was discontinued. Klemek’s account is important for identifying a trans-Atlantic urban renewal order, but he does not provide an in-depth look at the planning practices that help to define the urban renewal destruction and rebuilding as modernist.

The aesthetic’s influence is key to understanding how and why architects and planners would attempt to transform their cities. The look they were emulating had grown out of a genuine concern for those living in the city and offered ideas on how urban life could be improved through comprehensive master plans which called for the destruction and replacement of old city neighbourhoods with new road patterns and buildings and parks. The master plan would bring order and functionality to what was seen as a chaotic city, but demonstrating little concern for the communities affected.


Just as the Swiss-born, modernist master, Le Corbusier described the house as a machine for living, the city would also be viewed as an efficient machine whose functions, once separated and streamlined, could improve the urban experience. This concern for machine-like efficiency and rationality would make the city more amenable to the automobile, a machine that had become central to city life.

Rejection of the architecture and planning methods of the past was integral to the new ethos and helps to explain the aesthetic’s appeal to North American urban renewal planners after the Second World War. The solution to the city’s problems involved clearance and the destruction of the ways of the past. Both Buffalo and Hamilton’s downtowns, like their public libraries, were not immune from the transformation. Fortunately the documents which shed light on each cities’ urban renewal experiences remain preserved in their libraries. These documents help to explain how the modernist aesthetic contributed to the destruction of large parts of their urban centres, in addition to contributing to a fuller understanding of urban renewal as it was carried out in North America.

The modernist architect-planners believed they were saving the city and improving the lives of its residents, even as they drew up plans to destroy all that was old and, supposedly, without value. They would promote an orderly city divided into four distinct functions: housing, recreation, work and transportation. Pedestrian walkways, separated from the street, were proposed, and familiar streetscapes were recommended for transformation by large setbacks with open spaces beneath slab towers or cruciform apartment blocks, presented as the solution to congestion. The amalgamation of many small downtown blocks into a giant superblock was supposed to make the process of
transformation more efficient. The underlying impulse for social reform, which had initiated and continued to sustain the aesthetic, made it a very powerful force for those wanting urban change. Beginning with the European architects who wanted to improve social well-being during the housing crisis that followed the First World War, this impulse to serve society would encourage the development of urban planning ideas during the 1930s and the aesthetic would carry a social message with it when it crossed the Atlantic with the European émigrés who taught at Harvard, Chicago’s Institute of Technology, University of Toronto and elsewhere in North America. When the aesthetic was first introduced to America in the 1930s it was adopted more for its style than its social message but eventually young American architects and planners would respond positively to its call to action. In his book of essays on modernist architecture, urban sociologist Nathan Glazer makes the point that the new style was closely connected to social causes and promoted social reform when introduced to North American design students.¹⁴ He quotes architect Robert Geddes who, when preparing for the reunion of Harvard Graduate School of Design’s Class of 1950, reminisced that architects graduating in 1950 had established their professional lives “during a period of optimism and a modernist faith in a social agenda.”¹⁵ The smooth, clean and efficient look rejected the ways of the past and carried with it a call to improve society. After the Second World War, young architects and planners discovered that integral to the new style was a cause worth championing. When the urban renewal legislation came into effect, planners, educated in North America, would draw up urban renewal plans reflecting the modernist ideas.

¹⁴ See Nathan Glazer, From a Cause to a Style: Modernist Architecture’s Encounter with the American City (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
¹⁵ Ibid, 271.
Evidence of European modernism’s influence in both Hamilton and Buffalo exists from before the urban renewal programs became government policy. Its impact can be identified in the ideas of German architect Walter C. Behrendt who worked in Buffalo and in the master plan proposed for Hamilton by the Italian-trained Hungarian architect Eugenio G. Faludi. Modernist ideas would gain prominence once the urban renewal legislation came into effect in 1949 in the United States and in 1954 in Canada. They are evident in the urban renewal planning documents produced by planners such as C. Harry Broley, Nathaniel Keith and Carl Feiss in Buffalo and Murray Jones in Hamilton, who were all trained in North America. This study will make the connection between the European architects’ aesthetic and the North American planners’ studies prepared for the urban renewal projects on both sides of the international border.

By comparing CIAM’s *Athens Charter* or “Town-Planning Chart,” and other publications used to inform modernist thinking, with Buffalo and Hamilton’s published urban renewal plans and documents, a clearer understanding of the link between the modernist aesthetic and urban renewal is achieved. Urban renewal legislation prompted the creation of shelves of planning-related documentation. The US Housing Act of 1949 promised “a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family,” and gave American municipalities access to federal funds for slum clearance and redevelopment. The Canadian Housing Act would do the same for Canadian cities in 1954. Numerous studies, surveys, reports, books and articles were published to help planners and government officials understand the urban renewal legislation and what it could do for their particular city. Because this program was seen as “a long-term continuing process that requires continuous planning,” sociologists, academics, critics,
politicians and planners presented their views on how urban renewal could assist the problematic city in a variety of publications.\(^\text{16}\)

At the time, not everyone endorsed what was happening to the downtowns in the name of urban renewal. Most famously, Jane Jacobs would deliver a forthright attack on modernist planners for the monotony of their urban renewal projects and the destruction of old and lively neighbourhoods in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. She criticized planners for trying to make the city into a work of art instead of leaving its life-enhancing urban chaos and complexity alone.\(^\text{17}\) Scott Greer saw the American legislation as a victory for planners over public-housing activists, particularly when the urban renewal amendments of 1954 and 1964 in the United States shifted the focus to non-residential development.\(^\text{18}\) The urban renewal programs, initially intended to improve housing for the poor, most often did not end up representing the interests of those struggling to live in poor inner-city neighbourhoods. In the United States, the affected urban poor were primarily African-Americans.

Drawn north in search of new employment opportunities during and after the Second World War, African-Americans moved into the cores of industrial American cities. Their arrival in downtown neighbourhoods resulted in white residents leaving their homes for the developing suburbs in a phenomenon known as “white flight.” The urban renewal programs targeted slums and blighted areas close to the downtowns and therefore were frequently criticized for victimizing African-Americans who were already subjected to racist segregation restrictions when it came to choosing where they wanted


to live in US cities. The destruction of downtown neighbourhoods for urban renewal, often meant the eradication of black neighbourhoods in the United States. Civil Rights activist James Baldwin made the headlines in 1963 when he accused the US federal government of intentionally moving African Americans out of downtown neighbours in what he called “negro removal.”

The racial motivations behind urban renewal would soon become a common theme in American scholarship. The year after Baldwin made his charge, Martin Anderson in *The Federal Bulldozer* asserted that the program was racially motivated and pointed out that urban renewal made it more difficult for low-income and middle-income people to find homes, because more housing was destroyed than created. The link between Buffalo’s municipal politics and racial tension during the urban renewal years is underscored in Neil Kraus’ *Race, Neighborhoods and Community Power: Buffalo Politics 1934-1997*. In addition, University of Buffalo Architecture and Planning professor, Alfred D. Price shows how modernist housing failed the black community in his article “Urban Renewal: The Case of Buffalo, NY,” which was published in 1992 in *The Housing Status of Black Americans*.

The racial divisions of US cities distinguish American from Canadian urban experiences. Canadian scholars Michael Goldberg , John Mercer and Kim England argue that Canadian and American cities are fundamentally different. While race was not a major concern for urban Canada during the urban renewal years, race did play a role

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in Halifax, Nova Scotia’s urban renewal scheme to relocate the black residents of Africville. Tina Loo demonstrates how the relocation exposed the limits of the welfare state. The razing of the community could be seen as a progressive act, ending segregation and solving the problem of the isolated ghetto, but, as Loo shows, the residents who had negotiated their removal with the state learned that “integration was not belonging.”

Loo mentions in passing that modernist architect Gordon Stephenson designed the urban renewal plan, but she does not pursue the modernist’s role in the disappointment and alienation experienced by the community.

While race, for the most part, was not as contentious an issue in urban Canada as it was in the United States, that does not mean that Canadian cities were necessarily progressive. John C. Bacher demonstrates that Canadian housing policy was actually very conservative and that urban renewal, as practiced in Canada, had more to do with stimulating the national economy by offering incentives to the middle class rather than finding decent homes for the poor. Like in the United States, urban renewal, which was supposed to focus on improving housing conditions, often ended up being co-opted by downtown elites and politicians who had their own interests at heart. Canadian urban development after the Second World War became less distinct from its southern neighbour, so that urban patterns and processes became more continental than regional or national.

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22 Tina Loo, “Africville and the Dynamics of State Power in Postwar Canada,” *Acadiensis* 39, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2010), 27.
Although race is more pertinent to the urban renewal discussion south of the border, politics and old-fashioned pork-barreling were common to both sides of the line.\textsuperscript{25} Political elites and downtown business interests are identified as being responsible for the extent of the urban renewal destruction. The city was seen as a growth machine and developers, builders, real estate boards and chambers of commerce wanted federal funds directed at ways to enhance their city’s growth, and their own profits. Mark I. Gelfand, Harvey Molotch and John H. Mollenkopf expand on the idea of the city as an economic engine and show how money and politics redirected the legislation’s initial focus away from the construction of housing for the needy to the demands of the powerful.\textsuperscript{26} More recently, Robert M. Fogelson and Allison Isenberg have examined the importance of downtown America as a place for business. Fogelson presents the perspective of the powerful businessmen and property owners who feared that the collapse of downtown shopping and entertainment would push down property values while Isenberg highlights women’s consumer activities, the significance of the white female shopper and how the downtown became a contested space.\textsuperscript{27}

Whether motivated by race, politics or profits, politicians, city boosters and businessmen alike could use the modernist aesthetic to provide a new and convenient trajectory in order to direct the city toward what they assumed would be a better future.


On both sides of the border, people with different agendas for transforming the city would come together to agree that the new functional planning practices would not only provide the comprehensive plans for their renewed city, but would also help to erase the blight which threatened public health and future prosperity. The fear of blight and the urban slum had united aesthetics and housing reform from the 1920s through the urban renewal years. The early urban renewal documents depict blight as a major threat to the city. When seen through the modernist lens, the old downtown blocks of mixed uses, aged buildings and congested streets appeared blighted, or at least ready to fall into blights’ condemning grip, dooming the city forever. The cure for blight was eradication, according to the belief of the time, which would eventually find legislative teeth in the federal urban renewal programs on both sides of the border.

Alexander R. Cuthbert characterizes the attack on blight by the US Housing Act of 1949 as “legislated aesthetics.” He is referring to the modernist practices which rejected the buildings of the past. This antipathy for anything old would underpin the urban reform legislation in its attempt to eradicate blight. The government could enforce a new look for its cities. By 1954 the urban renewal programs in the United States “were increasingly interpreted as the federal sanctioning of the use of police power to achieve aesthetic ends” when downtown buildings were condemned by developers, planners and politicians and rebuilt with “imposed master plans.” A 1954 ruling by US Justice William O. Douglas confirmed the constitutionality of urban renewal in the United States when he supported the District of Columbia Redevelopment Act of 1945, in the case of Berman v. Parker. Justice Douglas wrote that “if those who govern the District of

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Columbia decide that the Nation’s Capital should be beautiful as well as sanitary, there is nothing in the Fifth Amendment that stands in the way.”

Legal scholar Amy Levin laments the case’s lack of policy guidance and its inadequate concern for the welfare of the people who were supposed to benefit from the program. The so-called pervasive spread of creeping blight, which was believed to threaten public health, economic prosperity and aesthetics, would encourage action regardless of who was standing in the way. The fear of a contagion that needed stamping out, justified the use of eminent domain, expropriation and police enforcement to destroy property. The developing concern for blight, whose removal was sanctioned by the legislation, came together with a new understanding for how a modern and up-to-date city should look at the middle of the twentieth century.

Blight played a role in justifying urban renewal on both sides of the Canada-US border. In Robick’s cross-border study of urban renewal projects in Hamilton, Ontario and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he shows how blight was employed to serve the different interests of the various city stakeholders and became a powerful motivator behind the two cities’ various urban renewal projects.

Building on Robert Beauregard’s study of the slum discourse in *Voices of Decline*, Robick traces the concept of blight as it was used to describe a neighbourhood’s declining conditions in addition to being used as a specific legal term to facilitate urban renewal destruction. Kevin Brushett also shows how the exaggerated slum discourse was crucial to the advance of Toronto’s urban renewal projects.

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plans. Modernists identified blight as the problem on both sides of the border and they found a solution in modernist planning practices and the Functional City paradigm advocated by CIAM.

The importance of the Congrès internationaux d’architecture moderne (CIAM) to the advancement of modernist architectural and planning ideas is explained in Eric Mumford’s definitive work. Mumford is particularly helpful in explaining the organization’s development, its role in bringing modernism to North America and its contribution to the practice of present-day urban design. In *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960* and *Urban Design: CIAM Architects and the Formation of a Discipline* Mumford explains how the Congrès would influence the development of European modernism and how the group’s connection to modernism was downplayed in America because some of its members had close connections to either fascist Germany or the communist Soviet Union. While ignoring the source of the aesthetic, modernist architecture and planning ideas would thrive during the urban renewal years in North America.

In separate studies, historians Anthony Alofsin and Jill Pearlman each examine the arrival of modernist architecture in America through the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Alofsin features images of students’ work as they rejected the Parisian Beaux Arts style to work with different expressions of modernist architecture. Pearlman divides the development of the modernist aesthetic at Harvard into two distinct and contrary

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camps, one espoused by the German modernist Walter Gropius and the other, more American approach, championed by Joseph Hudnut, who had established the Graduate School of Design and was responsible for bringing Gropius to Harvard in 1937. Her work gives Hudnut a prominent role in breaking American architecture from its Beaux Arts foundations and establishing a modern aesthetic in America. However, Pearlman laments Hudnut’s reduced influence at Harvard. Overwhelmed by Gropius’ powerful reputation and charismatic personality, Hudnut’s ideas would not carry the same weight as those that originated in the European Bauhaus. Pearlman suggests American urban design, taught at Harvard, suffered because Hudnut’s understanding of what Americans wanted for their cities was muscled out by the modernist European aesthetic.

Thus European modernism, with trans-Atlantic influences, arrived in North America during the 1930s, to be nurtured and taught to young architects and planners during the 1940s and 1950s. When the attack on blight was given legislative authority in addition to federal funding through the urban renewal program, the graduating architects and planners were prepared with the functional, modernist solution and the belief that the plans they were prepared to design were going to help society in general and their cities in particular. The modernist aesthetic promised a new, streamlined look for the city. In the struggle against blight and the urban slum, the modernist aesthetic became a powerful motivator, encouraging the destruction and providing a goal for urban renewal: a clean and efficient city.

Unfortunately, as anthropologist James C. Scott argues, the modernist aesthetic, which was expected to do so much social good, ended up enforcing a visual regularity on
urban planning and a totalitarian-like dullness on acres of “renewed” city blocks. M. Christine Boyer, who discusses what she calls the disciplinary order of planning history in the United States, also describes the modernist functional and rational approach as “one that works for those wanting to take capital advantage of the city but creates a flat wasteland for those living in its midst.” The destruction and rebuilding, which was accompanied by social and economic hardships for those transplanted by the upheaval, are identified as essential to the march of progress and modern capital’s need to create and recreate over and over again. While the modernist experience can be examined by focusing on the economic and political forces at work behind the destruction, this study focuses on the urban renewal projects of Hamilton, Ontario and Buffalo, New York and their relationship to the modernist aesthetic.

An examination of the material losses and the modernist impositions on Buffalo and Hamilton will clarify what happened during the urban renewal decades and joins growing academic interest in urban renewal as a subject of enquiry. These two cities, separated by an international border, reflect their countries’ different historical and political contexts. Hamilton does not have a history of urban racial segregation, and race did not play a role in its urban renewal policies. While both cities have an industrial heritage forged in the 19th century, Buffalo grew to become a much larger city by the mid-twentieth century. Despite their differences, they would both adopt modernist planning ideas. By analyzing urban renewal projects in the two industrial cities on either

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sides of the international border, issues of race and politics can be acknowledged but
downplayed because they were not shared issues. Instead, the modernist aesthetic,
reflected in CIAM’s Functional City ideal, emerges as a leading common element to the
story of urban renewal, not only as a style, but as an essential motivating factor behind
the destruction.

Diverse sources inform this dissertation. The large archival collections on urban
renewal in the Local History and Archives Department at the Hamilton Public Library
and in the Grosvenor Room at the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library provide the
background necessary to characterize the renewal schemes and what they wanted to
achieve. These collections include planning documents, city reports, magazine and
newspaper articles, architects’ reports, concept plans, maps, urban renewal studies and
consultants’ reports. Articles published in architectural journals of the time were
examined systematically, as were Buffalo’s two newspapers and both cities’ relevant
scrapbooks, available through their public librarieries’ special collections. Modernist texts
by Le Corbusier, Sigfried Giedion and Josep Lluís Sert were important sources.
Interviews with Hamilton modernist architect Anthony Butler and modernist planner
Vladimir Matus, who both worked in Hamilton during the urban renewal years, helped to
elucidate the functional motivations behind the aesthetic as well as to understand their
formation as professionals. Longtime North End Activist Gil Simmons helped to explain
the threat modernist planning and highway construction had on established
neighbourhoods, as did discussions with Buffalo author Mark Goldman and Cynthia Van
Ness of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. In addition, the photographs of
the destroyed neighbourhoods and the present day look of the renewed citiscapes provide
important insight into the transformative power of the modernist aesthetic and the enduring wounds the urban renewal destruction has left on these two industrial cities, and indeed on many North American cities. Finally, and most importantly, CIAM’s “Town-Planning Chart” and Sert’s Can Our Cities’ Survive provide the prescription for the modernist Functional City against which the two cities’ urban renewal schemes are examined.

Just as the modernists tried to impose order on the city, order can also be imposed on the analysis of Buffalo’s and Hamilton’s urban renewal projects in order to understand urban renewal in general and how modernist planning practices influenced the programs on both sides of the international border. Both cities’ plans and outcomes were analyzed through the prism of CIAM’s four functions, assessing how the cities’ urban renewal programs reflected the modernists’ planning ideal of the Functional City.

The first chapter of this dissertation explores how the modernist aesthetic was connected to urban renewal. It discusses the aesthetic’s development in Europe, and then its international scope and transfer to North America. CIAM’s role in promoting modernism is examined particularly regarding the CIAM-inspired Functional City and the Charter of Athens’ four functions. The spaces created for these four functions are the subject of, and provide a structure for, the argument.

The second chapter introduces Buffalo and Hamilton, their particular ambitions for improvement and growth and how they welcomed a modernist transformation, hiring European architects and then North American planners to do the job. These two cities, situated on either side of the international border, act as counterpoints and provide more
general conclusions about urban renewal beyond the confines of a particular country’s laws and culture.

Chapter three focuses on the housing function, seen by the modernists as the most important of all. In many ways, the residential urban renewal schemes, which were carried out in Buffalo and Hamilton, were the cornerstones of urban renewal policy for these two cities. The Ellicott District was Buffalo’s largest slum clearance and urban renewal housing project, but the Masten General Neighborhood Renewal Plan will also be examined, as will the Oak Street project. Hamilton’s North End was the residential urban renewal project for that city.

Chapter four looks at the recreation function, which was also called leisure. The waterfront projects for both Buffalo and Hamilton are discussed. Given both cities’ positions on Great Lakes, their waterfronts were important aspects of their identity and provided sites for potential recreational pursuits. The recreational areas that were inserted into the centre of Buffalo’s leveled Ellicott District and Hamilton’s residential North End will also be examined.

The work function in chapter five features both cities’ downtowns which were assumed to be important as centres of administration and commercial activity. In keeping with the modernist separation of functions, both cities’ downtowns were cleared of the buildings that had allowed for a mixture of uses. The downtowns were meant for a particular type of commercial activity, which meant that industrial and residential pursuits had to go on elsewhere. The urban renewal pilot project connected to Buffalo’s thruway industrial park is also discussed in this chapter.
Finally chapter six focuses on transportation, the essential function that connects all the other functions and would create an efficient and flowing modern system. While Hamilton’s Perimeter Road, York Blvd. and plans for a major east-west expressway through the city centre are discussed, Hamilton actually had very little transportation infrastructure built as part of its urban renewal projects within the city, particularly when compared to Buffalo’s highways. The New York State Thruway, the Niagara Thruway, the auxiliary roads and parkway construction meant that highways circled and crisscrossed the U.S. city and had a profound effect on the way Buffalo would look and work even today. While urban renewal was originally intended for housing construction, expressways were seen as essential to the modernist vision.

Chapter seven draws conclusions about how the modernist aesthetic was embodied in Buffalo’s and Hamilton’s urban renewal experiences. Transnational similarities are brought to the forefront when comparing the two industrial cities and urban renewal, even when issues of race and politics are not common to both cities. Modernism, sometimes called the machine aesthetic, imposed planning practices to gain efficiencies and traffic flow. The desired look was efficient and streamlined. This meant the destruction of many of the old buildings and spaces which provided colour and diversity to a streetscape and made city life so appealing. When the two cities’ urban renewal spaces are divided into the modernists’ four functions, a new way of looking at urban renewal is gained as well as a new approach to understanding the motivation behind all the destruction.
Chapter One

“Solving the ugliness all around”

The modernist aesthetic provided a way forward for those convinced that the city needed fundamental restructuring at the end of the Second World War. Increasingly seen as blighted and beyond redemption, the old industrial North American city, with its mixed-use neighbourhoods, aging buildings and congested streets, became the focus for anxieties about the future, the economy and the role of the downtown in people’s lives. Those wanting to ensure that the city reflected the post-war optimism of their era needed a model. They found it in the work of modernist architects and planners who showed disdain for the ways of the past, valued technological advances, encouraged efficiencies, and shunned all decorative elements. The Functional City paradigm, developed by modernist architects in the early twentieth century, provided a solution to the city’s problems and a plan for those prepared to reject the old downtown. Graduating architects and designers, inspired by the modernist ideas taught at North American architecture and planning schools, would vie for contracts to transform the city when urban renewal legislation came into effect from 1949 to 1974 in the United States and from 1954 to 1970 in Canada.

Urban renewal legislation allowed municipalities, through local renewal agencies, to condemn rundown neighbourhoods, teardown the buildings and resell the cleared land to developers. The program in the United States involved over 2000 projects on 1000 square miles of urban land and saw 600,000 homes demolished, removing approximately 2,000,000 people from their neighbourhoods.40 While the population of Canada is only

one-tenth that of the United States, the 161 urban renewal studies and the eighty-four approved Canadian projects remain relatively few in comparison to the US figures. The difference in scale is obvious, but nevertheless, urban renewal affected practically every large Canadian city, while the majority of projects were built in small and medium-sized cities. 41 Urban renewal spaces are still recognizable in many Canadian cities today, just as they are in the United States.

Modernist superblocks, utilitarian towers surrounded by flat plazas or expanses of grass, large housing projects and wide freeways remain part of today’s urban landscape and date from the mid-twentieth century when many believed the city could be improved by shedding its old chaotic appearance for one of efficiency and disciplined functionality, complete with fast transportation routes and well differentiated zones. The 1950s and 1960s mark a time when North Americans would seek solutions for the problematic city in a modernist aesthetic which favoured the straight line, as promoted by Le Corbusier. The modernist master was attracted to the horizontal, and viewed the efficient street and the straight line as reaching the sublime, aesthetically speaking. 42 His planning ideas would encourage others who wanted to transform the city. Modernist planners enthusiastically flattened old buildings and streets to create new housing structures and downtown superblocks. They worked to segregate functions. Well-defined zones were connected by expanded highway networks which encouraged the growth of the ever-widening suburbs on the periphery. In a reactive loop many middle-class people

abandoned the centre for the growing suburbs, leaving poorer, less-enfranchised people behind in the core, which only added to the anxiety felt for the old city. While concern was vigourously manifested for the North American city after the Second World War, the unease can be linked back to the pressures which followed industrialization.

Before the turn of the twentieth century, city reformers and city boosters voiced their anxieties over the look of their overcrowded cities and the growing blight that they saw as a threat. Robert A. Beauregard describes how their discourse prepared the way for urban renewal destruction. The discourse on urban decline reflected society’s concern with massive urban population growth that “combined with industrial capitalism to create widespread slums, environmental degradation, municipal corruption and moral dangers.”43 While the prosperity of the nation was linked to the city, the city was “used rhetorically to frame the precariousness of existence in a modern world.”44 The city was seen as in a state of crisis and became the repository for society’s fears and concerns. By the postwar period, middle class commuters would fret over the crowded and ramshackle homes they would pass on a daily basis. The “seemingly limitless growth” had come to an end and the downtowns were suffering.45 Urban renewal practitioners would embrace modernism as a solution, believing that it provided hope for the urban core by sanctioning the eradication of slums and blight, to redeem the city at last.

The modernist aesthetic was perfectly compatible with urban renewal’s goals. It rejected the styles of the past, allowing bulldozers to flatten century-old buildings that were seen to stand in the way of functional efficiency. Its inherent commitment to social change was reinterpreted, in North America, as a commitment to action, providing a

44 Ibid, 6.
quick fix for cities, and became the look which would reflect the ambitions of
government leaders, businessmen, housing reformers, planners and architects as they
campaigned for renewal and the remaking of North America’s cities. In order to fully
understand urban renewal in Buffalo and Hamilton, it is important to appreciate where
the modernist aesthetic came from, what it was and how it grew to become a powerful
aesthetic force for urban North America.

The desire for transformation grew out of contempt for the congestion of the city
at a time when automobiles allowed for increased speed and efficient mobility. The
disciplinary order modernists desired for the city was linked to the effect the machine had
on the industrial world. As the machine solved humans’ energy and industrial needs, a
modernist machine aesthetic evolved to solve society’s social problems. This new
aesthetic, as German architect Walter Gropius said, would be characterized by “exact
stamped form…clear contrasts, the ordering of members…unity of form and colour.”

Another Bauhaus modernist, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy demonstrated the importance of
technology to the aesthetic and to society in his 1922 essay, “Constructivism and the
Proletariat”:

> The reality of our century is technology: the invention, construction
> and maintenance of machines. To be a user of machines is to be of
> the spirit of this century. It has replaced the transcendental
> spiritualism of past eras….
>
> Everyone is equal before the machine. I can use it, so can you. It can
> crush me; the same can happen to you. There is no tradition in
> technology, no class-consciousness. Everyone can be the machine’s
> master or slave.\footnote{As quoted by Christopher Butler, \textit{Modernism: A Very Short Introduction}. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 27-28.}

\footnote{As quoted by William R. Curtis, \textit{Modern Architecture since 1900}. (Oxford: Prentice Hall, 1987), 60.}
The machine had changed the way society functioned and would now change the way it looked. Modernist architects, like the Italian Futurists early in the twentieth century, used pure forms and crisp straight lines to mimic the efficiency of the machine. The modernist aesthetic, that would work to improve conditions for the automobile in North American cities after the Second World War, had developed in Europe almost fifty years before.

In Germany, artists, architects, politicians and industrialists all shared a concern for design and the importance of form in the early twentieth-century. In 1907 a national organization called the Deutscher Werkbund was established to “bring designers and manufacturers together, educate the public about industrial design, reform design education, and raise the quality of German manufactured goods.”48 At the Deutscher Werkbund architectural exhibitions held in Cologne in 1914 and in Stuttgart in 1927, modernist architects demonstrated their progressive designs which were meant to improve life for factory workers by improving their housing conditions. At the Stuttgart Weissenhof exhibit German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe invited other modernist architects from around Europe to design inexpensive houses for industrial workers. These simple and streamlined buildings, with flat-roofs, horizontal window bands and no ornamentation, heralded a rupture with traditional architecture. Peter Behrens, Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Hans Scharoun and Bruno Taut, among others, each designed a building to showcase the new aesthetic and its potential as a solution to the housing shortage. The new spirit had ushered in a fresh and economical approach to house construction that represented a major generational shift in what was considered aesthetically pleasing. The new architecture would be described as modernist.

Terms can be confusing. To be modern is most often understood to be of our time, to be current, however modern architecture can be used to describe architecture that developed during the 18th and 19th centuries spurred on by the enlightenment’s technological advances. Modernity, a historical term, refers to the modern age, which is usually identified as the period beginning in the 16th century through to the twenty-first century when the seeds of capitalism, urbanization, secularism and our modern approach to life were sown, germinated and developed. The modernist aesthetic, identified by its streamlined look, was developed in Europe in the early twentieth century and was adopted in North America by urban renewal practitioners after the Second World War.

The terms modernist aesthetic and modernism both refer to the look which eschewed the ways of the past to favour efficiency and functionality and are the main subjects of this thesis. Modernism is also used, more generally, to describe a cultural movement around the turn of the twentieth century, linked to architecture, literature, music, painting and sculpture, that broke away from the bourgeois styles associated with these cultural expressions and proposed a new approach, inherently critical of past practices. Often the break was against state-sanctioned academic approaches – related to the French Academy and the formalism of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Modernist art historian Sigfried Giedion connected the mechanization of the early twentieth century to the modernist rejection of the past in such artists like Giorgio de Chirico, Fernand Leger and Marcel Duchamp as they used “machines, mechanisms, and ready-made articles, as some of the few true products of the period, to liberate themselves from the rotten art of the ruling taste.”

The avant-garde was not only developing a new way of doing art, or designing a

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building, but “had adopted new moral positions guided by the ‘right spirit’.”\textsuperscript{50} And in the Weimar Republic modernist architecture was presented to the world as more than a specific look or a style, but as a solution to the working-class housing crisis that followed the First World War.

The modernist aesthetic in architecture was identified by its simple forms, straight lines and flat roofs and, at the same time, by its social conscience. Function was an essential part of the aesthetic, and many European architects were drawn to modernism to improve the lives of the working class. Modernism’s look reflected efficiency and a social good. A building’s use and function had become aesthetically important. In 1929 this idea was articulated by modernist Bruno Taut in his book \textit{Modern Architecture} when he wrote: “Beauty originates from the direct relationship between building and purpose…” He went on to say: “If everything is founded on sound efficiency, this efficiency itself, or rather its utility will form its own aesthetic law.”\textsuperscript{51} Aesthetics had moved from dictating a precise prescription for beauty to a demonstration of how a building would make life easier for its inhabitants. Many modernists believed that architecture should reflect the notion of progress and improvement.

At the very core of the modernists’ practice was the idea that they had something to offer which would improve living and working conditions for the city as well as for their individual clients, an idea that had developed as architecture moved away from traditional building ideas to new plans incorporating technological advances. As Peter Gossel explains, “modernism must be regarded as a never-finished project concerned

\textsuperscript{51}As quoted by Adrian Forty, \textit{Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture}. (New York: Thames and Hudson),108.
with harmonizing Enlightenment hopes for self-determined individuals with social and technological changes.” For centuries beauty was seen as residing within the object itself and critics were able to declare a building beautiful and aesthetically pleasing because of a building’s particular attributes. In the 18th and 19th centuries, German philosophers Immanuel Kant and Frederich Hegel helped to remove the aesthetic appeal from the material. The act of experiencing art gained prominence over just looking at the work and therefore the social significance of art and architecture could take on more aesthetic relevance. The building’s function could now be associated with its beauty and architects felt free to design their buildings to reflect technological advances in the way the building was built and functioned, as was demonstrated by American modern architects.

In the late nineteenth century American architects Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright responded to the burgeoning city by adopting new ideas about how buildings should look as well as offering new ways of imagining how people could live. Booming Chicago would provide fertile ground for Sullivan to develop his ideas for the early skyscraper and for his student, Frank Lloyd Wright, to come up with his own prescription for the crowded and chaotic city with his anti-urban and expansive Broadacre City. Sullivan would coin the iconic phrase “form follows function,” so often associated with modernism. However, his phrase wasn’t meant to recommend austere functionalism, as modernist architects of the early twentieth century would practice, but instead to encourage the building’s form to reflect the workings of the building itself. This idea is evocatively expressed in Buffalo’s own Guaranty Building, built by Sullivan and his partner Dankmar Adler in 1894 (figure 2.1). Its decorative terra cotta exterior rises up

towards the ornately decorated cornice (figure 2.2), as if growing out of the material itself and metaphorically reflecting the way the early skyscraper worked. Both Sullivan and

Figure 2.1 - Sullivan and Adler’s 1894 Guaranty Building, an early skyscraper, in Buffalo, NY. Modern architecture was a response to industrial and technological change. Source: http://www.visitbuffaloniagara.com/buffalo-architecture/buildings-monuments/guaranty-building/ (accessed December, 2012).

Wright would ignore the prescribed forms of the past to create original buildings whose decorative motifs and form were inspired by their functions and their surroundings and not by traditional building practices. Their buildings however could not be described as having simple and efficient lines in the modernist-sense. Yet their ideas and the buildings themselves would inspire the European modernists, who would develop functional, economical housing and factory designs during the 1920s and go on to influence functional urban planning ideas taught in architecture and design schools internationally.
European modernists fed their interest in pure and efficient form, tied to functionalism, with trips to North America where they were fascinated by American engineering and showed particular interest in the grain elevators and silos that lined North American ports. Gropius, Le Corbusier and Erich Mendelsohn each wrote about the American engineered purity of form inherent to these industrial behemoths. Before any of the European modernists actually visited the United States, Gropius used images of American grain elevators for an article he published in 1913. Le Corbusier would ask to borrow Gropius’ silo illustrations for his own publication *L’Esprit Nouveau* in 1919.54 The modernists admired how the elevators’ function was openly displayed, superseding any concern for history or decoration and, in so doing, had achieved what they saw as pure beauty. Photographs of Buffalo’s silos and elevators were published in 1926 in Erich Mendelsohn’s “Amerika” (figure 2.3), and presented as “a preliminary stage in a future that is just beginning to achieve order.”55 Another Buffalo grain elevator was photographed to demonstrate how the will to organize could transform “delirium” into “boldness” and “confusion into harmony.”56 It was the efficiency of their look, tied to their function, which made the silos and elevators so very inspiring to the European modernists. They wanted their buildings to reflect the same functional purity displayed so clearly by the massive silos.

56 Ibid, 46.
“Elevator fortresses in the transshipment port at the northeastern end of Lake Erie where the Niagara flows into it. Unplanned confusion, in the chaos of the loading and unloading grain shipments, railroads and bridges. Monster cranes and gestures of living creatures, crowds of silo compartments of concrete, stone and enamel. Suddenly an elevator with management, uniform layered facades against the stupendous verticality of 100 cylinders.”

The connection between the new modernist aesthetic and the importance of function is best exemplified by the German Bauhaus. The school, established in 1919 by Walter Gropius, combined an art academy with a design school, in an effort to break down the barrier between craftsman and artist. Originally the school’s focus was on the crafts ideals, but with Germany’s economy in crisis, simpler, more efficient and

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57 Ibid, 44.
“objective” industrial production grew in importance. The objectivity of science and rationality were embraced to promote the standardization of form and to gain efficiencies. As Walter Gropius wrote in 1923 in *Idee und Aufbau*, his presentation of Bauhaus philosophy: “The Bauhaus believes the machine to be our modern medium of design and seeks to come to terms with it.” He also presented his view of architecture:

> We want an architecture adapted to our world of machines, radios and fast cars… with the increasing strength of the new materials – steel, concrete, glass – and with the new audacity of engineering, the ponderousness of the old methods of building is giving way to a new lightness and airiness.  

The new aesthetic was reflected in Gropius’ design for the Bauhaus facility when it moved to Dessau in 1925 (figure 2.4). The new school building was flat roofed, without decoration nor historical precedent. It resembled a factory. Bauhaus integrated a progressive social agenda into its look, one at odds with the ‘Aryan’ pitched roof and the Nazi desire to focus on German nationalism.  

Modernist promoter and art historian Sigfried Giedeon wrote that in Germany at this time the architect’s status had greatly improved. “It was recognized that the architect had a part in forming the spirit of his time.” The modernist movement seemed to be dominated by engineer-inspired rational principles but Gropius would say that rationalization was “really only its purifying agency” and that “the aesthetic satisfaction of the human soul is just as important.”

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Le Corbusier began to understand the importance of linking the machine to art when he worked in Germany for Peter Behrens, designing factories for the AEG in 1910. Behrens saw “mechanization as a central positive force in the creation of a new culture,
so long as the artist could inject the higher values of form into the industrial process."62

Le Corbusier would continue to connect the machine to his architectural ideas when he returned to France with the hope of coming up with architectural designs and mass-production processes which would help solve the housing crisis there; ideas which he would eventually adopt to transform the city as a whole. His aesthetic would include a desire to improve society. “The problem of the house is a problem of the epoch. The equilibrium of society today depends on it. Architecture has for its first duty, in this period of renewal, that of bringing about a revision of values, a revision of the constituent elements of the house,” he wrote in Towards A New Architecture, a compilation of articles that first appeared in the 1920s in the periodical L’esprit nouveau.63 He called for a new spirit in the creation of mass-produced houses and blamed the social unrest of the period on old-fashioned architecture. He believed he had the answer to society’s problems. The new modernist architecture was the key, or as he put it: “Architecture or Revolution. Revolution can be avoided.”64 He began to use his machine-driven aesthetic to provide answers to the machine-driven urban problems of over-crowding and traffic congestion. In 1928 he wrote “Today, steel and reinforced concrete provide us with the most efficient means to produce an urbanism consistent with the profound economic and social revolution which is the result of the machine.”

The powerful idealism and commitment to social change inherent in the European modernist aesthetic was promoted through the Congrès internationaux d’architecture moderne (CIAM), established in 1928 by a group of modernist architects, Le Corbusier among them, who believed in the importance of centralized land planning for the

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64 Ibid, 189.
common good and gathered for their first meeting, or congress, in a fourteenth-century
Swiss chateau. Their founding declaration proclaimed, in capital letters, their intention to
put “ARCHITECTURE BACK ON ITS REAL PLANE, THE ECONOMIC AND
SOCIOLOGICAL PLANE: therefore architecture should be freed from the sterile
influence of Academies and of antiquated formules.” CIAM, as the international
organization that actively promoted the modernist aesthetic, challenged the architectural
status quo of neo-classicism taught in the academies of Europe and North America and in
its founding document would reflect Le Corbusier’s ideas for the Functional City. CIAM
started with a focus on housing in Frankfurt in 1929, progressed to a discussion on the
height of block units in Brussels in 1930 and by 1933 was preoccupied by the city as a
whole. CIAM’s urban vision extended beyond the working-class housing estates of the
Weimar Republic to the reorganization of cities worldwide and included ideas directed
toward Soviet Communist efforts in their industrial cities. By 1933 political changes in
the USSR and in National Socialist Germany meant that CIAM’s ideas met with new
criticism. The Nazis would close the Bauhaus. Soviet objections to the organization
meant that members had to choose whether to stay with CIAM or go to the USSR to
assist with their revolutionary changes. Their influence diminishing in Europe, CIAM
modernists would begin to look toward Britain and North America for patronage.

The European modernists’ so-called “International Style” was introduced to the
United States in 1932 by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson through a New
York Museum of Modern Art exhibition which toured the United States over a three year
period, including a stop at Buffalo’s Fine Arts Academy (now known as the Albright-
Knox Gallery). Johnson called the new architecture “the first fundamentally original and

widely distributed style since the Gothic,” and wanted to present it to the American general public who had not yet experienced it.\textsuperscript{66} In addition to showing architectural models by European modernists, models of buildings by American modern architects like Frank Lloyd Wright and Richard Neutra were also displayed. Johnson gave credit to American architects, and particularly Frank Lloyd Wright, for providing the initial elements which went on to make up the “International Style” and started it on its way “to its present well-advanced stage of development.”\textsuperscript{67} The catalogue entitled \textit{International Style Architecture Since 1922} accompanied the exhibition. Presenting the architecture of Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe among others, the exhibition focused on the style of these Congrès internationaux d’architecture moderne (CIAM) architects rather than their commitment to social change. Hitchcock and Johnson argued that the new style “which orders the visible manifestation of a certain close relationship between structure and function” had “a definable aesthetic” and that modernism’s flat roofs had an “essential aesthetic significance” which they encouraged America to accept.\textsuperscript{68} As the United States began to take notice of the modernist aesthetic and Germany and the Soviet Union began to distance themselves from CIAM, modernist architects in Europe began to widen their focus from designing buildings to developing plans for the Functional City.\textsuperscript{69}

The 1933 CIAM Congress, entitled the Functional City, was initially slated to take place in Moscow but, with the Soviet Union no longer willing to fully endorse

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
CIAM’s ideas, the Functional City, as an idea for the future, was presented and discussed by modernists on a boat in the middle of the Mediterranean. The Patris II, the boat chosen as the conference site, slipped anchor from Marseilles on July 29, 1933. On the following day, Le Corbusier presented his ideas about urban reconfiguration to the gathered delegates, all passengers aboard the ship bound for Greece, in what was the fourth meeting of the Congrès, or CIAM 4. In the floating convention centre, the 100 delegates, representing 17 different countries (including Canada) strolled past same-scale plans for thirty-three different cities (including one prepared by architects from the United States) displayed on the promenade deck. Far from land, the modernist architects, artists and planners listened while Le Corbusier lectured in front of a wall covered with various city plans. He insisted that housing should be acknowledged as the most important function when CIAM’s delegates started to redraw city plans keeping true to the ideal of the Functional City.

The Functional City was presented as a model for all cities to follow in the “Town Planning Chart” which would later form the basis for Le Corbusier’s Charter of Athens published in 1943. In this document, housing was given priority in CIAM’s hierarchy of the city’s four functions: namely housing, recreation, work and transportation. The Town-Planning Chart would serve as the foundation for modernist architect Josep Lluís Sert’s Can Our Cities Survive?, published in 1942 for an American audience.

After the ship returned to Marseilles, Le Corbusier continued to promote his vision of how cities could be improved and rebuilt in articles about CIAM 4, the Functional City. He imagined a Cartesian city of rational functionality where the old streets and historic buildings would be demolished and replaced by modernist towers

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70 Ibid, 79. For a photograph of Le Corbusier speaking on board the Patris II, see page 80.
surrounded by green space allowing for sunshine and fresh air in the crowded city, which would become known as “towers in the park.” He proposed the destruction and rebuilding of Paris’ historic Marais district; he recommended elevated highways for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil telling Brazilians that pillars of concrete, called “pilotis,” would help them to “glide above the city;” and he drew plans for two highways running along the Algerian coast in North Africa.  

Le Corbusier recommended that historic districts be destroyed and razed to the ground in order to use steel and reinforced concrete to solve what he saw as urban problems. As Giedion wrote, “Le Corbusier has cast the net of his vision over the chaos of the contemporary metropolis. In his plans he has cut thoroughfares through vested interests, demolishing whole quarters and raising them anew.” The old city was to be demolished and replaced with a rational city, a Functional City that would not harbour any sympathy for the past or for its historic monuments. James C. Scott aligns Le Corbusier with Lenin for adopting an “imperial or hegemonic planning mentality that excludes the necessary role of local knowledge and know-how.” Indeed, Le Corbusier dedicated his 1933 book *The Radiant City* to “Authority” in which he recommended the demolition of central Paris in order to bring sunshine, health, order and efficiency to its cramped and twisting century-old streets.

Le Corbusier promoted his modernist ideas with enthusiasm, recognizing the need for a powerful administration to fulfill his aesthetic vision. He helped define the modernist aesthetic by emphasizing the importance of the straight line and denigrating

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71 Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*. (First Published in France in 1933 as *La Ville Radieuse*), (The Netherlands: Orion Press, 1967), 224.
72 Giedion, 531.
the slower curved route. He would segregate the city’s functions and separate the pedestrian from the street, while ensuring lanes of traffic were isolated according to their direction, their size and their speed. His aesthetic was scientific, clean and rational. As Francesco Passanti describes, “he could produce urbanistic typologies that had, embedded in them, both a modern functional necessity and an aesthetic intent, held in productive tension.” Le Corbusier wanted his visual order to end the so-called slum-like conditions of the old European cities and to herald a new machine-age civilization of efficiency in a city designed not by historical chance but by scientific principles of the new age. Modernist spatial regulation and single-use zoning would help achieve the desired visual aesthetic. By destroying the old city the modernist plans could be realized with even greater efficiency and order. Demolition was presented as a viable option, an idea that would gain currency in the United States where the city itself had long been the object of mistrust.

North American cities were seen as unhealthy and planners during the late nineteenth century strived for spatial order in response to the negative effects of urbanization. As M. Christine Boyer explains, the city was blamed for “having destroyed the uplifting qualities of the physical environment; everything had been sacrificed on the altar of industry and capital acquisition.” Parks and the great outdoors became a welcome reprieve from the chaotic and polluted city. In both Canada and the United

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77 This might be partially explained by the deeply rooted American idealization of country life as explored in Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).
States national parks as well as city parks were established to help improve people’s health and outlook. Landscape designers like Frederick Law Olmsted would bring parks into the city to help connect the city dwellers to their agrarian past and provide some respite from the pressures of industrial city life. Aesthetic reforms were also initiated in an effort to improve society’s social order morally as well as physically.

Starting in the 1890s, the City Beautiful movement attempted to address public concern over the proliferation of billboards, utility wires and unimpressive architecture and to give North American cities some European charm. Inspired by Paris and its grand boulevards and elegant architecture, Chicago’s “White City” offered a taste of what could be achieved during the Columbian World’s Fair of 1893. The aesthetic for the City Beautiful paradigm came from Europe and more specifically, from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Its neoclassical buildings and rational ordering of the city would bring an end to the American democratic look that Sullivan had tried to nurture in Chicago.79

As American cities grew in size, and industries expanded, the desire for increased order and control would result in the introduction of comprehensive city planning, with its attendant maps and zoning documents, to help manage the urban development. Boyer demonstrates that by 1914 efficiency and functionality had become what planners wanted for the city. They used zoning techniques to try to isolate conflicting land uses and to protect property owners. By the 1920s the City Beautiful and Beaux Arts plans had lost their appeal as practical and utilitarian approaches began to drive the agenda. The United States would move from the City Beautiful ideal to a city efficient model with Canada following the American lead in some instances while also adopting British town planning concepts. Eventually planning grew to be dominated by business and real estate interests.

79 Frampton, 56.
and “zoning became divorced from comprehensive planning.” Despite the architects and planners’ efforts, the congested city prevailed. The architects who designed the massive downtown skyscrapers contributed to the alienation of city life with more people moving out to the periphery in their new automobiles. The alienation and ambivalence would continue as the Depression put increased pressure and hardship on the city. By the late 1930s state intervention was seen as essential while government programs focused on public works and getting people back into jobs. Slum clearance and new ideas for redevelopment were introduced just as the Second World War demanded that the nation prepare for its defence. Action on behalf of the city was suspended when North America went to war. Meanwhile, from 1943 to 1948 the American Society of Planners and Architects effectively brought CIAM’s modernist planning ideas into the United States and worked “to advance the link between modern architecture and political activism, similar to earlier efforts by CIAM groups in Europe.” The war allowed for modernist ideas to be heard in North America. As Mumford states, “the need for a common front against the Axis led to cooperation between the previously antagonistic advocates of free enterprise and various forms of collectivism.” With the end of the Second World War and the introduction of urban renewal legislation, Mumford points out that the political line dividing CIAM and American urbanists had blurred. Both American capitalists and their critics were willing to accept modernist ideas for the Functional City which demanded much stricter zoning practices, raised the prominence of the city master plan and recommended a rational rearranging of the old city in order to

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80 Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City*, 153.
81 Boyer, 260.
83 Mumford, *CIAM Discourse*, 143.
ensure efficiency of movement. Dividing the industrial city into four functions would solve urban problems by offering individual liberty in the residential areas and the benefits of collective action elsewhere. The creation of three distinct areas, connected by transportation corridors, would make the city more efficient and more streamlined, with each function segregated from the other. While private developers would work to achieve the functional goal, an injection of government funds would speed up the process. In both Canada and the United States, funding was made available through their urban renewal initiatives. The federal urban renewal programs, as adopted in Buffalo and Hamilton, are the focus of this dissertation.

Land use segregation was not a brand new concept in North America. Planners had discussed the idea of universal zoning by function in the 1920s. American popular culture presented the inherent benefits which functional planning offered both the automobile driver and the manufacturer in General Motor’s Futurama exhibit created by Norman Bel Geddes for the 1939 World’s Fair held in New York City, and presented in the 1940 movie New Horizons. The film presents a wide motorway travelling over the Futurama model of expansive countryside towards a city of the future. The narrator foretells a time when well-planned cities with “a highly developed modern traffic system” would provide “space for living, space for working, space for play. All available for more people than ever before.” The four functions were specifically identified in the film’s script. Residential, work and leisure zones, connected by efficient motorways, make up this ideal - General Motors’ endorsed - Functional City. General Motors demonstrated how these American zoning ideas reflected CIAM’s machine aesthetic by

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84 Ibid, 116.
promoting zones “separated for greater efficiency and greater convenience.”\textsuperscript{86} This streamlined, efficient and convenient new look represented the modernist ideal of beauty and social advancement, an ideal promoted by a car manufacturer whose commercial interests would be sympathetic to the modernist aesthetic. Another car company, Voisin, had sponsored the Voisin Plan for Paris in 1925 in which Le Corbusier, with his cruciform towers, demonstrated that the best way to rebuild Paris for the car was “a frontal attack on the most diseased qualities of the city, and the narrowest streets.”\textsuperscript{87}

Le Corbusier’s ideas for the Functional City were discussed in his book \textit{The Radiant City}, and were illustrated by a green-coloured schema, divided in horizontal segments with housing taking the dominant central position (figure 2.6). The business zone is positioned to the north while the factories, warehouses and heavy industry, with no green space around them, are to the south. Strict zoning would allow for linear development of a city’s functions which were connected to one another by high-speed throughways, creating an efficient system. Function was part of the aesthetic appeal with each area “sharply characterized and then willfully juxtaposed to the others to form a larger drama.”\textsuperscript{88} This rational rearranging of the city would be possible if one could start fresh on virgin land, but when attempting to rearrange a city that had stood for generations, Le Corbusier was prepared to demolish buildings and streets, showing little respect or appreciation for what had come before.

\textsuperscript{86}Department of Public Relations, General Motors, \textit{To New Horizons}, on-line film, Prelinger Archives. 1940. \url{www.archive.org/details/ToNewHor1940}, \url{www.archive.org/details/ToNewHor1940} (accessed October, 2010).


\textsuperscript{88} Ibid, 32.
Figure 2.6 – Le Corbusier’s schema for the Radiant City showing strict segregated zoning in horizontal segments. Housing is in the centre between the industrial zones and the business centre. Source: *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning*, 155.

His philosophy was clear: “The lesson of history is an order to advance. Architecture and City Planning. We must equip the machine age! We must use the results of modern technical triumphs to set man free.”89 The city needed to be liberated.

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from its past and its encumbrances. The planner would analyze the plans from above and rationally determine which function should be assigned to which district. The plans were to be examined and the city’s functions were to be determined, rearranged, administered and controlled. City planning promised to bring about social change and improve the city. These ideas, which germinated in inter-war Europe, would blossom in North American planning and design schools with the help of modernist émigrés, and were ready to bear fruit in the 1950s just in time for the urban renewal projects.

It was its style, and not its progressive social stance, which first attracted North Americans to modernist architecture. The New York Museum of Modern Art’s 1932 exhibition made Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius into North American celebrities for their modernist housing designs. Harvard University would offer Gropius a position at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design in 1937 and whatever existed of nascent American modernism was overwhelmed by the European import. The German modernist would bring CIAM-members Marcel Breuer and Martin Wagner to Harvard and ensured that modernist Sigfried Giedion would deliver Harvard’s prestigious Charles Eliot Norton Lectures in 1938-1939, later published by Harvard as *Space, Time and Architecture*. Gropius would also ensure that Harvard Press published *Can Our Cities Survive?*, the CIAM-inspired book, promoting Functional City ideals, written by modernist architect Josep Lluís Sert. Harvard’s Graduate School of Design would become the centre of modern design education for North America and would have a profound effect on architects who graduated after the Second World War.

The founder and dean of Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, Joseph Hudnut, wrote the introduction to Sert’s 1944 prescription for the modern city, *Can Our Cities
Survive?, subtitled an ABC of urban problems, their analysis, their solutions. Organized into chapters featuring each of the four functions, Sert endorsed Le Corbusier’s Functional City and presented the modernists’ approach to city planning and architecture. Sert’s book promoted CIAM’s agenda for saving the world’s cities through the analysis of plans and strict zoning. Sert recognized aerial photography as a new analytical tool available to planners in 1944 which provided “a perspective never before known.” With this new perspective the planner was able to see the city as a distant image which could be re-imagined and remade. Sert described what aerial photography could provide to the city planner in his description of a photo of Manhattan from the air: “Here is no individual building, or street, or neighbourhood, but the whole city and, with it, a revelation of its composition.”

Again, just as the master plans had encouraged, the architect-planner did not have to be concerned with an individual neighbourhood or a particular street but could analyze the total city and its needs from above and make a pronouncement regarding how the city looked from the air. The planner could focus on how the city was composed in its entirety. Not only had the city become a specimen to be analyzed and reconfigured by the rational architect-planner, but the city had become a canvas upon which the artist-planner could use to create his art. The city, seen as a composition displayed at a distance, could be a piece of art on which the modernists could assert their own vision and rearrange into a manifestation of efficient beauty. Whether examined through plans affixed to the promenade deck of the Patris II or through aerial photography, modernists saw the city as something that could be redesigned and reconfigured after thorough analysis. Acknowledging the importance of the city’s different functions and what Le

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Corbusier called the biological development of the city, the modernists believed “in the necessity and the possibility of a complete transformation of our cities.”

Sert’s book presented the European modernists’ vision for the future, in the form of the Functional City. While Hudnut did write a positive introduction to Sert’s book - which Lewis Mumford had refused to do - historian Jill Pearlman questions Hudnut’s commitment to CIAM’s planning ideas, suggesting that he only agreed to help with Sert’s project as a favour to Gropius. Hudnut had used his connections to get Harvard University Press to publish Sert’s book, but after a few years he would openly criticize many of the planning ideas espoused by CIAM. While Hudnut’s allegiance to CIAM was questionable, Giedion was a whole-hearted supporter of CIAM and its modernist foundations and is seen as a CIAM propagandist. In his introduction to Sert’s book, which was to introduce the Functional City to America, he made sure that his CIAM credentials were fully recognized, asserting that he had been involved with CIAM from the group’s inception and explaining that they chose the term “Congrès” for its original meaning as “a marching together.” Giedeon used his introduction to Sert’s book to go over the history of CIAM, and to emphasize the importance of housing as the foundational concern for the modernist architects. For Giedion the chaos of the urban environment could only be solved through planning - planning which would take into consideration the most elementary social needs of the citizen, presumably expressed through the four functions. He was particularly keen on the usefulness of CIAM’s

91 Ibid, 214.
93 He would position the modernist era, and the importance it placed on the plane surface, as the third space conception era after the Greek and the Roman eras. Sigfried Giedion, Architecture and the Phenomenon of Transition; the Three Space Conceptions in Architecture. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).
94 Sert, ix.
planning ideas in 1942 as the Second World War was destroying large neighbourhoods in London and in many other European cities. He described how modernist towers, surrounded by large open spaces, were more easily defended because they offered minimum surface to the bomber while a traditional city’s congested neighbourhoods, “sprawling open to the sky…are invitations to destruction.”

Modernists believed their aesthetic provided answers to contemporary problems whether a housing crisis or a bomber. Air bombardments were a concern addressed by Le Corbusier in The Radiant City, published in 1933. He suggested that his skyscrapers could be topped with metal plating to provide “definitive anti-bomb protection.” This theme was also addressed by Sert during World War II. Le Corbusier, Sert and Gideon, modernists all, were convinced that their aesthetic would do society a service and that it should be put to work in order to solve some of society’s most difficult problems. CIAM saw their modernist tower solution as not only the best way to house large numbers of people while preserving surrounding space for sunlight and recreation, but also as a means of wartime defense, particularly important to North Americans during the Cold War.

Modernists analyzed the city from above, comparing plans and aerial photographs. The aerial views revealed “the haphazard distribution of their buildings” which could be improved upon. Their analysis was primarily remote, far from the street, ignoring the historic antecedents and the engrained customs and traditions of the communities they analyzed, in their goal to achieve a rationally conceived modern city -

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96 Le Corbusier, The Radiant City. (First Published in France in 1933 as La Ville Radieuse) (Orion Press: The Netherlands, 1967), 171.
97 Sert, Can Our Cities Survive, 42.
a goal North American architects and planners were beginning to appreciate and promote. New graduates wanted to use their knowledge to serve society. They had absorbed the slum discourse, had a common distaste for the supposedly slum-ridden city and in their design schools were immersed in the European-inspired modernist aesthetic with its proposed solutions. The modernists’ promise of efficient, rational cities seemed to offer a plan and an aesthetic worth following. In addition, the functionalism of the modernist movement had risen to become the dominant style of architecture in America by 1945.\(^98\)

After the armistice, the popular desire to clean up the city, to make up for the years of neglect, became more acute. Both Buffalo and Hamilton, as industrial powerhouses, had focused on making war machinery to the detriment of how both cities looked. After accepting the increased government involvement during the Depression and war years, city officials would look to the federal government to help make their cities more efficient and up-to-date. Just as the City Beautiful movement, two generations before, promised to improve the city by making American boulevards more elegant and pleasing to the eye, modernist planners also promised to change the look of the city; only this time the aesthetic was going to go beyond boulevards and vistas and would work to transform the city into a functional machine: efficient, streamlined and without historic antecedent. These ideas were being discussed in both the United States and Canada.

Canadian architects were influenced by CIAM’s ideas, with the first Canadian CIAM branch established in 1951.\(^99\) British CIAM member Jacqueline Tyrwhitt taught at the University of Toronto’s School of Architecture from 1951 to 1955 and would invite

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\(^{99}\) In Vancouver, led by H. Peter Oberlander. Mumford, 205.
fellow CIAM-member Gordon Stephenson to teach at the University of Toronto. While Canadian architects were being introduced to modernist planning ideas, the discourse on blight in Canada sounded similar to American hyperbole in expressing concern for the urban core.

“This blight is spreading,” said J.S. Hodgson, Executive Director of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) at a symposium on Urban Redevelopment in 1958. “Already it occupies hundreds of acres in every Canadian city.” He added, “We cannot reasonably expect it to shrink or disappear by itself.” He called for a surgical approach. “Total demolition and a fresh start. Today we are directly concerned with only this most radical kind of renewal.” Some Canadians, Hodgson admitted, had aesthetic reasons for wanting to get rid of blight. However, he found this rather suspect, “since in a purely visual sense the slums of cities may often be more picturesque than newer areas. Successful redevelopment needs to be guided by a sense of beauty, but something beyond the aesthetic motive is needed at the outset.”

He outlined social and economic reasons for adopting total destruction of a city’s neighbourhoods, adding almost parenthetically that the provision of jobs, at a time of increasing unemployment, made redevelopment a very interesting prospect for a city. He ended his speech with the line “Redevelopment will go on forever.” Canada was clearly being prepared for modernist destruction.

At the same symposium, Member of Parliament C. E. Campeau, a former Director of Town Planning for Montreal, would identify the slum as a “breeding place for crime, disease, juvenile delinquency and personal disintegration” and called for a “total attack”

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with “efficient action” like a military campaign to rid the city of the slum.\footnote{C.E. Campeau, “Urban Redevelopment,” \textit{Journal RAIC} 35 (July, 1958), 267.} He saw urban renewal combined with comprehensive planning as the way to improve the city. He gave the urban renewal plans for Montreal as evidence that social and economic benefits would result along with radical change to the physical pattern of the city’s oldest sectors.

The modernists’ Functional City idea was discussed in 1959 as a model for urban transformation in Canada. S.H. Pickett, the advisor on Urban Renewal to the CMHC, used the Functional City’s four functions to describe the typical general urban renewal plan which would contain “a map of proposals for physical improvements of all kinds: highways, parks, industry and housing” (another way of saying: transportation, recreation, work and housing).\footnote{S. H. Pickett, “Urban Renewal in the Dynamic City,” in \textit{Urban Renewal Seminar}. (Ottawa: Central Mortgage and Housing Company, September 1959), 8.} Gerald A.P. Carrothers, from the University of Toronto’s Architecture School, said that while most participants at the 1959 CMHC-sponsored urban renewal seminar stressed the importance of the plan and the planning process, he thought the real objective of urban renewal was “to change the appearance of our cities.”\footnote{Gerald A.P. Carrothers, “Prospects for Urban Renewal in Canada” in \textit{Urban Renewal Seminar}, ibid, 32.}

Canadians were strongly influenced by the urban renewal projects being carried out in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. Stewart Bates, President of Canada’s Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation returned from a tour of Pittsburgh’s urban renewal projects in 1959, “with renewed conviction of the urgent need for bold action in Canadian cities.”\footnote{Central Mortgage and Housing Company, in \textit{Urban Renewal Seminar}, ibid, 1.} Delegates from Hamilton attended an urban renewal conference in
Philadelphia in 1960. Canadians saw government-sponsored urban renewal as a way to improve the city. In Canada, like in the United States, the modernist aesthetic would be put to work to change how the city would look and function. The old city was no longer valued for the way it had evolved over time. As Boyer attests, the modern movement had shown that the old city was but an abstraction and “a new modern city of functional components negated and emptied its valueless historical centers.”

The modernist aesthetic when applied to urban planning, and supported by urban renewal schemes, would bring down city blocks with a devastating arrogance, committed as it was to a quick and rational solution. “Order and harmony that once seemed the function of a unitary God had been replaced by a similar faith in the idea of progress vouched-safe by the scientists, engineers and planners.” Planners, influenced by modernist Functional City ideas, often presented the city as a large sculpture whose overall form and efficiency were theirs to control. Critic Jane Jacobs would oppose the modernist order and segregation, finding fault with the aesthetic itself and arguing that “modern city planning has been burdened from its beginning with the unsuitable aim of converting cities into disciplined works of art.” While her opposition was direct and unequivocal, the power of the modernist aesthetic, as expressed through the urban renewal programs, would prevail in North America until the 1970s.

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106 Boyer, 286.
The belief that modernist-inspired urban renewal would improve the city meant that laws were created to support its imposition. The Supreme Court of the United States ruled in 1954, in *Berman versus Parker*, that the city could demolish a building in Washington DC under eminent domain in the interest of public welfare, in order to ensure aesthetic beauty – as represented by the modernist superblock. Mr. Justice Douglas delivered the opinion of the court that:

> The values it represents are spiritual as well as physical, aesthetic as well as monetary. It is within the power of the legislature to determine that the community should be beautiful as well as healthy, spacious as well as clean, well balanced as well as carefully patrolled.\(^{109}\)

The state-sanctioned modernist destruction was deemed to be in the public’s best interest and thereby overrode the beauty found in the structure by the building’s owner and by the original architect. The law supported urban renewal destruction. Bylaws were also created to ensure the zoning could be enforced. Legal controls were instituted across North America. In Hamilton, Ontario, for example, the city council passed a bylaw in 1958 “to provide architectural control machinery for certain areas of the city” in order to prepare for the civic centre district.\(^{110}\) First imagined by modernist architect Eugenio Faludi in 1945, and incorporated into his master plan of 1947 the land set aside for the civic centre district would eventually accommodate the new city hall and the urban renewal superblocks.\(^{111}\) In the 1958 bylaw, which secured the land for the future, the


\(^{111}\) E. G. Faludi and Sue Gordon, *City Planning Committee Report, No. 9* (City of Hamilton, November 9 1945) and E.G. Faludi, *A Master Plan for the Development of the City of Hamilton.* (City of Hamilton, March 1947).
modernists’ belated interest in the importance of the civic core, as a fifth function, can be detected.

Josep Lluis Sert, who became President of CIAM in 1947 and Dean of Harvard’s Graduate School of Design in 1953, would direct attention to the civic core after the publication of Can Our Cities Survive? which had promoted the four functions of the Functional City. An admirer of Lewis Mumford, Sert was stung by Mumford’s critique that the four functions of CIAM’s urbanism were too limiting for city planning.\footnote{Mumford, \textit{CIAM Discourse}, 132.} Therefore, a fifth function, the community-building function, was promoted at the 1951 conference, organized by Jaqueline Tyrwhitt and CIAM’s British chapter known as MARS. The conference was called CIAM 8: the Heart of the City and took place in Hoddensdon, north of London, England. This new attention to the core and a built space focusing on culture and civic government would preoccupy CIAM for most of the 1950s.\footnote{Mumford, 142.} While both Hamilton and Buffalo would construct central civic areas, a separate analysis of the civic zone lies outside the domain of this study of modernist urban renewal projects and the four functions of the Functional City. The fifth function was an after thought and was separate from the original urban plan articulated by CIAM in the 1930s and would not be generally accepted as part of CIAM’s modernist, Functional City agenda.

However, CIAM’s promotion of the fifth function is clearly evident in Hamilton’s central core development, which was called the Civic Square Urban Renewal Scheme by urban renewal planners Murray V. Jones and Associates in 1965. Hamilton’s original civic core plan highlighted the interests of the greater community and included a
planetarium, a sculpture court, a library, an art gallery and an education centre. Hamilton architects were enthusiastic supporters of the fifth function and quoted CIAM member Marcel Breuer who had said, “the Civic Square is a necessary waste of space.”\(^{114}\) When financial problems threatened the scheme, the plan’s commercial side was given priority over the original civic plans and the downtown development would place its emphasis on commerce rather than civics, thereby being more closely connected to the work function. Buffalo would build its downtown convention centre in 1978, which lies outside the time frame for the federally-mandated urban renewal. While Hamilton and Buffalo planners were interested in civic core development, their urban renewal projects more readily reflect the original four functions of the Functional City and the overarching modernist aesthetic with its efficient and streamlined machine look.

The modernist aesthetic, which began with the Deutscher Werkbund and the Bauhaus, and promoted ideals of efficiency, cleanliness, organization, and standardization, would be extra potent when combined with the fervent belief that social good would be the result. Its functional look would appeal to business interests concerned with their downtown investments; housing reformers who wanted to improve living situations for people living downtown; planners schooled in the virtues of the Functional City; as well as politicians keen to improve their city’s image and create new jobs, particularly if government funding was available to make it all happen. The momentum would be contagious and the optimism of the era would encourage the modernist planning ideas to be applied to the urban renewal program. In pursuit of the sanitized and efficient straight line, North American cities adopted comprehensive master plans, cleared blocks of their downtowns, rearranged established street patterns and

encouraged traffic to flow. It offered a rapid way to remove urban problems tied to the ugly slum, and to replace the slum and associated problems with relatively inexpensive buildings constructed in new materials. Businessmen lobbied government officials for modernist urban renewal plans or came up with the funds themselves in order to get the job done. Downtown demolitions allowed modernist architect-planners to mold and create their particular visions on fresh expanses of vacated modernist superblocks, ensuring the clear segregation of functions so that the city could adopt a machine’s efficiency. Urban renewal appeared to offer a convenient solution to the city’s many problems; racial antagonisms, poverty, and an at-risk downtown could all be tackled with the efficient clean-sweep solution. Modernist architecture and planning could be applied to any pressing need; economic problems, social unrest, traffic congestion and even unemployment could all be addressed. The clean and efficient modernist aesthetic had the added benefit of being seen as a quick remedy which responded to the prevailing sense of urgency with its promise of immediate action.

While the consensus was that urban renewal would transform the city, change did not happen fast enough for some. The built environment was seen to need immediate attention after the Second World War and laws were created to ensure the transformation would happen, however a decade after the urban renewal legislation was passed New York architects remained concerned about the look of the city and their role in the struggle against the ugliness they saw around them. They gathered with other concerned citizens in New York City during the spring of 1962 for a conference on “Aesthetic Responsibility.” 115 The architects wanted to be more involved in America’s urban

redevelopment schemes. The Functional City paradigm had inspired the destruction of acres of downtown buildings but architects were not always involved in the rebuilding part of the process. They feared being overlooked entirely as non-architects and package builders were given the jobs to rebuild. It is ironic that the architects felt the need to lobby hard for their part in the urban renewal process when the Functional City ideal, the inspiration for much of the urban renewal destruction, had been developed and promoted by architects a generation before. North American planners, businessmen and government officials had accepted the aesthetic as a way to solve the city’s problems but the architects who endorsed and encouraged the modernist solution were not receiving the contracts they had expected.

At the conference government officials expressed confidence in the architects. Herman D. Hillman, Director of New York City’s Public Housing Administration linked aesthetics to good health and moral, psychological and physical safety and said he expected architects to assist the Public Housing Administration in finding “new and improved solutions of family living.”116 Daniel P. Moynihan, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Labor, told the assembled architects that while conservative forces once saw modern architecture as being associated with political radicalism and that while others saw the modernists’ use of steel and concrete as more expensive than traditional architecture, “a very considerable change” was taking place with business leaders and other powerful individuals starting to accept that the modernist aesthetic would help to make their operations more efficient, which encouraged them to adopt the modernist

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solution. Moynihan made it clear that the U.S. government was now open to the architects’ lobby and asserted that John F. Kennedy, the President of the United States, was interested in adopting modern architecture for government buildings.

Despite this official endorsement of the architects’ role in urban renewal, it was clear that they were being overlooked and non-architects were making important planning and design decisions. In the *AIA Journal*, a month after the Conference report was published, Jane Jacobs pointed out that the legislation and regulation dictated most of the important design decisions for public housing and urban renewal programs and that the zoning laws rigidly controlled what could actually be accomplished. Jacobs criticized architects for being complicit in allowing package builders to play a greater role in how the city was configured and suggested that the architects had only just begun to aggressively confront the situation.

Indeed, the American Institute of Architects’ conference on Aesthetic Responsibility, and its follow-up reports entitled the “War on Community Ugliness,” encouraged architects to get involved in political affairs because they needed the government’s financial backing in order to do their work of transforming and revitalizing the city. Urban renewal advocates had long recognized the importance of community engagement and advocacy, with journals like *Architectural Forum* encouraging business leaders, bankers, realtors, big companies, merchants, architects and journalists to promote

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118 Ibid. Also, Nathan Glazer has dedicated a chapter in his book *From A Cause to a Style*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) to Daniel P. Moynihan and his influence on American architecture, including his successful effort to protect Sullivan’s Guaranty (Prudential) Building in Buffalo, NY.
120 “What is this Quest for Beauty,” *AIA Journal* 44 (3), September 1965, 31.
urban renewal to public officials in order to reshape the “crowded, decaying downtown” using “new and better principles.””121

Architect Richard W. Snibbe called for citizen committees to be established across the United States and for architects to “start the action on a broad scale” by helping to re-educate the general public of the necessity to rebuild using quality designs. Architects were not guiding the growth of the United States, as they had expected to be doing, and while heritage buildings were coming down, they wanted to be more involved in the rebuilding of urban America. City officials had absorbed the modernist message that had originated with modernist architect-planners, but American architects felt they were being excluded from building the quality buildings needed to replace the ones coming down. Snibbe called for: “Progress on a rational basis” and called on architects to ensure communities bowed the line. He expressed concern that the buildings that were being put up were cheap and of low standard. “What a frightening disregard for beauty as a desirable end result of our efforts!” The New York architects established the First Committee on Esthetic Responsibility and Snibbe called on others to “participate in this movement of national necessity.”122

Buffalo answered the call. The Buffalo-Western New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects registered its concern for the “physical ugliness all around us” at their “Symposium on Esthetic Responsibility in our Community” in January, 1963. Architect Douglas Haskell, Editor of Architectural Forum regretted the lack of qualified architects involved in urban renewal as well as the way the land was being cleared without consulting architects from the very beginning of the modernist

George F. Rand, former chairman of the Buffalo City Planning Board, spoke up for aesthetics saying that a “rebuilt downtown area, or a city whose plan is based on beauty as well as economic efficiency, cannot fail to have substantial advantage – esthetic, psychological and thus economic – over its competitors.”

Buffalo Mayor Chester Kowal also showed his concern for the “rapidity with which decay is taking over in our major cities,” Buffalo included. He showed his support for the cause of aesthetics, recommending that cities learn from their past mistakes. Buffalo had just flattened 29 housing blocks in the Ellicott District of the city. As the politicians and architects spoke, the houses were gone but nothing had yet replaced them. The destructive aspect of the modernist aesthetic, the flattening of the old and threatening, was easy to achieve when the prevailing belief was that something had to be done. Destruction by heavy machinery, and even fire in Buffalo’s case, could be accomplished quickly. However, the Buffalo architects were clearly concerned that the rest of the modernist message, the total planning and rebuilding part, had not been fully understood and they wanted to make sure they would be listened to when it came to rebuilding in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

Architects in Hamilton were equally eager to have their say in what their city would look like. As part of a Centennial project marking Canada’s 100th birthday in 1967, the Hamilton Chapter of the Ontario Association of Architects produced a series of articles to demonstrate “how much more pleasant Hamilton could be with sound, comprehensive planning,” as well as calling for the separation of the pedestrian from the

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124 George F. Rand, A Symposium on Esthetic Responsibility in our Community, ibid, 8.
125 Chester Kowal, A Symposium on Esthetic Responsibility in our Community, ibid, 16.
automobile and showing concern for the city’s green space. They called on the city to hire someone to coordinate the redesigned civic square, specifically “an architect and artist who is recognized by his fellow architects as being an outstanding designer and leader.”

The modernist aesthetic’s clean lines and its antipathy for the ways of the past had demonstratively made the transfer across the Atlantic. North American architects were enthusiastic about applying the new look to their cities. The nineteenth century downtowns of Hamilton, Ontario and Buffalo, New York, were considered ugly and in need of renewal. By analyzing these two cities’ urban renewal projects through CIAM’s four functions their modernist heritage will be revealed. CIAM’s idea of making the city functional and efficient by imposing strict functional zones and taking the pedestrian off the street would make sense to many who were raised on the belief that the old parts of their cities were blighted and a threat to the urban environment. The aesthetic would prove to be a very powerful motivating force. It promised to solve urban problems quickly and conclusively with a wrecking ball and a bulldozer. With no interest in monuments, memory or ornamentation, the destruction of historic downtown streets would be accomplished without regret. It was an aesthetic linked to immediate action, and forged at a time of societal upheaval and pressing housing needs. Modernism embodied a style, a look, as well as a cause, and promoted a way of assessing the city through the comprehensive master plan. A consideration of CIAM’s four functions: housing, recreation, work and transportation, and their relationship to the urban renewal projects, help to show how the modernist aesthetic would influence the redevelopment of

the North American city, and specifically the urban renewal projects carried out in Hamilton, Ontario and Buffalo, New York.
Chapter Two
The Ambitious City and the City of Opportunity

The post-war American and Canadian urban renewal schemes offered hope for older cities threatened by the deterioration and hollowing out of their cores, the expansion of their suburbs and the construction of new shopping malls on their peripheries. Hamilton, Ontario, a mid-sized Canadian industrial city, responded enthusiastically to the promise of urban renewal and received more federal dollars per capita from the initiative than any other Canadian city. While urban renewal transformed the look of Hamilton’s downtown, the program itself was tiny when compared to what happened across the US border in Buffalo, New York, a mid-sized American industrial city. Despite the smaller area affected in Hamilton, urban renewal had a major effect on both of these two industrial cities within the context of their particular countries’ urban renewal programs. Both Hamilton and Buffalo’s promoters saw urban renewal as a positive force and they looked forward to the prosperity which they believed the program would usher in. They wanted their cities, and particularly their downtowns, to look modern and to function efficiently. In order to be modern and efficient, like a Functional City, modernist planning techniques would be employed.

As two industrial Great Lake cities who would adopt urban renewal, Hamilton and Buffalo are interesting study subjects because of their similarities as well as their differences. Urban renewal programs and modernist planning techniques would be adopted by both cities despite their racial, historic, physical, economic and national

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differences. Modernism would be welcomed by both these cities and introduced as a positive aesthetic force required to transform their old and outdated look to one of functional efficiency. Separate federal urban renewal funding programs in both Canada and the United States would allow for modernist planning ideas to be applied to Hamilton and Buffalo.

Despite their very different urban realities, both cities’ administrations experimented with city planning before the urban renewal years and both hired modernist architects, trained in Europe, to examine and prepare master plans for their cities. Their early experience with European modernist planning ideas reflects how these ideas entered North America with European architects fleeing the rise of fascism in Europe. In both cities, modernist planning techniques were first introduced by European architect-planners, and then later these ideas were promoted and developed by planners trained in North America. After the Second World War both Buffalo and Hamilton were ready and willing to adopt the now North American modernist planning practices and to enthusiastically apply for urban renewal funding from their respective federal governments when it was made available. Perhaps these cities’ early industrial successes and their striving natures made them particularly vulnerable to the siren call of urban renewal. In any case, the modernist aesthetic would prove to be the common denominator. Not only was the aesthetic a driving inspiration for their ambitions, but if offers an explanation for what happened in these two cities during the urban renewal years.

Buffalo was a much bigger city than Hamilton. With a population of 580,132 in 1950, Buffalo was over twice the size of its Canadian counterpart. Hamilton, a major
centre of urban renewal in the Canadian context, was not encumbered by the racial
hostilities which existed in Buffalo and race was never an issue for Hamilton’s urban
renewal programs. Different in size, national identity, cultural heritage, legal tradition
and racial make-up, Buffalo and Hamilton did however share some commonalities.
They were both Great Lake industrial centres of commerce and steel production, and of
manufacturing and transportation. They both enjoyed growth from the mid-nineteenth
century into the twentieth century, although Buffalo’s growth was much more dramatic.
Benefiting from the close proximity of the Niagara escarpment’s power generation, albeit
on opposite sides of the Falls, both cities were determined that their industrious pasts
would propel them into a future of continued prosperity. Their populations grew as their
industries developed and their city boosters saw future growth as inevitable. Buffalo
proudly referred to itself as the City of Opportunity and was known as the Queen City,
second only in New York State to New York City itself. Hamilton also lived in the
shadow of a large city, proudly wearing the moniker “the Ambitious City” and often
behaving as if in direct competition with Toronto. In 1957 the local newspaper, the
Hamilton Spectator, advertised in a major Toronto daily that Hamilton was “Ontario’s
fastest-growing major city.” Both Hamilton and Buffalo had a sense of entitlement
gleaned from their previous experiences of growth and both shared a hunger for more
growth and the determination to make it happen. Their ambitious natures made them
eager to try something new if it would allow them to prosper.

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While both industrial cities are on the Great Lakes, the urban renewal years marked a time when Buffalo’s industrial clout would begin to pale and Hamilton’s to rise. The St. Lawrence Seaway would open in 1959, cutting Buffalo’s ports off from the Great Lakes network and benefitting Hamilton, as part of the Seaway. Urban renewal would be applied to both cities despite their particular circumstances. One city was poised for more growth while the other fought to hold onto its position of strength. Planners and politicians for each city thought they found the hope their city needed in the urban renewal program. Different as the two cities were, optimism and civic pride remained strong motivators behind their respective city officials’ interest in urban renewal.
A study of Hamilton and Buffalo’s post-war urban experience provides greater insight into urban renewal because of their similarities and their differences, but most of all because of their mutual adoption of modernist planning techniques. To introduce these two cities and their citizens’ enthusiasm for material change and renewal, the story of their city halls - the way they chose to represent their administrations - is an interesting place to start. Their willingness to reject their old city halls and move their city administrators into updated buildings provides an illustrative introduction to these cities, to their growth, their willingness to reject the past and their enthusiasm for the modernizing project. The account of their city halls introduces the comparative approach this dissertation will adopt in analyzing the cities’ urban renewal projects. It also gives some context to the discussion around aesthetics and shows how the Victorian architecture of the classical revivalist schools, harkening back to the past, would be seen as outdated to be superseded by a more modern look reflected in art deco and modernist architecture. Both cities abandoned their Victorian city hall buildings in the twentieth century and chose new modern buildings to reflect their self-identities as cities of the future and to provide functional spaces from which to project their identities. The stories behind their new city halls reflect their ambitious natures and will help to introduce these cities and their situations by the middle of the twentieth century.

Buffalo’s art deco city hall, with its commanding presence between the waterfront and the downtown, proclaimed the city’s 1920’s self-confidence through the building’s mass and height (figure 3.2). Art deco was a new aesthetic which preceded the more straight-edged and flat-roofed modernism. Using machine age techniques, art deco buildings were decorated with geometric patterns, often making reference to ancient
Egyptian and native American designs. Art deco was popular in both Europe and North America in the 1920s and the 1930s but Buffalo’s city hall is seen as representing a particular American aesthetic, “unfettered by European tradition.” ¹³⁰ The architect John J. Wade was inspired by American delineator Hugh Ferriss’ futuristic and romantic architectural drawings of skyscrapers in New York City. Wade described his building as expressing “the masculinity, power and purposeful energy of an industrial community.” ¹³¹ Buffalo’s mammoth city hall was designed for an American industrial city poised for more growth and continued prosperity when its construction began in 1929.

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The *Courier Express* headline for March 3, 1929 announced that the murals planned for inside the City Hall’s elaborate interior “would Emphasize Modern Life” and the sub-head explained that they would “depict romance of present day progress.” The journalist assured Buffalonians that the interior of their city hall would not depict historical events but instead would showcase “life in Buffalo at the present time.”

New York muralist William de Leftwich Dodge painted the city as proud and muscular, flourishing with the wealth wrought from machinery and hard work in his mural entitled “Talents Diversified Find Vent in Myriad Forms” (figure 3.3). Behind the glorification of the industrial city’s muscle and bounty is a cityscape. However, it is not the city of clap-board houses, five-storey brick buildings, warehouses and streetcar tracks familiar to most Buffalonians of the 1920s; this was an imagined city of gleaming skyscrapers, crowded against one another, reaching ever upward. Again, Hugh Ferriss’ “Buildings like crystals. Walls of translucent glass” are reflected in this imaginary future Buffalo. Buffalonians believed they were on the road to increased glory and wealth. Buffalo, the Queen City, saw itself as a modern metropolis worthy of tall buildings and glistening glamour. When Buffalonians looked into the future the saw their city as looking very different from the one they rode by on the tram.

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Across the lobby from this magnificent mural, is another equally beautiful depiction of Buffalo by William de Leftwich Dodge entitled “Frontiers Unfettered by Any Frowning Fortress” (figure 3.4). Again the city is depicted as strong and powerful
and embodies the winged-figure Peace, dominating the centre of the mural. The angelic figure holds helmet-clad warriors representing the United States, looking forward, and Great Britain, turning away. Buffalo, in front of a streetscape of tall buildings and bridges, is shown as the link between the United States and Canada. Thoroughly modern America is represented by a wealthy couple their arms overflowing with luxury consumer goods. The man holds out automobiles, while the woman, dressed in furs, heels and an iconic cloche hat, has jewels and exotic carpets flowing from her arms. Across the bridge is a Canadian woman on one knee pointing towards the United States so that her young son can see the manifestation of progress and opportunity. Behind her are rough Canadian labourers carrying furs and fish. Clearly Buffalonians believed their industrial prowess should be a beacon for all, ignoring that Canada had its own industrial centres, like Hamilton, Ontario, and that Canadians did more than hunt and fish. These images of an opulent, proud city, were inspired during a time of exhilarating growth. Incorporated as a city in 1832 with a population of 8,668 people, jobs and prosperity would attract people looking for work and, almost a century after its founding, Buffalo would be able to boast a population of 573,000 when their art deco city hall was completed in 1931.

Buffalo rejected its Victorian Gothic Revival city hall because it was too small for the city’s projected growth and the city wanted a taller and more modern building style that would reflect its place in the industrial world and its confidence in the future. Buffalo chose a tower to dominate Niagara Square because it did not want its city hall to be overshadowed by the Square’s Statler Hotel. The city was communicating its promise, its power and its modernity when it chose to build the impressive building for its community’s administrators. However, the Art Deco style would not last beyond the

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134 Conlin, 9.
1930s and the physical manifestation of modernity would be very different after the Second World War.

Hamilton, Ontario would choose a modernist design to replace its old stone Victorian city hall. The old building was built in 1888 and was also considered too small for the growing Canadian city. Modernist architect and planner, E. G. Faludi, who drew up the city’s first Master Plan in 1947, said the old city hall (figure 3.5) was obsolete and not able to accommodate an efficient administration. Not only did Faludi consider the stone Romanesque Revival building outdated but he also claimed the building hampered commercial development and “impedes the improvement of traffic congestion,” by preventing the widening of James Street necessary for “the free flow of traffic.”

Nothing was done to answer these criticisms until Hamilton’s city architect, Stanley Roscoe, designed a modernist building in the “International Style” in 1956 for the industrial city’s administrators (figure 3.6) and the old stone city hall would fall to the wrecking ball in 1961.

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135 E.G. Faludi, Master Plan for the Development of the City of Hamilton. (Hamilton: City Planning Committee, March 1947), 43 and 76.
Figure 3.5 – Hamilton’s City Hall on James St. North. Source: Hamilton Public Library, Local History and Archives Department.

Figure 3.6 – Stanley Roscoe’s 1956 “International Style” City Hall. Source: Globe and Mail, September 10, 2012.
A graduate of the University of Manitoba and a modernist, Roscoe was hired by the City of Hamilton in 1951 to be its staff architect for major projects.¹³⁶ He represented a new age in architecture and embraced modernism, introduced to North America as the International Style, an aesthetic that would have a profound impact on both Hamilton and Buffalo during the urban renewal years. His building would represent a sharp break with the aesthetic of the past, and a major generational shift as is illustrated by the debate he had with Hamilton Mayor Lloyd D. Jackson. The mayor wanted to physically transfer the old council chambers into the new building because he wanted to preserve the history and traditions they represented. Roscoe would not entertain such an idea. He strongly rejected Jackson’s entreaties, refusing to move the curtains, the brass rail and the woodwork into the new chambers because, he claimed, technology had moved on and there was no room for the old fixtures in a modern building. The older mayor, unable to convince the young architect of the importance of preserving a link to the past, passed his hand over his brow, as reported in the Hamilton Spectator, and groaned, "Now we will get modern."¹³⁷

Modernist architects intentionally did not want references to the past in, or on, their buildings. There would be no vaulted archways, historic ornamentation or Victorian council chambers to reflect a community’s history. The modernists would reject ornamentation and create flat-roofed buildings with clean sharp lines, often elevating their structures on pilotis, or stilts, to give a feeling of floating volumes. Their buildings would frequently be set back from the street to allow for a large plaza in front of the

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¹³⁶ The city of Winnipeg was influenced by modernism from 1945 through 1975. See Serena Keshavjee, ed. Winnipeg Modern. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press), 2006.
structure. This describes Hamilton’s modernist City Hall, a building that Roscoe believed would be socially beneficial and “give the place dignity yet add the human note so essential in municipal government.” The modernist building was not only to be beautiful but it also was to be functional and reflect a social agenda.

Hamilton’s city architect rejected the old council chambers because it couldn’t be reconciled with the modernist look and how the building would function in the future, just as the city of Buffalo had hired an architect to design a building for the future that would dominate the skyline, and had commissioned a muralist to reflect Buffalo’s current riches and future promise. Both cities saw themselves as progressing and growing towards a positive future and did not want to look back. Buffalonians wanted their city hall to proudly dominate Niagara Square and to embody a look that would compliment the city’s anticipated future of continued growth. Both cities chose modern buildings to reflect their future ambitions, one art deco and the other modernist. The art deco style would not survive the Second World War but modernism, and its emphasis on functionalism, would gain greater and greater acceptance as the style that reflected a new, efficient way to correspond with the machine age. By the mid-1940s the modernist aesthetic would epitomize the new look for buildings and would inspire new planning techniques required to achieve a modern Functional City. Both Buffalo and Hamilton by the 1950s were vulnerable to the modernist siren call and when federal urban renewal funding became available, they were anxious to get started transforming their cities. Just as they rebuilt their city halls in order to reflect their ambitions for the future, they

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wanted their city streets to shake off the dated Victorian look and be renewed. The old architecture would be replaced with something new, as would the old street patterns and city blocks. The modernist urban renewal projects that Hamilton and Buffalo would embark upon would see acres and acres of downtown properties destroyed, reconfigured and rebuilt. During the urban renewal period, when these industrial cities presented their urban cores for major transformation, both Hamilton and Buffalo produced master plans, programs, updates, pamphlets, bulletins, interim reports, statistical profiles and extensive urban renewal studies. While Buffalo’s urban renewal projects were much more extensive and its population much larger than Hamilton’s, they both have been the subjects of academic interest in urban renewal.

Academics have examined urban renewal in both cities, focusing primarily on politics, economics and the social disruption caused by the various projects. In 1970 Paul E. Miller examined the relocation of residents in Buffalo’s waterfront urban renewal project for his PhD thesis entitled “Forced Relocation in Urban Renewal: A Sociological Analysis.” Norman Krumholz demonstrated the complicated and adversarial politics behind Buffalo’s Ellicott District urban renewal project “with the redevelopment agency, the Council, the Mayor’s office and the federal agencies all competing for leadership” in his PhD thesis, “Redevelopment in Buffalo, Ellicott District: The Politics of Urban Renewal.”139 Frank A. Manuele would push the political analysis further and show the

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importance and prominence of the mayor’s office in dealing with the complexities of urban renewal in his examination of the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency which oversaw the city’s eleven urban renewal projects in his 1983 PhD dissertation entitled “The Politics of Redevelopment: the Evolution of the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency.” The way modernist planning practices disregarded the desires and needs of the Ellicott District’s black population is examined by University of Buffalo Architecture and Planning professor, Alfred D. Price in his article “Urban Renewal: The Case of Buffalo, NY,” which was published in 1992 in *The Housing Status of Black Americans*. Urban Studies professor Mark Goldman presents a politically and ethnically divided Buffalo, buffeted by historical forces, which suffered greatly during the twentieth century as federal programs, like urban renewal, proliferated, and local ideas were ignored. He presents the individual citizens’ pain and the damage done to neighbourhoods during the urban renewal years in select chapters of his two books on Buffalo: *High Hopes: The Rise and Decline of Buffalo, New York* and *City on the Edge: Buffalo, New York* which were published in 1983 and 2007 respectively. Racial tensions, political machinations and government greed and ineptitude predominate in these narratives of urban renewal and the modernist aesthetic is given little attention.

The politics behind Hamilton, Ontario’s experience with urban renewal is discussed by Bill Freeman and Marsha Hewitt in *Their Town: the Mafia, the Media and the Party Machine*, published in 1979. It demonstrates how politicians benefited from urban renewal while the needs of the local citizens were ignored. The social displacement of Hamilton residents forced to leave their North End homes was examined by sociologist Franklin J. Henry in his 1974 study, “The Consequences of Relocation: A Study of
Figure 3.8 – Nine priority areas identified for urban renewal in Hamilton, Ontario. Source: Mark P. David, *Urban Renewal Study*, Vol. 2. (Hamilton: Planning Department, 1958).

Hamilton’s North End.” He presents searing examples of the pain the urban relocation caused individuals and their families forced to leave their North End neighbourhoods and how unfairly they were treated by city officials. Robert Harry Riddet’s 1969 MA thesis “Urban Renewal as a Catalyst of Change in Retail Business: The Case of Civic Square, Hamilton, Ontario” shows how difficult the urban renewal experience was for individual merchants who had spent years developing their businesses along King St. West, only to have them destroyed for the superblock.
More recently, historians Danielle Robinson and Brian Robick have examined Hamilton’s struggle to define itself in a more modern world. Robinson looks at the debate between individuals she characterizes as the traditionalists and the modernizers over the future of the Hamilton downtown farmers’ market.\textsuperscript{140} A compromise was achieved in 1959 with the market built under a parking ramp, a modernist structure that physically represented the aesthetic authority of the straight line and the automobile over the historic market (figure 6.10). In his comparative study of Hamilton and Pittsburgh’s urban renewal experiences, Robick documents the various ways blight was called into play to represent the city’s decline during Hamilton’s urban renewal years and how the concept of blight was used to push for redevelopment by the city’s planners and business leaders.\textsuperscript{141}

While these studies help to explain elements of the urban renewal experience for these two cities, particularly by focusing on the story of particular individuals’ dislocations, in addition to the conditions which encouraged the renewal, they do not provide a comprehensive argument as to why so much destruction was undertaken in Buffalo and Hamilton. Here is where the attraction of modernism and the Functional City ideal can provide an answer. The concept and fear of blight helped motivate people to reject the appearance of their city and to work towards a total transformation in order to achieve the modernist ideal. On both sides of the border, the modernist aesthetic would provide a goal to work towards, with its functional solutions represented in the Functional City paradigm. Modernist planning ideas, the clean look of the modernist


buildings and the underlying belief in the positive effects inherent in the efficient, straight line combine to explain why industrial cities like Buffalo and Hamilton enthusiastically accepted the promises of urban renewal and the destruction which it all engendered. Politicians, businessmen and many citizens held great hope in modernist planning practices, which would be accessible to them through their respective federal governments’ urban renewal programs. The goal was to eradicate the old and build new structures while allowing strict zoning to separate the city’s different functions. The modernist Functional City was to be divided into four separate functions: housing, recreation, work and transportation.

The physical transformations in Buffalo and Hamilton help to demonstrate the influence of the modernist Functional City paradigm on urban renewal. These cities also help to demonstrate how modernist functional ideas were transferred from Europe to North America. Just as the architect-planners transferred their ideas for a functional machine-age house to a functional machine-age city in 1933, modernist European architects, who once designed modernist buildings, arrived in both Buffalo and Hamilton to push for modernist transformations to these cities prior to the enactment of the urban renewal legislation.

Immigrating to the United States in 1934, the German modernist Walter Carl Behrendt was hired in 1937 by Buffalo’s City Planning Association to work on a master plan for the city while teaching at the University of Buffalo in addition to directing the city’s newly established Planning and Experiment Station. Behrendt, who promoted modernist ideas in his book *The Victory of the New Building Style*, was concerned about the “disorder and ugliness” of many of Buffalo’s streets in contrast to the grandeur and
order of the city’s well-planned Niagara Square. For the modernist planner who had promoted modernist architecture in Germany, Behrendt could only disapprove of the mixture of buildings “being used for residential or shopping purposes, for store and warehouses, for manufacturing or even industrial purposes” which, he claimed, brought chaos to Buffalo’s downtown streets. For him, like for Le Corbusier, the city was comprised of different parts serving different purposes, and he believed that it was his job to separate and assign each one “to areas which, according to their local and physical features, are best suited to serve these functions.”

He would call for the vibrant and chaotic mixed-use waterfront area to be cleared and turned into an up-market residential zone when his plans for the city were presented at an Albright Art Gallery show called “Buffalo, City of Tomorrow” in January 1940, almost a decade before the urban renewal legislation would come into effect.

Hamilton would also invite a European-trained modernist architect to work on its master plan. Eugenio Giacomo Faludi was a Budapest-born Jew who graduated as an architect in 1929 from university in Rome, Italy. He designed modernist buildings in Italy before immigrating to Canada in 1940. Like Behrendt he started as a modernist architect and became a planner. He established his own planning firm in Toronto and would bring “the principles of modernism to mainstream Toronto planning circles.”

His master plan for the City of Hamilton was presented in March 1947 and delineated different zones for specific land uses while calling for improved traffic flow within the

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143 Mark Goldman, City on the Edge. (New York: Prometheus Books, 2007), 127 and 128.
144 For examples of his modernist houses see: Carpenteria Bonfiglio, La Casa per Vacanza: costruzioni economiche e smontabili. (Milano: Carpenteria Bonfiglio & Co., 1935).
downtown. His ideas would influence urban renewal planners when they began their urban renewal studies of Hamilton in 1957. Faludi and Behrendt, both European modernists, brought their ideas to Hamilton and Buffalo and worked on master plans for these cities. When urban renewal legislation came into effect and federal funding became available, planners born and educated in North America would carry the modernist message forward and push for acres of city blocks to become urban renewal projects.

*The Future of Buffalo – An Action Program for Community Development* was an influential urban renewal document from 1958 which would recommend large scale urban renewal destruction for Buffalo and the strict separation of uses along Functional City lines. It was written by American planning consultants Nathaniel Keith and Carl Feiss. Feiss graduated from the University of Pennsylvania’s architecture program in 1931 and worked in Washington as a planner in slum clearance programs during the 1950s. He believed in the power of science and technology to defeat the urban slum and, while he worked primarily in the United States, he did address the Community Planning Association of Canada in 1956 and encouraged Canadian planners to take action against the slum. His associate, Nathaniel Keith, did not have an architecture background but worked in public relations for the Federal Housing Administration and the National Housing Agency. By 1949 he was Director of Slum Clearance and Urban Redevelopment for the Housing and Home Finance Agency and would present “some of the far-reaching implications” of the newly introduced program for slum clearance and

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146 His obituary in the University of Pennsylvania *Gazette* says that he went on to help create the U.S. Federal Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Perhaps he worked to preserve buildings because of what he saw destroyed as a result of urban renewal. [http://www.upenn.edu/gazette/0598/0598obits.html](http://www.upenn.edu/gazette/0598/0598obits.html) (accessed Oct. 16, 2012).

redevelopment enacted by Congress under Title 1 of the Housing Act to US planners at their national conference in 1949.148 These two planners would look at what they described as Buffalo’s “ugly, drab and dirty” appearance and prescribe major clearance, beyond what had already been achieved in the Ellicott District, to get rid of “the sea of rot and decay” which they saw as engulfing the city.149 The American planners had absorbed the modernist message and applied it in an ever more encompassing way. Another American-educated planner, C. Harry Broley, a graduate from Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, would lead the Arthur D. Little Study for Buffalo’s downtown redevelopment in 1960 (figure 3.9). He, too, would apply modernist planning practices to the city.

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Figure 3.9 – Scale model showing Buffalo’s downtown redevelopment plans from December 1960. C. Harry Broley, in the centre gesturing with his right hand, was a graduate of Harvard’s Graduate School of Design. Mayor Frank A. Sedita is on the left and Charles H. Diefendorf, Chairman of the Greater Buffalo Development Foundation, is on the right. Main St. runs down the centre of the photo with the superbloc for the new shopping mall on the left. Source: Buffalo Evening News, December 8, 1960, Archives, E.H. Butler Library at Buffalo State University.
Hamilton would eventually have a Canadian-born planner presenting his modernist ideas for urban renewal transformation but first a British town planner was hired to work on the city’s first urban renewal plan in 1957, reflecting Canada’s historic ties to Great Britain. The British-trained architect and town-planner Mark P. David was hired to help Hamilton’s Planning Department to improve the city’s official plan. He was to be assisted by the British-born modernist architect, and newly-hired University of Toronto professor, Gordon Stephenson who was trained as an architect in Liverpool. Stephenson had impressive modernist credentials. He trained as a planner at MIT and spent two years at Le Corbusier’s atelier in Paris “where he was deeply influenced by the ideas of Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM).” Hamilton’s first urban renewal study, which was financially supported by Canada’s Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, was completed by David in 1958 and shows a modernist’s typical concern for the blight and deterioration connected to the oldest parts of the city (figure 3.10). The newer outlying parts were seen as sound. The study would recommend nine areas for renewal, eight of which surrounded the central business district (figure 3.8). It would also recommend the construction of new expressways, arterial roads and improved roads for an inner ring transportation system.

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Figure 3.10 – Planning District Grading. Mark P. David identified blighted areas as the oldest parts of the city, shown as the darkest parts. The newer sections were seen as sound while the area below the escarpment, around the “blighted” inner city, was seen as “declining.” The beach areas on Lake Ontario were also identified as “blighted.” Source: Mark P. David, *Urban Renewal Study* Vol. 2 (Hamilton: Planning Department, 1958).

The City of Hamilton would then hire Canadian planner Murray V. Jones in 1964 to produce an urban renewal study of central Hamilton. Like Nathaniel Keith, Jones didn’t have an architectural degree but instead had a degree in Political Science with one extra year of planning education. He came to Hamilton having served as the first Commissioner of Planning for the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board.¹⁵¹ His firm, Murray V. Jones and Associates, would work on plans for Hamilton’s city centre, made possible because of the federal legislation of 1964, which permitted the planning and

redevelopment of commercial areas. Jones would also prepare urban renewal studies for Hamilton’s North End and York Boulevard.

The modernist aesthetic introduced to both Hamilton and Buffalo by European modernist architects, would be later championed by North American planners who would promote comprehensive plans, superblocks, segregated zoning and expressways once the urban renewal legislation was initiated. The aesthetic carried disdain for the ways of the past while promoting streamlined efficiency, which encouraged the industrial cities’ promoters’ enthusiasm for urban renewal. The stories behind Buffalo and Hamilton’s city halls elucidate the cities’ ambitions before the urban renewal years began, as does the hiring of European modernists to produce the cities’ master plans. However, the urban renewal studies drawn up by the North American planners give a clearer illustration of how the aesthetic was connected to urban renewal practices. It is in their work that we see the influence of CIAM’s Functional City paradigm which can be analyzed through the modernist city’s four functions: housing, work, leisure and transportation.
Chapter Three – Housing, The First Function
“A Decent Home and Suitable Living Environment”

The urban renewal projects of Buffalo and Hamilton reflected the modernists’ desire to solve urban problems through the rational application of modernist urban planning techniques. The modernists’ Functional City paradigm, with strict zoning segregation and a strong antipathy for ways of the past, offered a clear model for how the city could be reconfigured which suited the politicians’ and businessmen’s agendas, as well as responding to planners’ and housing reformers’ concerns. When federal government funding became available after the Second World War, the Functional City seemed within reach and planners began to envision distinct zones in order to provide “sound, viable and desirable living and working and leisure areas within the central city,” emphasizing the three functions which would be linked by the fourth, transportation.\(^{152}\)

Housing, or the living area, would be the first function to receive the attention of urban renewal enthusiasts, following the path established by early modernist architects. Concern for housing had inspired the modernist look in the 1920s. Congrès internationaux d’architecture moderne (CIAM)’s initial focus was on housing and in 1929 CIAM members gathered in Frankfurt, Germany to discuss the theme “Die Wohnung fur das Existenzminimum” (the minimum subsistence dwelling). At the Frankfurt congress, called CIAM 2, members focused on the design of the minimum housing unit with Walter Gropius recommending the high-rise apartment as “the best form for the new collective dwellings.”\(^{153}\)


were trying to come up with solutions to the severe housing shortage which plagued Europe after WWI. CIAM wanted to create a minimal dwelling unit designed and constructed specifically for people living on limited incomes. By the 1930s CIAM’s focus on the individual dwelling had developed into a concern for the whole housing district. The house was recognized as an individual cell from which the neighbourhood would take shape, with the housing district playing the most important role in the Functional City, a role reflected in the North American urban renewal plans and legislation of the 1950s and 1960s.

Modernists recognized that a residential neighbourhood’s condition would determine the success of the individual dwelling and they focused their concern on what they described as creeping blight, often connected to overcrowding and unhealthy living conditions blamed on a lack of sunlight and inadequate green space. The “Town-Planning Chart,” which came out of the 1933 Functional City conference, called for “high, widely spaced apartment blocks” in order to “liberate the necessary land surface for recreational purposes, community services, and parking places and provide dwellings with light, sun, air and view.”

In order to improve housing conditions CIAM foresaw the need for land assembly which modernist José Luis Sert would emphasize in the 1940s. “Economic development of small plots in already blighted areas is not generally feasible,” he wrote, “making large scale rehabilitation such as involved in the neighbourhood plan the only way out.” Sert saw the necessity of using eminent domain, called expropriation in Canada, to assemble

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land in order to achieve the goal that upheld CIAM’s modernist aesthetic for the city: modern housing units grouped together in a distinct neighbourhood serving as the most important function within the Functional City. This idea would later manifest itself with the creation of superblocks interrupting neighbourhood streets and altering street patterns in the urban core. In order to achieve ideas like the modernist superblock, government money and legislative authority would have to be forthcoming.

During the Depression of the 1930s, both Canada and the United States legislated to improve the housing situation in their respective countries. After the Second World War this legislation was expanded with National Housing Acts in both countries that would allow modernist planners in North America to begin to follow the aesthetic lead established by CIAM and to act on concerns which had preoccupied North Americans since the turn of the century. Title 1 of the US Housing Act of 1949 provided federal funds for cities to acquire “blighted” land, to condemn the houses on the land and to rebuild in order to provide, as stated in the Act, “a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family.” The Act was revised under Eisenhower’s administration in 1954, allowing for the rehabilitation of housing and including non-residential projects in the program. With the 1954 amendments, the process of condemning and clearing urban neighbourhoods became known as urban renewal.

Similar to the American experience, the Canadian National Housing Act of 1944 first provided federal financial assistance to cities for slum clearance and “land assembly for low or moderate cost rental units.” Slum clearance became urban redevelopment

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with the Housing Act of 1954 allowing the Canadian government to transfer money to municipalities for “the clearance, replanning, rehabilitation and modernization of blighted or substandard areas.” The Act was amended in 1956 to allow the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, now known as the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), to offer financial assistance to municipalities to complete their urban renewal studies, in preparation for the clearance and construction of new residential housing. In 1964 the legislation was widened to include civic improvement plans that allowed cities to “renew” areas that were not necessarily residential neighbourhoods. However the initial thrust of the urban renewal programs in both the United States and in Canada was intended to improve housing in the city, just as the early modernists had tried to do when faced with the European housing crisis of the 1920s.

While North American concern for housing conditions began with the industrialization of the continent’s cities, the anxiety grew during the Depression and continued to be expressed after the Second World War. After over fifteen years of limited housing construction, from 1930 to 1945, housing stock in industrial cities, like Buffalo and Hamilton, was considered dilapidated. At the same time, downtown business interests were concerned that the poor housing conditions and the growth of inner city slums were hampering investment opportunities and threatening the commercial development of the downtown core. Concern was directed towards the central residential areas in both Buffalo and Hamilton because of the general concern for housing conditions, the new suburban developments and the fear that the downtowns were in decline. As John Weaver and Michael Doucet have shown, a new period of state

158 Canada, National Housing Act, 1954, Chapter 23, Section 1.
intervention in the North American housing sector began after the Second World War.\textsuperscript{159} Both the American and Canadian governments’ policies dovetailed with the modernists’ concern for an efficient downtown and improved housing. Modernists wanted to eradicate the slum and the older mixed-use neighbourhoods, and thereby advocated strict zoning and adherence to a master plan. They favoured apartment buildings which allowed sunlight into the units and multi-family housing with simple designs, flat roofs, without ornamentation or historical references. Modernists offered a prescription to bring order and control to urban neighbourhoods which were seen as chaotic, dangerous and unsanitary. Modernist planning techniques promised a Functional City, where efficiency of design and use trumped local traditions, historic buildings and familiar traffic patterns. Both Buffalo and Hamilton were keen to use federal urban renewal money to see their “endangered” city cores transformed into sleek, efficient modern spaces. Of the four functions, housing was considered the first and most important by the modernists. Urban renewal legislation in both countries would first aim to improve housing conditions. Housing would also be the prime focus for the urban renewal programs for Buffalo, New York and Hamilton, Ontario.

\textbf{Buffalo}

In 1937 German modernist architect Walter C. Behrendt drew attention to a goat tethered on a residential street not far from Buffalo’s City Hall, as an example of what was wrong with Buffalo.\textsuperscript{160} For him the goat had no place in a promising metropolitan centre and its presence demonstrated how the dilapidated residential area was spilling

\textsuperscript{159} Michael Doucet and John Weaver, \textit{Housing the North American City}. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Press, 1991), 130.
over and denigrating the downtown core. The sight of a weed-eating goat near the centre of town disturbed his modernist sensibilities which demanded order, zone separation and regularity.

Behrendt saw himself as part of a long tradition of Buffalo planners, starting with Joseph Ellicott, who first laid out the city of Buffalo, and including Frederic Law Olmsted who established the city’s system of parkways and avenues. For Behrendt, modern city planning had become a science that saw the city needing a comprehensive plan to guide its development – it needed a master plan. This master plan would establish housing for low income groups and provide “sufficient air and light and quietness for physical and mental regeneration after work” – ... separating “the residential sections from the industrial districts by large green zones – by parks and playgrounds.”

The enthusiasm for large-scale modernist planning ideas was also expressed in 1944 when Planning Consultant Ladislas Segoe addressed the Buffalo City Planning Association and called for “comprehensive, long-term, overall planning” and redevelopment on a large scale. Although Segoe was not a proponent of slum clearance and was influenced by Patrick Geddes’ ideas about the importance of fostering community as a planner, he would adopt the modernist metaphor of the machine to describe the city. He saw “the modern city as a machine for production, distribution and living which demands that all parts and activities be properly coordinated and geared one to the other, if the urban machine is to function efficiently and economically.”

Housing was one of the functions and Segoe believed Buffalo was going to have to do

161 Ibid.
163 Ladislas Segoe, The Modern City: (An Address to the Buffalo City Planning Association: brochure, March 14, 1944), 1.
something about its substandard residential areas which he blamed on “obsolescence, physical neglect” and the “indiscriminate mixing of conflicting uses.”

The lack of strict zoning was considered a blighting influence by modernists and blight became a major concern for the city as well. In 1941 a comprehensive national survey carried out by the National Resources Planning Board identified Buffalo “as one of the industrial areas in the Middle Atlantic region that is suffering from ‘urban blight.’” Buffalo’s City Planning Association actively promoted the creation of a post-war land-use plan which would revise the zoning ordinance as the “logical first step toward the elimination of present decay and forestalling of future blight.” Master plans, comprehensive or general plans, were the way modernists would attack the problem. In early 1950, Buffalo’s City Planning Commission approved the city’s General Plan which was required in order to be considered for federal redevelopment aid under Title 1 of the new US National Housing Act. Buffalo was quick to provide a General Plan to fulfill the legislation’s demands while satisfying the modernist planner’s desire to redesign the city from above, redeveloping the city by segregating and ordering its functions.

Redevelopment was the term initially used for the razing and the rebuilding of large tracts of land after the Second World War. All of Buffalo’s practicing architects would join the Committee of Architects, Engineers and Landscape Architects for Post-War Construction when it was determined that urban redevelopment was one of Buffalo’s

164 Ibid, 6.
165 “City Seen Suffering From “Urban Blight”, Courier Express, April 9, 1941. (Grosvenor Room Housing Scrapbook), 153.
166 The Buffalo City Planning Association, You Have a Stake in the Future of Buffalo. (pamphlet, 1945)
main post-war issues.\textsuperscript{167} In preparation for the Civic Planning Week activities of February 1945, the committee came up with five redevelopment plans, only one of which included a rehabilitation program. The redevelopment plans all focused on an older residential neighbourhood, east of Michigan Street, an area known as the Ellicott District.\textsuperscript{168} All the plans created by the architects’ committee included a revised street pattern that eliminated through traffic. The newly designed neighbourhoods were to be constructed of multi-family dwellings, in addition to single and two-family homes positioned close to parks. The existing densely-populated neighbourhoods, believed to be “blighted” or “near-blighted,” would be completely rebuilt if enough private capital could be found to make it happen. Buffalo’s Planning Association was keen to promote these ideas in their effort to transform Buffalo into a modern city, through comprehensive planning and improved zoning.

Buffalo planners echoed the modernists disdain for the past by focusing on the established neighbourhoods which were located near or in the city centre. There was no desire to preserve the buildings because they were seen as a blighting influence as were the variety of different activities, or mixed uses, that these neighbourhoods allowed. “The infiltration of mixed commercial and industrial uses” threatened the residential areas.\textsuperscript{169} Blight and, its companion, the slum were blamed for holding the city back and inhibiting the progress which the Queen City felt was her due. In its pamphlet, \textit{Rebuilding Old Buffalo}, the Buffalo City Planning Association made it clear that modern homes could not be forced into “a form built for horse and buggy needs.” They claimed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{168} “Areas Calling for Improvement,” \textit{Buffalo Evening News}, Feb. 27, 1945 (Grosvenor Room, Housing in Buffalo and Vicinity Scrapbook, Vol 1), 131.
\item \textsuperscript{169} City of Buffalo, \textit{Redevelopment Plan for the Ellicott District RedevelopmentProject}. (Grosvenor Room, HT 177 .B8 A24.),1957?.
\end{itemize}
that Buffalo needed “livable” communities “where normal and wholesome family life can exist” and the only way to achieve such communities was through “complete replanning and LARGE SCALE rebuilding.”¹⁷⁰ They claimed that one third of the total dwelling units in Buffalo were substandard. They blamed the traffic running through neighbourhoods for creating noise, fumes and danger and said that industry in residential areas “kills beauty, lowers land values, hastens blight and forces tenants to seek more desirable locations.”¹⁷¹ The old neighbourhoods were seen as overcrowded, lacking light and air, and being unsanitary; all of which caused them to be a tax burden, costly to the city because of fire and police protection costs. Most worrisome, these old central districts were seen as a threat to the city’s future growth. The old neighbourhoods were given as the reason people were leaving the city and moving to the suburbs.

The slum discourse would increase after the Second World War. In 1946, Health Inspector Frank J. Leary claimed that it was not the buildings that made the slum but people who had to bear the responsibility. “A lot of rattletrap buildings should be torn down,” he said. “But even if every home in the city were modern, we’d still have sanitation problems.”¹⁷² He pointed out that there were properties in rundown sections of the city that were neat and clean while there were also examples of poor living conditions in some of the best districts. While he spoke from experience, most government officials and the general public were not willing to withdraw their categorical scorn for the older neighbourhoods and the belief in modernist large-scale action. The conventional wisdom was that the older neighbourhoods were a threat to the city and were not worth

¹⁷⁰ Buffalo City Planning Association Inc., Rebuilding Old Buffalo. (pamphlet, 1943?)
¹⁷¹ Ibid.
retaining. Needless to say, the overcrowding, which many people associated with slum conditions, was the result of the residents’ poverty, and for African-Americans, who were subject to racist housing restrictions, they often had no place else to go.

Buffalo’s urban redevelopment plans were from the very start connected to public housing, with the Municipal Housing Authority (MHA) designated as Buffalo’s official Redevelopment Agency. In 1949, the City Planning Commission and the MHA established a Redevelopment Study Area in order to receive federal redevelopment funds under Title 1 of the new US Housing Act. The Redevelopment Study Area encompassed the entire old part of the city, which was described as “a blighted mixed-use district containing some of the city’s oldest housing.” In their 1951 report the Planning Commission included a composite picture showing the Redevelopment Study Area as the source of substandard housing, welfare, juvenile delinquency and tuberculosis which they illustrated with four maps, demonstrating their “blight factor studies” (figure 4.1). The old city was seen as the source of society’s problems, blame was assigned and the proposed modernist solution was to be large-scale redevelopment and the eradication of the problems through mass destruction.

Two of the oldest neighbourhoods within the Redevelopment Study Area would be identified as having the worst slums: the Waterfront and the Ellicott Districts. Positioned on Lake Erie as the terminus for the New York State Erie Canal, with a large and important in-land port, Buffalo had a long-standing historic relationship with its waterfront. However instead of celebrating the neighbourhood’s maritime past, Buffalo,
wanted to appear modern and efficient, and would move away from its connection to the water, and its history. City officials would demolish the historic buildings, fill in the canal and eventually build a wall of highways and buildings to separate the city from the waterfront community known as Dante Place. The physical links to the rowdy sailors, and the Italian immigrants who replaced them on the waterfront, would be bulldozed away after the waterfront area was declared a slum and in need of redevelopment. NY state housing commissioner, Herman T. Stichman, claimed, the waterfront slum “was one of the worst I had ever seen anywhere.”

New York State actively supported modernist urban redevelopment to solve the perceived slum problem, before the federal legislation was drawn up. In 1941 its state legislature enacted the Urban Redevelopment Act which allowed municipalities, like Buffalo, to use eminent domain for slum clearance. The historic Erie Canal was filled in and buildings, dating from the mid-nineteenth century, were destroyed. With funding advanced by the state, the Municipal Housing Authority purchased a paint factory, an elevator company and Mount Carmel Church and felt confident that they could take over the other 40 properties. If the owners were not willing to sell, the authority would force the owner’s hand “by going to condemnation in any case where an agreement cannot promptly be worked out within the appraised price.”

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As Buffalo historians Vogel, Patton and Redding recounted,

The Commercial Block of 1850 crumbled, along with the Beals, McCarthy and Rogers buildings on The Terrace, with their dozen Roman-arched portals that once faced the Canal. Down, too, came the Monarch Elevators, the old Lake and Canal Store building at Water and LeCouteulx, the former E. Workman Grocery and Provisions store with its marker stone proclaiming the corner of Canal and Evans, and the aging Maiden Lane buildings with their double chimneys, slanted roofs and rectangular windows with gray stone lintels. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church succumbed, too. Among the last hold-outs to sell were Libby and Joe Gullo, who left the Peacock Grill for another business uptown.\footnote{Vogel, Michael, Edward J. Patton and Paul F. Redding, \textit{America's Crossroads: Buffalo’s Canal Street/Dante Place}. (Buffalo: Heritage Press, 1993), 340.}
Condemnation proceedings forced out the 60 remaining families and 90 people were moved off Dante Place to be housed in city housing projects away from the waterfront. With state funding, and a long-standing desire to rid the waterfront of “one of the city’s most blighted areas,” the remnants of the canal days were destroyed and replaced with seven brick cruciform apartment buildings (figure 4.3).\textsuperscript{178} Their cruciform form was reminiscent of Le Corbusier’s towers in his Plan Voisin from the 1920s which he presented as a more rational approach to city living.\textsuperscript{179} The modernization process, harnessing the power of the seven cruciform towers’ residential function, had purified the area – the historic markings were erased and the mixed use was no longer tolerated.

When construction began in October 1950, the new towers were heralded as “a new chapter in the history of this plot of ground that has in its soil the blood, the sweat and tears from the whole evolution of this great city,” by J. Eugene McMahon, chairman of the Municipal Housing Authority.\textsuperscript{180}

Just as early European modernists had developed their ideas by designing working-class housing, Buffalo’s modernist urban renewal experiences began with public housing. Initially called the Dante Place Housing Project, the 616 housing units in the seven twelve-storey buildings were the first public housing project completed in Buffalo since World War II. At the dedication of the buildings in September 1953, Buffalo’s mayor


\textsuperscript{180} \textit{The Buffalo Evening News}, October 10, 1950. (Grosvenor Room, Housing in Buffalo and Vicinity Scrapbook, vol. 2), 216.
called the project “a most welcome addition to our face-lifting operations going on along the waterfront.” Their construction exemplified the modernist desire to turn away from the past and to segregate the city according to function. The towers were to be purely residential – the other businesses and even the local church were no longer welcome. The city had big plans for the waterfront but they would have to wait until the area could officially be identified as an urban renewal area in order to receive federal funding. The Municipal Housing Authority “felt that a modern, well-maintained, multi-

story public housing project would stabilize the residential section of the waterfront and stimulate further reclamation of the area.”\textsuperscript{182} The historic waterfront, seen as derelict and slum-like, was transformed into “a functional modern residential district.”\textsuperscript{183} Eventually the Dante Place project would be the prototype for two massive public housing projects in the Ellicott District, and Dante Place would provide housing for many of the displaced people whose homes were destroyed to accommodate the two Ellicott District projects.

Dante Place’s seven cruciform towers resembled a Le Corbusian solution for ideal housing except for the fact that they were not situated in the flat parkland, which was recommended for modernist towers, but were crowded up against the harbour (figure 4.4). This would prove a major concern for the families of the 1309 children who were moved into the housing project which was perilously close to water with limited enclosed play areas.\textsuperscript{184} The project also began to be criticized for being dirty and poorly maintained. Reporters investigating the issue feared that the buildings would revert to the level of the slums they had replaced.\textsuperscript{185} The area was going to change again. Once the Ellicott District housing projects were completed, the waterfront towers would no longer welcome low income tenants but were converted into a middle income housing coop in 1960 and the tenants would be moved back to the newly constructed towers in the Ellicott District. This situation would outrage architectural critic Jane Jacobs, who mentioned

\textsuperscript{182} Ernie Gross, “Public Housing in Buffalo Marks 20 Years of Progress Under Local Authority,” \textit{Buffalo Evening News}, October 30, 1954, 7.
\textsuperscript{184} Mildred Spencer, “1309 Children in Dante Place Creates a Recreation Problem,” \textit{Buffalo Evening News}, (Grosvenor Room, Housing in Buffalo and Vicinity Scrapbook, vol. 2), 226.
\textsuperscript{185} Vogel, Michael, Edward J. Patton and Paul F. Redding, \textit{America’s Crossroads: Buffalo’s Canal Street/Dante Place}. (Buffalo: Heritage Press, 1993), 345.
Figure 4.4 - Dante Place project in the background and the nearby harbour slip where a boy drowned, April 27, 1957. Source: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.

Buffalo in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*: “A new project, much like Dante Place, has been built in another part of town, and the inhabitants of Dante Place are to move there to fester so Dante Place can be salvaged – which means so it can be converted to a middle-income project.” The conversion also meant that the most racially integrated public housing project in Buffalo became virtually an all-white cooperative, with the African-American residents forced back across Main St to the lower east side. The complex would lose its tenants and then its name. As of August 1960 it

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would be known as the Marine Drive Apartments and the four streets (Dante Pl, Marine Drive, Port St. and Water St.) surrounding the buildings would all be called Marine Drive.\textsuperscript{188} The memories of the old canal days and the era when Italian immigrants dominated the area were effectively wiped off the map and replaced with a name more reflective of the image of middle-class recreational boating, which is what some politicians wanted the waterfront to become: a recreational area for the middle class and the city’s next urban renewal area. First, however, attention would turn to the Ellicott District where a modernist solution was being considered to stem the fear of the encroaching blight and the expanding slum.

In 1950 the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency no longer allowed Buffalo’s Municipal Housing Authority to direct and administer slum clearance work.\textsuperscript{189} The city itself became the direct contact with the federal government, and then hired the MHA to continue its work on slum clearance. In the early 1950s the US government was moving away from European-style social housing and “saw a shift towards more individualistic market-based ideologies.”\textsuperscript{190} However slum clearance was still seen as necessary for the city’s salvation and the displaced had to have somewhere to go. While the state-financed Dante Place housing project was being constructed in 1951, the MHA announced two new public housing developments to be constructed on cleared land in the Ellicott District with additional blocks cleared for recreation land. The District was formally presented as a possible area for urban redevelopment in 1949 and again in 1952.

Reporters and photographers provided lurid descriptions of unhealthy living conditions in the predominantly African-American neighbourhood, and a campaign to clean up the Ellicott District was launched by local leaders. Leaky roofs, rotting staircases and rodent infestations were exposed. Negligent landlords were castigated, as was the city for a setting a bad example by not cleaning up city-owned parkland while punishing citizens for health violations.\textsuperscript{191} However it was the Ellicott District community which was mainly criticized for “doing nothing to overcome sickening conditions” and was thereby forced to accept the slum-elimination project.\textsuperscript{192}

Widespread claims about the spread of blight were substantiated by surveys conducted in the Ellicott District. In one small section of the redevelopment area, one-third of the 233 houses surveyed were deemed “not suited for continued human habitation.”\textsuperscript{193} Damning photos were displayed in the city’s newspapers. One showed a house with a messy front yard next to a clean front yard with the tenant holding a broom. “She scrubs her seven children, cleans her four-room house and sweeps her grassless yard daily,” read the caption.\textsuperscript{194} Eight City Court judges toured the District to see conditions first hand in preparation for new hearings planned for housing standard complaints which would be addressed in the special housing section of City Court. Reporting on the judges’ neighbourhood tour the newspaper used quotation marks around the word “homes” to show how uncomfortable and distant the general public felt about the housing conditions.

\textsuperscript{192} “Ellicott Cleanup Drive Can Inspire City to End Lethargy Toward Slums,” \textit{Buffalo Evening News}, July 26, 1951 (Grosvenor Room, Housing in Buffalo and Vicinity Scrapbook, vol. 2), 168.
\textsuperscript{194} “Personal Initiative Can Make This Much Difference in Elliott Cleanup,” (Grosvenor Room, Housing in Buffalo and Vicinity Scrapbook, vol. 2), 186.
conditions the judges encountered in the Ellicott District. The city’s two daily newspapers, frequently running stories on the living conditions in the Ellicott District during the early 1950s, “were implicitly arguing for major redevelopment of the area” and “many observers were increasingly framing the issue in terms only of wholesale redevelopment as the best possible alternative.” This solution reflected the modernist approach to dealing with the perception of widespread slums and the fear of growing blight.

While many believed the houses had to be cleared, there was evidence that not every house was beyond redemption. A housing quality survey carried out by the Erie County Health Department found “that 15 to 20 percent of the buildings scattered throughout the project area should be demolished” and that the majority simply needed repairs to make them acceptable by minimum standards. This was typical. Urban renewal figures nationwide showed that almost 40 percent of the homes destroyed in the US were in reasonable condition. Property owners in the Ellicott District rightly feared for the future of their community.

The owners’ protests proved ineffectual and the Municipal Housing Authority persevered with its plan to destroy 399 structures representing 771 dwelling units and 34 stores. The two public housing projects were to provide 1328 housing units, a net increase of 557 homes in projects which would look like Dante Place. Site A, the Talbert Mall, would provide 768 units in twelve cruciform towers in the area bounded by

Clinton, Jefferson, South Division and Spring. In addition to the buildings which would be destroyed to accommodate the towers, Vary, North Division and Eagle Streets between Jefferson and Spring would be closed to allow for the land assembly. Site B, Ellicott Mall, would have 560 units in eight cruciform towers inside the area bounded by Eagle, South Division, Pine and 100 feet east of Michigan St., so that Michigan Street businesses would not be compromised. Portions of North Division and Chestnut Streets would be closed to assemble the necessary land for the towers.

The two housing projects were to be called the Talbert Mall and the Ellicott Mall after local historical figures. Mary B. Talbert was an early African-American social worker in Buffalo and Joseph Ellicott made the original surveys of the city. Francis Slaby, who suggested the names said that “the word mall, meaning a tree-lined promenade, has a nice village flavor to it.”\(^{199}\) The people of the Ellicott District might have thought they were going to get a village atmosphere, with historic references attached to the housing projects, but instead it was to be a massive impersonal tower development, similar to Le Corbusier’s drawings of urban towers, with no obvious link to a village, or to their collective past. The towers and vacant superblocks meant that familiar roads were reconfigured and erased to create an unfamiliar and bleak modernist landscape.

Figure 4.5 - Le Corbusier’s Plan Voisin, Modernist vision for Paris, France, 1925. Source: Le Corbusier, The Radiant City, 207.

Figure 4.6 – Buffalo’s Ellicott District with the eight towers of the Ellicott Mall to the left and the twelve towers of the Talbert Mall on the right. The tower look similar to Le Corbusier’s Plan Voisin. Source: Buffalo Courier Express, Archives, Butler Library, Buffalo State College.
While the land was being razed for the housing projects, a much larger area of the Ellicott District was approved for redevelopment under Title 1 of the 1949 Housing Act. This was Buffalo’s first official federally-funded urban renewal project. Streets were closed to “provide a self-contained neighbourhood from which through traffic could be eliminated” and housing, stores and industries were cleared within the area bounded by Michigan, William, Swan and Jefferson Streets. Redevelopment planning in Buffalo was integrated with the Municipal Housing Agency and the City Planning Commission, which drew up the construction blueprints. Needy people displaced by this much larger clearance area would be housed in the new towers. Buffalo’s first urban renewal project under the 1949 legislation would contain modernist elements: land assembly on a massive scale, cruciform apartment towers to provide a healthier living environment, creation of superblocks, the elimination of industrial and commercial mixed uses from the area, a disregard for the history and traditions of the neighbourhood and the belief that they could remove and immediately solve difficult social challenges.

The towers were supposed to be a huge improvement over the crowded frame housing of the district because the seven-storey cruciform buildings would ensure “plenty of light and air to every apartment” which was the modernist architects’ goal. In addition, 13 acres of grass and play areas would be added to the community. The buildings were touted as “modern structures in pleasant surroundings” which would replace “substandard housing and blight.” The modernist practice of assembling land

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203 Ibid.
in order to build cohesive neighbourhoods with limited through traffic was seen as beneficial to public housing projects and the slum neighbourhoods from which they grew. The twelve Talbert towers were designed by the architecture firm James William Kideney Associates. Kideney predicted that his creations would help the slums to gradually become “areas of beauty, happiness and pride.” Public housing success, he thought,

lies in good over-all planning to co-ordinate all land and building improvements into a whole neighborhood of good living which will induce private builders to erect new homes in order to take advantage of the parks, recreational centre, educational developments and other facilities available to all residents of the area.204

The modernist architect-planner believed his buildings would solve the community’s problems. Site B, the Ellicott Mall, with 565 units was designed by the architectural firm Bachus, Crane and Love. The modernist towers were supposed to rescue the entire district and bring substantial benefits to the entire city by reducing the costs of these neighbourhoods. In they early 1950s, modernist planning practices were viewed with great optimism. Not only were they going to save the city from blight but they were going to save taxes as well. Streets were to be eliminated which would reduce the costs of “lighting, cleaning and snow and ice removal.” So when NY State Housing Commissioner Herman T. Stichman walked through the slums of the state’s cities and realized how much needed to be done he became enthusiastic about turning the talk into action.205 The modernist planning techniques held great promise. Given that politicians

204 Ibid
205 Ibid.
and government officials thought they had a win-win solution, immediate action was called for.

Action against slums was also what a group of Buffalo businessmen wanted and the modernist solution appealed to them as well. Calling themselves the Buffalo Redevelopment Foundation, the businessmen joined together to promote local planning programs which would be “conducive to private investment in the city” and to encourage the further transformation of the Ellicott District. In preparation for Redevelopment Week, planned for October 1956, the Chairman of the Foundation warned community leaders that “indifference could undermine the city’s redevelopment plan.” He told them that “Buffalonians must know why and how urban renewal demands an immediate, hard-hitting action” and that the leaders had “an opportunity to implant an ideal in men’s minds – an ideal of a new Buffalo, a clean, wholesome city, free from the ravages of slums and blight.”

“A series of action projects based on an intensive and continuing inventory of the city’s needs, problems and goals for future growth,” were recommended by redevelopment consultant Nathaniel S. Keith who had worked with his associate Carl Feiss on redevelopment projects in Baltimore, Rochester and Washington, DC. The consultants recommended that the Ellicott District plan be acted upon and that the next urban renewal residential project on the Waterfront be initiated. They then encouraged the city to actively seek out larger neighbourhoods requiring “comprehensive urban

renewal treatment” and to apply for new urban renewal project grants from the federal government.\textsuperscript{209}

Immediate, comprehensive, large-scale, plan-driven urban renewal was seen as necessary. The consultants did not only call for one action but a “multitude of actions.”\textsuperscript{210} Their report \textit{The Future of Buffalo}, which they began working on in July 1957, called for “a city-wide action program” as they outlined “the urgent need for a complete program of urban renewal.”\textsuperscript{211} Their report embodied modernist thinking and modernist solutions for Buffalo. After listing their ten objectives, which primarily called for improvement, streamlining and modernization of the city – often in an efficient and economical way – they framed the first part of the report using the modernists’ four functions: housing, work, recreation and transportation. The consultants recommended that the city be rebuilt to conform to the ideal of the Functional City with its four functions ensuring a true separation of uses.

Keith and Feiss described Buffalo as old and out of date. They said out right that “much of the city is ugly, drab, and dirty” and claimed that “much of the city badly needs a coat of paint.”\textsuperscript{212} While most of the city might have needed a cosmetic touch up, the consultants advocated a much more drastic treatment for “at least one-third of the city’s residential area.”\textsuperscript{213} Their prescription was “a complete clearance of substandard housing or housing which is no longer efficient to maintain because of deterioration, lack of essential facilities for satisfactory living, and undesirable neighbourhood influences.”

\textsuperscript{209} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{210} Nathaniel Keith and Carl Feiss, \textit{The Future of Buffalo: An Action Program for Community Development}. (City of Buffalo, June 1958), intro.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{212} Ibid, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{213} Ibid, 8.
They considered the Ellicott Redevelopment Project’s massive clearance plans as a positive attempt at reshaping “an obsolete pattern of streets, lots and blocks into a more modern type of residential neighbourhood” but for them the District was a small problem within a much larger area of deterioration. They wanted action for all of Buffalo and called for the clearance to radiate from beyond the Ellicott District into the “sea of rot and decay” which threatened to engulf the city.\textsuperscript{214} The next steps were to be the Waterfront area and the Masten Park district. Following the rebuilding of those two residential areas, more redevelopment was planned for Lakeview-Allen-Johnston Park, Perry St, Thruway Industrial Parkway, Forest Avenue, North Ellicott, East Side, West Hopkins and Hamelin Park. They printed a “recommended priority schedule” which showed the “execution” of the plans for the Ellicott District beginning in 1958, the year the report was published, and then each of the eleven proposed projects was given a date for when the planning would begin and when the construction and rehabilitation would be completed with dates projecting into 1972.\textsuperscript{215} They imagined the sixties in Buffalo as a time of major destruction for Buffalo’s built environment. The renewal areas would start in the oldest part of the city and radiate out in a fan of massive clearance, fulfilling the modernist agenda.

The old buildings were not considered functional, nor were they considered attractive. They were decidedly not modern. Older neighbourhoods were associated with the encroaching blight and slums which were termed Buffalo’s No. 1 problem.\textsuperscript{216} Keith and Feiss saw the old housing stock of the city as being without merit. Even if the houses were initially well built, they saw old buildings as being obsolete through overuse: “like

\textsuperscript{214} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid, 80.
\textsuperscript{216} Ibid, 14.
an old car, they are just worn out.” Perhaps they would have agreed with Le Corbusier’s idea that houses were machines to live in. Although it is not clear whether Le Corbusier thought his machine houses would ever wear out. His aesthetic represented a solution for the city’s current problems, without any respect for the past. This attitude was also reflected in urban renewal’s disdain for the past and pressure for immediate action. While new plans were imagined and promoted by Keith and Feiss, the urban renewal clearance and rebuilding was actually being carried out in the Ellicott District. The public housing projects were under construction and over 160 acres surrounding the towers were slated for clearance. After over a decade of politicking, discussion and

Figure 4.7 – Ellicott District Redevelopment Study 1951 showing the mixed land use. Residential, commercial and industrial land uses were mixed throughout the area. Note how the residential and commercial uses were combined all along William Street at the top of the redevelopment area. Source: Robert Traynham Coles, “Community Facilities in a Redeveloped Area: A Study and Proposal for the Ellicott District in Buffalo, NY.” (MA diss. MIT, Sept. 1955), figure 5.

217 Ibid, 15.
anxiety directed at the old, poor and increasingly African-American neighbourhood, final approval was granted for New York State’s first Title 1 clearance program on July 9, 1957.

The huge clearance operation would begin in September 1959 and the displaced families began to move into the Ellicott Mall project in March 1959. Three city blocks separated Ellicott Mall’s eight towers from the twelve towers of the Talbert Mall. At the time, Bill Marcus, a reporter for the Buffalo Courier Express called the reality of these modernist towers disenchanted. “On the architect’s drawing board, they look beautiful. Once built, they look cold and forbidding to many persons.”

They undoubtedly would look colder and more forbidding when surrounded by the flat desolation of the cleared land, which had once been home to 2,219 families (figure 4.9). The community’s 1,235 buildings were razed. Their frame homes were bulldozed and then, to save money, the city allowed the debris to be burnt down to the flat earth. Leaving a smooth, if smoldering, canvas on which privately-financed modern housing could be built. It was a victory for modernist planners who were opposed to the mixing of residences, industry and commerce. The Sanborn insurance maps of the Ellicott district show that while the neighbourhood was primarily residential there were stores and industry scattered throughout the neighbourhood. Lumber yards, factories, a candy maker, a brewery, machinery shops and bottling works were part of the community but they were all erased in the renewal. Approximately 250 small

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219 “Since 1954, Project is Haunted by City Haggling,” Buffalo Courier Express, July 25, 1963, 3.
neighborhood-orientated businesses such as restaurants, taverns, grocery stores and laundromats would also be erased from the neighbourhood. The southside of William Street from Michigan to Jefferson Streets had been lined with businesses which were all destroyed so that the William Street could be widened (figure 4.8). Also destroyed were the accommodations in the upstairs flats located above the stores, which represented a mixture of uses, so disparaged by modernists who wanted to isolate the different functions. The flattened, 161-acre expanse surrounding the towers was truly a modernist achievement of flat uncompromising potential. However that potential would lie vacant for many years while politicians argued over what type of housing to build and who would be given the construction contracts.

![Shops along the Ellicott District’s William St with apartments above. The entire south side of William St would be razed and the street widened. Source: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, file 137 – 299 William St.](image)

Figure 4.9 - An aerial view of the Ellicott District Project, April 1963. Talbert Mall and Jefferson Avenue in the foreground with Ellicott Mall, Michigan Avenue, the downtown and the harbour in the distance. Source: Buffalo Courier Express, Archives, Butler Library, Buffalo State College.
The modernist flattening undertaken by bulldozer and fire had not solved Buffalo’s problems and the empty expanse was seen as blocking the city from accessing further urban renewal funding for more destruction. The *Buffalo Evening News* ran a front page editorial entitled “The Shame of a City” demonstrating the universal frustration with the process and the fear that “the ineptitude, the bickering, the greed which have marked this proposal have sent the Buffalo city government down in the eyes of the federal officials as the poorest city in the country with which to do business.”

The flattened 29-block scar and the political bickering persisted for years. The demolition of the over 1200 buildings which began in September 1959 and was completed by June 1961 would result in frustration. In 1964 George Ramussen wrote that the large expanse of vacant land, so near the downtown, “could lead naïve light plane pilots to assume the city was constructing a landing strip for them next to the biggest retail area.”

Nature did not leave the strip totally vacant, weeds grew on the piles of upturned, burnt land turning it into what newspapers called a jungle with tall trees marking where streets had once been. In recognition of the tenth year for the urban renewal project, Richard Hirsch of the *Buffalo Courier Express* described it this way:

> Take 161 acres in the heart of a city, bounded by William St., Jefferson Ave, Swan St. and Michigan Ave. Move the residents away. Bulldoze and burn about 1,200 buildings. Fill up the excavations. Let the weeds grow. Let the land be covered with garbage and broken wine bottles. This is what it looks like today.

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224 The sources differ on the actual start date for Buffalo’s first urban renewal project. Some say it began in 1947 as a women’s organization’s dream, others put the date at 1949, 1950, 1952 and 1953. The Ellicott project was New York State’s first large federally-funded urban renewal project and most newspaper sources connect this milestone to the date 1952. Government documents say that the Ellicott district was first formally presented to Common Council in January, 1950.
The Urban Renewal Department admitted that the Ellicott district looked like it was destined to become a “veritable jungle” and that “instead of eliminating blight, the very purpose of urban renewal, a weed-infested pestilence was inflicted upon the community.” In its 1965 report the Urban Renewal officials claimed to have learned of the “efficacy of phased acquisition and demolition” as opposed to the total clearance that they had practiced from 1959 to 1961 in the Ellicott district. They may have felt contrite about the past but they remained exuberant about urban renewal’s future. Clearly

the flattened landscape represented some kind of victory and the modernist desire to take action against the other old parts of the city remained strong, despite the glaring failures. Modernist destruction remained the accepted solution to urban problems, even though the Ellicott project was still incomplete. In 1963 three new urban renewal projects were in the planning stages and needed federal support. The federal government threatened to refuse consideration of these projects if the stalemate over housing in the Ellicott District was not resolved. The potent desire to keep the federal urban renewal gravy train flowing brought an end to the political bickering in the Ellicott District and the competing developers were given the opportunity to start building both the model homes and the rental apartment units.

Figure 4.11 - Model homes in the Ellicott District, October 1964. Source: *Buffalo Courier Express*, Archives, Butler Library, Buffalo State College.
“From this site is going to grow one of the most beautiful things you’ve ever seen,” said Councilman Delmar E. Mitchell to a prospective homebuyer, standing amidst the acres of empty land which stretched east from Michigan Street. The proposed houses would definitely be different from what the neighbourhood had known before. Where narrow clapboard houses had once stood close together on 25 feet frontages, the developer would insert new model homes with brick and aluminum-siding exteriors and much larger frontages as if they had been transplanted from suburbia (figure 4.11). Indeed, “the six new houses, with their fully-seeded lawns, look much like homes in a modern suburban development, although they are only a few blocks from downtown Buffalo,” reported the Buffalo Courier Express. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) protested the high costs which they claimed were equal to the costs of a suburban home. “Many Negro families who moved out of the area had the idea they’d like to move back,” said the Rev. Porter W. Phillips Jr., but a large percentage could not afford the elevated prices. Indeed, after the houses sat vacant for a year, Hartford, the developer, was only able to attract renters for the model houses. Hartford had to rescind its contract with the city to build 150 homes.

Hope now turned to Urban Properties Inc., the other developer, to transform the vast wasteland “into an attractive community, providing new modern apartments at rents within the reach of those in the modest-income brackets.” The first 39 units were fully rented when the initial two-storey, flat-roofed, brick apartment buildings were completed.

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230 “Removal of Roadblock in Ellicott District,” Editorial, Buffalo Courier Express, August 7 1964, 12.
in late August, 1965. More apartment buildings were called for. The low-rise walk-ups were called Towne Gardens to “represent the fresh attractive future of Buffalo’s first rental housing through urban renewal” and the community’s roads were renamed to give the community more of an up-market feel with names like Bedford Court, Oxford Court, Cambridge Court and Essex Lane. With optimism growing, concern was expressed “about the appearance of neighborhoods surrounding the project area.” Despite the acres of empty land which still made up large parts of the Ellicott Urban Renewal Project, more urban renewal was seen as necessary for the residential area north of William Street where many Ellicott District residents had moved after the destruction of their homes. This proposed urban renewal area was called the Masten General Neighborhood Renewal Plan (GNRP). The city had presented it as a possible urban renewal project in 1957 but the federal government still had not approved the project in 1963. To encourage the federal government to open its urban renewal purse strings, Buffalo put more effort into the rehabilitation of its neighbourhoods, produced a master plan for the city and a housing code to comply with tightening federal requirements, but the Ellicott project still languished.

The Ellicott project was a disappointing failure which should have been foreseen before the clearance began, however the belief in the modernist solution was so powerful planners would continue to ask for more clearance. With modernist hubris they believed they could solve the blight to the north and to the east of the city centre, just as they had forced modernist clean-sweep planning ideas on to the Ellicott District. This flattening of

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232 “All Signs Point To Ellicott Project Acceptance,” *Buffalo Courier Express*, August 8, 1965, 1-B.
the old, in order to start again fresh, was the idea behind the first urban renewal project and could also be used to explain its bitter failure, but city officials still called for more destruction. Urban renewal money and plans were recommended for the Masten community’s 767 acres and formally presented to the federal government by Council in 1957. Four times as large as Buffalo’s first redevelopment project in the Ellicott District, the Masten General Neighborhood Renewal Plan would involve over 5,000 houses in a scheme which called for redevelopment, rehabilitation and conservation. In addition, the Hamelin Park Neighbourhood, to the north-east of Masten, would undergo rigorous code enforcement. While city officials recognized that Masten District’s Fruit Belt was “basically a good, self-contained neighborhood of modest but well maintained homes,” they still saw “the unmistakable evidences of blight” and felt that they still had “time to stamp them out.”

The “blight” was exacerbated by the demolitions progressing in the Ellicott district to the south. Exiles from the destruction were moving into the Masten area. The vast majority of the 247 families who moved north were African-Americans. Buffalo was segregated by race, and African-Americans had limited opportunities for housing so the urban renewal of the Ellicott District forced them either to live elsewhere in the District or to move into the Masten area. As explained by an urban renewal document from 1965, “this restriction, though unwritten and unstated, nevertheless reduced the supply of housing units available to non-white families displaced by the Ellicott Project to an insufficient level.” The result was increased density for the remainder of the

233 City of Buffalo, The Planner IV, No. 2 (February 1958), 1.
Ellicott District and the Masten Area “mainly by virtue of illegal conversions of single and two family structures to multifamily structures and by the doubling up of families in existing units.”

Modernist planners, who were responsible for the overcrowding in the first place, saw the increased densification as contributing to blight and aggravating the threat to the city.

More demolitions were planned for the Cold Spring, Oak Street and Glenwood neighbourhoods and in the meantime the Erie County Health Department found that sixty-six former Ellicott District families had found decent homes in these three communities. Few doubted that the large-scale demolitions would be carried out and that these decent homes would eventually be destroyed with the other 1775 housing units slated for destruction in Masten GNRP. In fact the modernist belief in urban renewal’s transformative powers continued into 1965 with urban renewal consultants finding blight in the older central portion of the city and spreading eastward right to the city’s eastern boundary. They were able to identify the blight even though the Ellicott District had been cleared and the Waterfront was being cleared. In the map to go with their report almost one-quarter of the city was to be cleared of its old housing stock. It did not end there. The consultants who prepared the City’s Master Plan in 1964, to comply with the federal expectations, “identified nearly two-thirds of the city as containing some type of environmental or structural deficiency.” Masten GNRP was part of the grand clearance plan.

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236 Ibid.
237 Ibid, 8.
239 City Planning Associates-East Inc., Buffalo Community Renewal Program, (Buffalo, April 9, 1965).
240 City Planning Associates-East Inc., City of Buffalo Master Plan, (Buffalo, Sept. 1 1964).
Mercifully, the federal government refused to approve the clearance of the Masten GNRP and the ambitious urban renewal plan was downgraded to only the Oak Street Urban Renewal Area in 1965. The 145-acre project was combined with the expansion of the Roswell Park Memorial Research Institute and the Buffalo General Hospital “to provide a wedge into the heavily blighted lower areas of the Masten community.”

Once more the traditional grid was altered to include curved streets which did not continue directly through the development. The traditional wood frame houses were replaced by attached, brick garden homes with lots of green space around them. Three hundred and sixteen families were displaced by the program and were located elsewhere, with the exception of those elderly residents who qualified to live in the senior citizen apartments which were also part of the Oak Street urban renewal plan.

The modernist commitment to replacing the old with new buildings and the redrawing of street patterns was repeated many times over in Buffalo’s urban renewal plans, with the exception of the Allentown neighbourhood which would serve to train urban renewal staff in conservation techniques. While conservation was intended to be part of the federal urban renewal program, up until 1965 Buffalo had “not as yet engaged in any completely successful conservation type activities.” The idea was that once the Allentown Area was fully inspected, urban renewal staff would move on to help with the rehabilitation and conservation of the Broadway-Fillmore Project, the Mills Area and the Front Park Area. Urban renewal authorities saw these conservation areas as providing a barrier to the blight of the older central part of the city.

243 Ibid, IV -21
By 1971 the modernist large-scale clearances were losing their appeal and urban renewal consultants recommended more inspections and the rehabilitation of houses. The Allentown-Lakeview and Hamelin Park projects were presented as models for future rehabilitation and conservation action, with code enforcement strongly recommended for the Broadway-Fillmore area. The high cost of new construction and the lack of available funding for the relocation of displaced residents were given as reasons why Buffalo’s urban renewal program had started to encourage the rehabilitation of existing structures instead of clearance. Loans and grants were given to homeowners in the Allentown-Lakeview and Hamelin Park communities and “2,600 housing units were restored to a safe and comfortable condition in 1971 as part of the City’s Neighborhood Improvement Program.” The old homes of these communities were recognized as worthy of rehabilitation.

Attached to this project was the Maryland St. West Urban Renewal Program which did call for clearance and land assembly of the neighbourhood south of Efner and north of the New York State Thruway but on a much smaller scale than the Ellicott District. Planned in 1969, the program demolished an entire city block and attached it to vacant city land for the privately built Maryner Towers and Townhouses which provided 292 moderate income units. This small-scale urban renewal project was viewed as a major success by Buffalo’s urban renewal department. The city had learned that small-scale destruction was much more manageable than the large-scale Le Corbusier-style

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246 Ibid.
247 Ibid.
clearance of the Ellicott project. By the 1970s large-scale housing demolition was no longer considered feasible by urban renewal authorities.

Figure 4.12 - The Ellicott District Urban Renewal Project, from Pine St. looking west toward Michigan Ave, still awaiting development, April 3, 1974. Source: Buffalo Courier Express, Archives, Butler Library, Buffalo State College.

Meanwhile, the large-scale urban renewal project continued to languish. “Ellicott Project Follows Snails Pace,” reported the Buffalo Courier Express in September 1970, saying that the Ellicott Project and the word “delay” were “synonymous ever since the idea for redeveloping the Ellicott district was first conceived in the 1950s.” After 20 years only the halfway completion point for the project was in sight. Twenty acres of
empty land awaited development.\textsuperscript{248} Towne Gardens II with 360 units in low rise apartments were completed in 1972 and new housing construction projects in the Ellicott District were sponsored by area churches and community organizations but still the district was moribund. By 1975, residents of the public housing towers were leaving their apartments with the Ellicott Mall facing a 47 per cent vacancy. The possibility of closing the modernist housing project was discussed.\textsuperscript{249} By 1984, the last 119 tenants remaining in the Ellicott Mall had to be forcibly removed and the empty towers were boarded up. The 590-unit apartment complex sat vacant on 14 acres of land, “languishing in more than urine-stench and filth.”\textsuperscript{250}

In 1972 St. Louis, Missouri’s Pruitt-Igoe public housing towers, designed by modernist architect Minoru Yamasaki, were demolished and their destruction is sometimes used to mark the end of modernism. The modernist towers of the Ellicott District would persist for a few more years and, in fact, a movement developed to preserve the Ellicott Mall. Driven by his own memories of growing up in the Ellicott District, where he witnessed the demolition of homes throughout his youth, Buffalo Councilman James Pitts was determined to break the “cycle of failure” in the district he represented and to preserve the housing project.\textsuperscript{251} Pitts saw the State’s lack of concern for the buildings and the willingness to destroy them as “a continuation of the urban renewal attitude of the 1950s: ‘let’s destroy that community and start over.’”\textsuperscript{252} For Pitts the preservation of the Ellicott Mall “was an issue of black pride and the pride of the

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\textsuperscript{249} “More Tenants Vacate Ellicott Mall Housing.” \textit{Buffalo Evening News}, September 19, 1975, 23.
\textsuperscript{250} Linda R. Levine and Maria Scrivani, \textit{Beautiful Buffalo: Preserving A City}. (Buffalo: Canisius College Press: 2003), 162.
\textsuperscript{251} as quoted by Linda R. Levine and Maria Scrivani, Ibid.,165.
\textsuperscript{252} Ibid., 160-161.
\end{flushleft}
poor, of respectability and civil rights. Pitts pushed week after week, refusing to give up.”253 His activism resulted in the restoration, updating and preservation of four of the towers, while the other four were demolished to be replaced by townhouses. The towers were updated, their modernist starkness tempered by a sloped roof and a highlighted top floor. The first families moved into the new Ellicott Mall Town Centre in 1995.

In 2000 the Talbert Mall, renamed the Frederick Douglass Towers, would have nine of its twelve towers destroyed as part of a new project which would see 128 townhouse units constructed. Joseph B. Lynch, state commissioner of housing and community renewal, recognized the people “who stuck it out and never gave up.” He said the new project was transforming “a monument to government failure into a symbol of hope, renewal and community.”254 A few of the towers were retained as symbols of their time but the memory of a barren landscape flanked by a dozen modernist towers on one side and eight on the other would only remain with those who had endured the urban renewal years when over 1600 structures were destroyed and when the optimism contained within the modernist aesthetic was thoroughly tested. The modernist experiment was over.

Today the once empty land, along South Division Street on the south end of the Ellicott District, is lined with new houses which look very much like what a Buffalo frame house looked like in the nineteenth century, except they sit on wider lots, making room for off-street parking and a small yard. The modernist experiments did not satisfy the needs of the community. Planning Professor Alfred D. Price writes of community representatives in the 1980s angrily responding to yet another public housing project by

253 Ibid., 166.
shouting, “Damn it! We’re talking about HOMES! HOUSES! Not housing!” After over 40 years of disappointment, the modernist urban renewal attempts were abandoned and homes, not housing, filled in what remained of the flat, modernist spaces in Buffalo’s Ellicott District.

**Hamilton**

Working class housing was a major concern for Hamilton, Ontario just as it had been for the early European modernists and for Buffalo’s planners. Modernist solutions were presented to fix Hamilton’s housing crisis which followed the Second World War. Hamilton had attracted thousands of labourers to its hard-pressed war industries during the war and the influx caused a great deal of pressure on existing housing with the result being severe overcrowding. In 1940 the *Hamilton Spectator* called for a “body of experts” to consider the “long view” and the opportunities for the city’s “systematic development along lines of beauty and utility.” In 1944 Hamilton’s City Council hired modernist architect-planner Eugenio Giacomo Faludi, of Town Planning Consultants, Ltd., to “produce a statistical picture of the city diagnosing its problems, growing pains etc. Faludi diagnosed the problems and then presented a Master Plan with proposals for the future, highlighting the importance of segregating the city’s functions and confronting the threat of blight.

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257 “Town Planning,” *The Hamilton Spectator*, September 21, 1944
Faludi found that almost half the city’s total residential area was in decline and blamed the deterioration of houses on overcrowding and the mixing of residential with business and industrial uses. Faludi recommended that the city redevelop blighted land by taking advantage of the National Housing Act’s provisions for slum clearance. The European-educated modernist identified 1000 acres of inadequate housing that had “depreciated to the point where they have fulfilled their usefulness for good living.”

He recommended strict zoning to separate residences from businesses and industry. Like the Buffalo modernists, he believed that “scattered business and industrial developments constitute major barriers to good residential conditions in the central areas.” Faludi proposed zoning bylaws which would identify five residential districts which would be separate from industrial, commercial and green zones. His ideas generated a great deal of interest in Hamilton.

Over 4000 visitors came out to see Faludi’s findings exhibited in the form of “vari-coloured maps and models, and the many photographs of accidents, dangerous crossings, slum houses and other unhappy features.” Just as CIAM had exhibited maps and plans on the Patris II, Faludi displayed his maps and plans in Hamilton’s downtown Robinson’s department store. The exhibit attracted Hamiltonians interested in the future of their city and, specifically, in their own neighbourhoods as reported facetiously in The Hamilton Spectator:

A chart showing present residential, declining, blighted and sub-standard areas was examined closely by many. A conversation overheard might have gone like this: “I’ve just discovered that I live in a declining area.”

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259 Ibid.
260 Ibid, 64.
“Oh, I wouldn’t feel too badly some of my best friends are blighted.”

While an amusing conjecture, the truth was that many Hamiltonians would have recognized their block on Faludi’s maps for redevelopment. Faludi’s Master Plan suggested that there were approximately 50,000 people living in blighted housing. His plan actually recommended that the five residential districts, in the oldest parts of town, be designated for redevelopment “under the provision of the National Housing Act for slum clearance.”

“Insufficient control” of the city’s growth and the lack of zoning, which allowed for “scattered business and industrial developments” in residential areas, were blamed for the poor condition of Hamilton’s neighbourhoods. As Faludi explained, “the invasions of residential areas by commerce and industry and the lack of regulation of the type of residence to be built in a given area has resulted in the decline of residential areas and instability of property values.” Clearance was recommended for the five blighted neighbourhoods. His model for redevelopment included a sample neighbourhood, one of the five “blighted” ones, surrounded by Barton and York and Locke and Bay Streets (figure 4.13). He recommended that this neighbourhood be redesigned as a low rental housing project, complete with apartment blocks and townhouses, and to include curved and blocked roads, transforming the grid in order to limit through traffic.

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262 Ibid.
263 Ibid.
264 Ibid.
265 Ibid, 63.
Faludi was pushing for clearance, which would be partially funded under the National Housing Act’s slum clearance grants of 1944. This legislation would eventually lead to the redevelopment legislation of 1954 and the urban renewal of 1956 – all of which encouraged large-scale clearance facilitated by the state and in doing so provided the mechanism necessary to achieve the massive transformation which modernists, like Le Corbusier, had called for. The modernist master recognized that a powerful authority was needed to implement such destruction, such as a king or a Baron Haussman-like character. Faludi saw that the state was willing to take on the role. Under Part II of the 1944 Act, the federal government offered municipalities grants in order to put together large areas for the construction of new rental housing units.\textsuperscript{266} New was the operative word. Modernists liked solutions which offered new structures, and although provisions for the rehabilitation of housing existed, the legislation was really intended to facilitate the growth of jobs which could be achieved through new construction projects.\textsuperscript{267}

Hamilton did not act immediately on Faludi’s residential clearance ideas; more federal legislation would have to be forthcoming before city officials would start to consider the destruction of whole blocks; and new legislation was indeed on the horizon. In 1954 Canada’s Housing Act introduced the idea of “Housing Redevelopment” and offered municipalities federal assistance for urban renewal, specifically the “clearance, replanning, rehabilitation and modernization of blighted or substandard areas.”\textsuperscript{268} An amendment in 1956 extended federal urban renewal assistance by allowing the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation to help municipalities fund their urban renewal

\textsuperscript{266} H. Peter Oberlander and Arthur L. Fallick, \textit{Housing a Nation: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy} (Vancouver B.C.: CMHC, 1992), 36.
\textsuperscript{267} Oberlander, 55.
\textsuperscript{268} Canada, \textit{National Housing Act}, 1954, Chapter 23, Section 1.
studies. So it was in 1957 that Hamilton would take the modernist plunge and commission its first urban renewal study with assistance from CMHC.

The urban renewal study was intended to help Hamilton’s Planning Department make improvements to Faludi’s official plan. British-trained architect and town-planner Mark P. David was hired to lead the study under the direction of Hamilton’s Planning Commissioner J.T.C. Waram and with the assistance of “one of the greats of modernist planning,” University of Toronto architecture professor Gordon Stephenson.269 David relied on Faludi’s 1945 system of grading residential neighbourhoods, in addition to a city-wide survey of the exterior of every Hamilton building completed in the fall of 1957 by the city’s Planning Department. Not surprisingly the blighted areas in Faludi’s master plan were also identified as blighted by David, moreover the urban renewal study extended the fear of blight to all of the city’s older neighbourhoods. The blocks abutting the oldest neighbourhoods were considered “declining,” while only the more recently built houses on the top of the escarpment and at the outer edges of the city to the east and the west were determined to be “sound.” The urban renewal study reflected the modernist contempt for all that was old. The old buildings and neighbourhoods were considered a threat to the entire city. As the study made clear, the worst conditions were found in the oldest sections, “where it is to be expected that the worst conditions would prevail.”270 The houses close to heavy industry were also considered blighted and were not expected to stand for long because it was understood that the industries would expand and absorb them.

269 Ian Alexander and Shane Greive, “Modernist Town Planning and Metropolitan Planning: Reflections from Gordon Stephenson,” Urban Policy and Research 15, No. 3 (September 1997), 225.
270 Mark P. David, Urban Renewal Study for the City of Hamilton. (Hamilton: City of Hamilton, 1958), 16.
Results from “scientific” surveys were superimposed on master plans and city maps to demonstrate that the clearance of entire blocks was the best solution. The urban renewal maps showed that blighted areas coincided with incidents of high juvenile delinquency, traffic accidents, tuberculosis, fire incidents and high density and made a strong case for getting rid of it all and starting again. The plans however do not identify the areas of positive interaction within an urban context such as cultural events, community assistance, neighbourly support, religious practices or other positive human connections which a dense urban environment facilitates. The plans were biased against the old established, denser communities because their totalizing approach, diagnosing from above, made it appear that there was nothing redeemable within the older parts of the city. The written report is more nuanced allowing for “a considerable range in the degrees of blight” but the plans show only what is blighted and declining with no gradation for individual blocks or houses which did not require clearance. It must have been very difficult for a Hamilton resident of a so-called blighted area to look at these plans, particularly given the knowledge that the federal government legislation, and the modernist outlook of the day, encouraged clearance of so-called substandard areas and the city seemed keen to comply. While rehabilitation was an option, the preference appeared to be clearance. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation would report that during the urban renewal era rehabilitation “never seemed to be able to become a reality even in a most limited, experimental way.”

Priority for clearance was given to the district with the highest percentage of substandard buildings based on data for the individual communities. The study

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271 Ibid, 22.
272 Central Mortgage and Housing Corp., Urban Renewal – Observations of Program Defects 1964-1968. (Canada Mortgage and Housing Information Centre, Cal MH 69 U66), 4
recommended Van Wagner’s and Crescent Beaches because an inspection of their 192 buildings deemed 77 per cent of them as substandard and therefore irredeemable; no mention was made of the 23 per cent acceptable dwellings. While the location was initially identified as a possible area for good residential development, the study recommended that the land be used for recreational purposes instead. Shortly after the 1958 urban renewal study was officially submitted to Council in February 1959, the city prepared its application for urban renewal assistance from the federal and provincial governments in order to clear the houses and to resettle the 199 families. The clearance of the Van Wagner’s and Crescent Beach communities would be Hamilton’s first urban renewal project and it is considered in more detail in the recreation chapter of this thesis because the land was cleared in order to provide the city with recreational parkland.

David’s 1958 urban renewal study also gave second and third priority to two other districts which were seen as blighted because of their mixed uses. “The mixture of industrial, commercial and residential uses on the rim of the centre forms an environment quite unsuitable for family living,” said the report, using a common modernist criticism of mixed use for these two older neighbourhoods which made up the commercial business district. However, neither of these areas was put forward as an urban renewal project, presumably because the federal government legislation was for housing and not for commercial redevelopment. Hamilton’s business leaders, like their Buffalo counterparts, wanted urban renewal for the downtown business area which would focus on commercial uses and not housing.

The city’s second urban renewal effort would instead focus on the city’s North End, “a well-defined, existing residential area” situated on the Burlington Bay with the

273 Ibid, 23.
CNR mainline railway tracks cutting it off from Hamilton’s downtown to the south. 274 The Bay’s shoreline wraps around the west and the north of the neighbourhood, with Wellington Street to the east. Hamilton’s North End was primarily a working class residential community which had grown during the late nineteenth century when workers could walk to their jobs on the waterfront or to industrial factories within the community and further to the east. Recognized as being “one of the oldest residential sections of the city,” the North End was presented as a candidate for urban renewal in order to combat growing blight and the “great danger that the blight will continue to grow and that eventually portions of this area would turn to slum.” 275 While the North End was initially identified as “blighted” in the first urban renewal study, it was also praised for its “surprisingly good” residential atmosphere. 276 At the time of the 1958 study, the North End was not considered a priority for clearance but once it became the focus for urban renewal, the slum discourse increased. The area was re-surveyed and the new findings confirmed the fears. While the 1958 study identified 36 per cent of the North End buildings as in need of clearance, the re-examination of the housing situation in 1961 found that the figure had risen to 45 per cent. Hamilton’s Urban Renewal Committee would also point out that the 1958 study had not taken into account “other blighting influences, such as the small size of some buildings and most lots, the almost complete lot coverage in many instances with inadequate front and side yards, the depreciating influence of mixed uses and other factors” all of which would increase the demand for

274 Ibid, 23.
276 Mark P. David, Urban Renewal Study for the City of Hamilton. (Hamilton: City of Hamilton, 1958), 23.
clearance. In the 1958 Urban Renewal Study the substandard sections were identified as being to the west of James St, where the industrial cotton mill was situated, but by 1963 the North End Renewal Project documentation showed that the blight had spread to buildings scattered throughout the North End. It must also be acknowledged that once an area was identified as “blighted” that the deterioration would only increase as homeowners took less interest in maintaining their homes if they saw expropriation and clearance as inevitable.

The urban renewal plan was to provide “a balanced program of redevelopment, rehabilitation and conservation.” While rehabilitation of homes was advertised in urban renewal literature distributed around the North End, and was presented as a change from the total clearance of the first urban renewal project, clearance was given a higher profile and the flattening of land was expected from urban renewal. Clearance was seen as necessary to fulfill the modernist-inspired drive to improve the city and to provide a new look for the neighbourhood. Of the North End’s 1795 buildings, most of which were residential properties, almost half were to be cleared while the other half were slated for rehabilitation.

Hamilton’s residential urban renewal project was much smaller and less dramatic than the Ellicott District’s urban renewal scheme but it also illustrates the modernist approach. Hamilton’s planners would endorse strict zoning, separating industry and commerce from residences, in addition to not showing any concern for historically significant buildings. The North End project also shows the modernist commitment to

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278 Ibid, 3.
279 Ibid, 10.
open recreational spaces; the large-scale land assembly to produce a superblock which would alter the established traffic patterns; new efficient roadways; the construction of public housing; the building of residential towers; and, most significantly, the belief that urban renewal carried with it a social good, which would benefit people whether the community appreciated it or not. The city identified blight as the North End’s problem and embarked on an ambitious public relations campaign to sell urban renewal to the area’s residents. Four public meetings were held and an urban renewal office was set up in the North End in 1962. Pamphlets, in Italian and in English, were circulated promising that urban renewal would get rid of run-down buildings while offering higher property values and a better and more attractive neighbourhood. Urban Renewal chairman Ken Soble and his successor Graham D. Emslie were communication experts who deflected the rising opposition to the plans.

Figure 4.14 - Hamilton slum housing. Source: CMHC, Canada Mortgage and Housing Information Centre.

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The people of the North End, known for their cohesion and their spirit, were not enthusiastic about the proposed changes and did not share the politicians and downtown businessmen’s support for the scheme. Residents took their complaints to the Ontario Municipal Board, a quasi-judicial provincial tribunal which rules on planning matters. The OMB ruled that “some individuals will suffer some loss, but the overall benefit which should accrue to the city as a whole will greatly outweigh it.”\textsuperscript{282} The OMB also argued that the plan would save the area from the blight which had threatened the North End for many years. The fear of blight combined with the desire to initiate an urban renewal project as close to the downtown as possible, with the hope that the government would eventually extend the program to the commercial district, encouraged the city to proceed with the North End’s urban renewal project. It was believed that the urban renewal funding would be good for the community despite what the community might think. Urban Renewal Consultant Murray Jones’ 1968 report said that the objective was “to encourage renewed confidence and stability in the physical, social and economic characteristics of the North End neighbourhood” and to help the community “regain its importance as one of the most desirable neighbourhoods in the city of Hamilton.”\textsuperscript{283} Planners and politicians expected urban renewal to improve the North End and city counselors were advised to ignore the protests and petitions opposing the plan.\textsuperscript{284} Not only was the North End project supposed to help the North End but Mayor Victor Copps believed the project “would prove that Hamilton is serious about redevelopment, and maintaining the city. This proof is very likely to attract a good deal of attention from

\textsuperscript{283} Murray V. Jones Ltd., \textit{North End Urban Renewal Scheme}. (Hamilton: Urban Renewal Committee, June 1968), 2.
private investors and developers of the type required to the downtown core.” Urban renewal was not only going to revive a working class neighbourhood but it promised to improve the entire city. As in Buffalo, the city’s ambitions for its downtown commercial business district were played out in a residential neighbourhood.

The project’s first stage focused on 14.53 acres of land in the centre of the North End with 148 buildings slated for destruction, including two schools. The 10-block area to be cleared was between Wood and Simcoe Streets with an easterly extension between MacCaulay and Picton across Catherine Street to create a T-shaped community park and playground for three schools. The houses which once lined the streets were to be leveled and four streets bifurcated to create a superblock and to inject light and recreational flat space into the heart of the community. In order to create this modernist space, a number of historic buildings would come down.

The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario tried to preserve the houses at 60 and 62 Ferrie Street because of their architecturally-significant stone construction. The Conservancy also recommended that a modest red brick Georgian home at 401 John St. North, built in 1848, be saved because it was unique in the North End and very well-preserved. The building next door, originally a store from the 1840s or 1850s, was also recommended for preservation. The Conservancy even suggested that the two buildings on John St. could become part of the recreational plan for the superblock and conserved for that purpose. However all the historic buildings would be demolished. The plan was to create a superblock for new buildings, and two old and rare architectural specimens jutting out of the flat open space would not fit the wholesale character of the modernist aesthetic vision, which could make no exceptions to the perceived pure function of a

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district or a superblock. There was a desire for control, and flattening everything in a block deemed chaotic gave the planners that control.

Figure 4.15 – North End Redevelopment Plan, 1963. The central superblock would change the neighbourhood’s street patterns and require the demolition of housing and two schools. Future demolitions were envisioned for waterfront development. Source: Hamilton Urban Renewal Committee, North End Renewal Project. (City of Hamilton, 1963), Map 4.

Ferrie Street was bifurcated to allow for the superblock and Alderman Frank Dillon’s house would be torn down. The large brick house with an impressive balcony dated from 1890 and had always been in the Dillon family (figure 4.16). Although a political insider, the alderman was not powerful enough to stand in the way of urban renewal. Neither an appeal to family nor political connections could sway the belief in
clearance for the good of the city. The vast majority of the 130 families who were forced out of the neighbourhood negotiated the value of their houses with the city officials who came to the door to tell them that they would have to leave. Five families refused and their houses were expropriated.

Figure 4.16 – Alderman Frank Dillon’s family home, 45 Ferrie St. It was demolished in 1965. Source: Hamilton Spectator, June 27, 1964.

The bulldozers began to flatten the homes within the enlarged block in June 1965 and Urban Renewal Chairman Kenneth Soble was proud to be finally achieving his goal after seven years of “confusion and controversy to get Hamilton to accept urban renewal.” He blamed the delays on “public ignorance” and was quoted as saying that
“despite public meetings, mass mailings, and an information office, the North Enders could not understand urban renewal was an attempt to preserve a neighbourhood, rather than flatten it.” He clearly believed he was doing the right thing for the community and that urban renewal was going to benefit the North End. “And to think nobody thought we were serious,” he said. “Nobody in the North End believed urban renewal was coming - until the first house came down.”

Figure 4.17 – North End Renewal Scheme, February 1969. More development was planned for the North End, including private housing construction and major development along the waterfront. Note superblock in the centre of the neighbourhood and the towers marked “private development.” Source: Murray V. Jones, North End Urban Renewal Scheme, August 1969, Map 10.

In addition to the demolition of houses and the creation of a flat recreational space, the large Canadian Cotton Company complex was leveled (figure 4.18). The federal and provincial legislation required that housing be made available for residents displaced by urban renewal clearance and the industrial cotton mill land in the James-Ferrie-MacNab-Simcoe block was designated for public housing. The large brick nineteenth century industrial building filled the whole block and extended across Simcoe Street to the south. The mill had stopped production in December 1959 and was seen as a blighting influence for the north end community. Its age made it a candidate for destruction under the modernist aesthetic, as did its industrial purpose within a residential area. Built when the workforce could walk to their workplace, the mixing of industry and housing was no longer valued and in 1967 the building was demolished. Unfortunately the urban renewal scheme to house those displaced when their houses were destroyed did not work according to plan because the demolition of houses for the recreational superblock began in 1965 and the low-income housing units, built on the cotton mill site, were not ready for occupancy until 1969. They were brick townhouses, with flat roofs and monotonous, unadorned fronts, typical of public housing units of the time and in the modernist style.

Figure 4.18 - North End’s Cotton Mill. Source: CMHC, Mortgage and Housing Information Centre.
High rises were the modernist answer to increased density and were an important part of the urban renewal plans for Buffalo. In Hamilton private developers tore down old mansions in the residential Durrand neighbourhood to construct apartment towers south of the downtown core, but they weren’t part of an urban renewal project. Murray Jones’ concept plans for the North End proposed at least seventeen towers to be built along the waterfront and more down James Street by private developers. In the end, only three were built in the North End, namely the two Marina Towers and the Kenneth D. Soble Tower (figure 4.19).

Figure 4.19 - Kenneth D. Soble Tower, named after Hamilton’s Urban Renewal Chairman. Source: CMHC, Canada Mortgage and Housing Information Centre.

In addition to towers, the modernist ethos promoted efficient roadways to ease congestion and to provide convenient connections between the city’s other zones. The transportation function is discussed as a separate chapter in this thesis, but the Perimeter Road will be considered here as well because it was an important part of the North End

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urban renewal project. The wide roadway was to ease congestion within the North End and facilitate through traffic to the industrial zone. Initially the plan was to destroy the houses on both sides of Strachan Avenue, on the southern edge of the North End, for the Perimeter Road. The assumption was that such a thoroughfare would benefit the community thereby requiring the demolition of 199 small houses and the leveling of a variety of small businesses and institutions. However the community did not agree. Their protests and petitions brought about a compromise and a reworking of the plans which allowed for the destruction of just one side of the road for a reduced total of 102 houses.

The removal of residents from their homes began in September 1965. An Italian church and a barbershop were leveled, as were the irregular homes which were tucked in between the houses and the railway tracks, to the south of Strachan Avenue. The homeowners of two houses at 72 and 74 Strachan Avenue resisted their removal with a lawyer’s help and the two small houses were allowed to remain as two lone bumps on a smooth modernist flatland which ran along the south side of the street. The Perimeter Road was never built. Like in the Ellicott District, the enthusiasm to flatten land without necessarily following through, made the expropriations all the more difficult for people to bear. Perhaps the modernist conviction that clearance and roadway construction could solve a city’s problems was beginning to temper. A more likely explanation, however, was that funds were growing tight. In 1969 Murray Jones issued an Addendum to the North End scheme and put a brake on the Perimeter Road by finding an alternative solution to the congestion by widening Wellington St. and Victoria Ave, outside the North End. Costs had risen substantially “due to the higher standards for the road itself”
When drawing a line across a map, which would lead to the destruction of over a hundred homes, the Urban Renewal Committee thought it was doing something positive for the city. They had forgotten to include in their calculations the rising costs of roadway construction and the pain they would inflict on innocent residents.

City officials were willing to sacrifice certain homes and the feelings and financial wellbeing of certain individuals in exchange for the greater good promised by urban renewal. Hamilton’s urban renewal ambitions were spreading across the city. Plans for the downtown and York Boulevard were becoming closer to realization in addition to the ongoing redevelopment of the North End. These added pressures on the urban renewal budgets forced the cancellation of the Perimeter Road and increased the interest in rehabilitation instead of clearance for the North End. While rehabilitation and conservation of housing had always been part of the North End urban renewal scheme, rehabilitation instead of clearance began to take on an even higher priority by 1968. Murray Jones reported on the findings of a Toronto study that recommended rehabilitation over clearance. It is interesting to note that in 1973, long after federal urban renewal dollars had dried up, Mayor Vic Copps acknowledged that the urban renewal large-scale demolitions had not been entirely successful and that the city had changed its philosophy: “We are encouraging more rehabilitation than demolition and this is partly because of difficulties caused for people by a large-scale type of relocation.” He went on to say that “previously a whole area had to be designated for urban renewal whether or not some homes were in reasonably good condition. This caused some

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difficulties, especially for older people who had their roots very deep in the area.”

Modernist clearance practices had proven to be too painful for the communities involved. The city began to actively encourage homeowners to fix up their homes but in the North End this struck residents as particularly ironic given that the one hardware store in the neighbourhood, where the necessary tools could be found, had been torn down by the city as part of the first stage of the urban renewal project.

During the 1970s commentators continued to debate the merits of urban renewal in the North End. Critics pointed to the large amount of money spent on the scheme and suggested it had not achieved very much for the community. A *Hamilton Spectator* article in 1977, called “North End Nightmare,” revisited the contentious issues related to the urban renewal project such as the misspent money used to clear the houses for the roadway which was never built; the bitterness felt by the residents of the North End; the bungled purchase of the cotton mill; and the lack of growth in the North End after the renewal process was complete. In the same edition, government officials and a politician suggested that urban renewal had been a positive experience citing the removal of blighted housing, the reduced traffic flow, housing for seniors, improved engineering services and better schools and recreation space. Former Commissioner Reg Monaghan was quoted as saying that if the federal government had continued to fund urban renewal after 1970, the North End urban renewal project would have continued its efforts to improve the neighbourhood.290 The two opposing positions reflect who had the urban renewal power and who did not have much agency: the politicians and government officials versus those who lived in the neighbourhood. Modernist planning was top

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down; state power was used to improve the community based on a particular vision influenced by the modernist aesthetic.

When Ken Soble shoved the inaugural urban renewal spade into the ground he felt like he was doing something which would be good for the North End, regardless of the community’s position. Longtime resident Gil Simmons wrote to the Hamilton Spectator in 1973 to say that the people of the North End had not had much opportunity to comment on what was being done to their community. At the public meetings, like the one in the HMCS Star, she described how the planners presented their plans to 300 or 400 people “and somehow these residents were supposed to comment on, maps and drawings and proposals which no professional would accept without investigation.”

The residents felt outmaneuvered by the public relations experts and the professional planners. The urban renewal plan was supposed to be good for them and for their community so when the officials came to some of their doors and told them they had to leave, most felt they had no other option but to pack up and go. The flattened south side of Strachan Avenue and the large educational superblock did not adequately compensate for the lost buildings and missing neighbours.

Modernism left an emptiness both in the landscape and in the hearts of the residents. Enthusiastic responses to modernist plans meant that empty blocks in the Ellicott District were left to fester and half the North End homes along Strachan Avenue were flattened for a road which was never built. The push for action and the belief in the planners’ aesthetic meant that buildings came down in anticipation of a modernist solution. Unfortunately, the demolitions were sometimes premature. And when the public housing in the North End was finally constructed it did little to respond to the

community’s sense of its own identity. The public housing, built on the site of the old cotton mill, was flat roofed and plain; the houses looking out of place in a community of pitched roofed, narrow brick Victorian homes. The planners asserted their vision onto the community. With planning maps to prove their competency, the officials left very little room for the local people to explain how the culture of the community worked and why it should be left alone. The aesthetics’ influence, combined with the force of expert opinion, left the residents with little choice but to submit to the modernist plans.

The North End was identified as a residential neighbourhood by the urban renewal authorities. The goal, from the outset, was to improve housing conditions for the people of the community which was supported by both the federal and provincial governments. The planners were supposedly helping the community to flourish as a residential neighbourhood but the population figures do not support this notion, in fact they suggest that the neighbourhood became a less attractive place to live after the project was completed. During the urban renewal years 412 buildings were demolished and 449 alternate dwellings provided. However, instead of the population increasing, it decreased from 8,362 people in 1961 to 6,184 in 1976. While these figures may indicate decreased family size, they also show that the urban renewal changes did not encourage increased numbers to move into the neighbourhood. The population figures show that, in fact, fewer people actually lived in the North End after the urban renewal project was completed. These figures in themselves are a strong refutation of modernist efforts to improve the residential function of the North End. The plans, which the authorities offered the community, were impositions on the neighbourhood’s physical connection to

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its past and on its community networks which once inspired belonging. The modernist plan imposed a vision of a well-ordered, clean and efficient community on a neighbourhood which already had a clear sense of its working-class identity. Given the community’s powerful sense of self, it is not surprising that the North Enders felt little enthusiasm for urban renewal.

The planners in both Buffalo and Hamilton thought they were proposing a modernist vision to enhance their cities. Unfortunately their large-scale planning agenda was driven by urban renewal plans on too large a scale to identify the individual needs of the communities involved. The bold, clean sweeping away of blocks of houses had the satisfying feel of getting something done when the problems seemed intractable but in the end they only resulted in distress and disruption. The flattening of neighbourhoods promised potential, and allowed for new street patterns and superblocks to be positioned on the empty canvas, but in the end proved ineffectual, particularly in the Ellicott District. Most of Buffalo and Hamilton’s residential urban renewal experiences were modernist disappointments. The master plans, a requirement of urban renewal, would dominate and direct attention away from stable structures, historic buildings and important cultural connections when large-scale land assembly and destruction were called for. The modernist vision wasted no time for history; the look was supposed to be new and different. The appeal of the modernist flattening was that it seemed to solve problems and wrought control where chaos was seen to reign in residential neighbourhoods contaminated by industry and commerce. In the Functional City’s strict adherence to the four functions there was no real consideration for how a community actually worked, and what other components may have been overlooked. In planning
from above, modernists were able to take action on a large scale, blind to their own
hubris and believing that they were offering solutions for working class, central
neighbourhoods. The flattened blocks were reflected in the flat roofs and straight lines
of the public housing units and towers. It was a landscape of control and containment
where the chaos of life was ordered and streamlined for efficiency of movement and
where there was no room for decoration or ornamentation. The flattened spaces of the
North End and particularly of the Ellicott District are dull, even today. The Functional
City paradigm called for control and attempted to reshape neighbourhoods to fit the
modernist vision. Flattened neighbourhoods, rebuilt without familiar shops, workplaces
and institutions seem sterile. The residential function ironically took a lot of the life out
of the neighbourhood. This was not the case for the recreational function however, which
provided the possibility for some fun in this pure and ordered modernist vision.
Chapter Four - Recreation, the Second Function
“Fulfilling a Definite Need of the Whole People”

Modernists who endorsed the ideal of the Functional City saw the recreation function as an essential element in their efforts to improve workers’ lives and make the industrial city a better place to live for its workers. While the housing function assured the liberty of the individual, the recreation function would organize collective life, which was important to assert during the politically turbulent 1930s. Following CIAM 4, which had introduced the Functional City in 1933, the modernists’ fifth conference was held in Paris in 1937 under the theme “Housing and Leisure” or “The Functional City II”. It gave leisure activities particular attention and tried to show, as Eric Mumford explains, that “CIAM had transcended its earlier Taylorist and technocratic approach and was moving toward a more broad-based appeal to the perceived needs of the masses.”

Sert highlighted the importance of public sporting facilities and public recreational areas in Can Our Cities Survive?, demonstrating how, over time, public recreational spaces had decreased while more leisure hours were made available to the worker. Sert used quotations from the 1933 “Town Planning Chart” to support his claim that “open spaces in cities today are generally insufficient.” He called on public officials, and not private organizations, to “fulfill a definite need of the whole people.”

Like the American parks and playground movement, the European modernists were concerned with overcrowding in the city centre. They believed people needed more sunlight and air, as well as a connection to nature. These goals could be achieved by

294 Mumford, The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 114.
296 Ibid, 78.
creating play areas, recreational centres and playing fields in the city while also preserving natural recreation sites on the city’s periphery for weekend trips. They would recommend that old warehouses and rail yards be cleared from river frontages and lakeshores to allow for greater access for the general public to these reclaimed natural spaces. Sert maintained that as the cities grew, the provision of sufficient recreational space had become one of the most urgent urban problems. He used quotes from the “Town Planning Chart” which suggested that poor planning and chaotic development had destroyed many natural sites near urban areas and that cities should do whatever they could to make areas near lakes, rivers and forests accessible for recreational purposes.

CIAM recommended that new residential districts should always allow for sufficient space for playgrounds in their plans and encouraged the analysis of the recreational space which did exist in their membership’s city centres. CIAM’s Dutch membership did a complete study of the recreational needs for the city of Rotterdam and members from London recommended that parks and recreation facilities should represent seven and two-thirds acres per 1,000 inhabitants. To answer the needs of overcrowded urban dwellers, slum clearance would be considered the best way to achieve greater recreational opportunities by opening up blocks within the central core. Sert suggested in the 1940s that if people were leaving the central city for the suburbs than land values should fall which would allow municipalities to be able to purchase the depreciated land for recreational purposes. Clearance would not only provide the necessary athletic fields but it would also give the adjacent buildings fresh air and sunlight.

297 Ibid, 84.
298 Ibid, 96
299 Ibid, 92.
300 Ibid, 94.
Both Buffalo’s and Hamilton’s urban renewal plans would embody these modernist ideas that connected the recreation function to the Functional City. Both cities would clear land within their residential urban renewal areas specifically for recreational use, and both would use urban renewal funds to clear and develop sections of their waterfronts. Their waterfront projects, however, would result in very different outcomes, with Hamilton’s new lakefront park cleared for the general public’s recreational use while Buffalo’s waterfront, initially slated for recreational purposes, would end up encouraging private residential development and marinas.

**Buffalo**

Initially, Buffalo’s planners appeared to follow CIAM’s guidelines when they drew up the plans for the two large housing projects at opposite sides of the Ellicott District’s urban renewal area, and ensured land would be made available for public sporting facilities at the same time. Land was cleared for a 30-acre recreational area, between Clinton, Pine, Hickory and South Division Streets, when the Ellicott and Talbert Malls were being constructed. The clearance and land assembly for the housing towers and sports fields happened before the rest of the District was cleared under the Title 1 legislation. The sporting fields and recreation centre were built in between the two housing projects. By the time the recreation centre was ready to open in 1963, the urban renewal destruction of the entire 161 acres was complete and the facility sat in the middle of a vast wasteland, with its athletic fields surrounded by blocks of flattened housing, with only two schools and a church remaining nearby. The cleared surrounding area gave an eerie atmosphere to a neighbourhood which, at one time, was teeming with
people who might have made use of the centre. The inhabitants of the modernist towers would have to walk by blocks of open, empty land to get to the sports fields and the recreation center, which would be eventually known as the John F. Kennedy Community Center and was itself a modernist building (figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 – John F. Kennedy Recreation Center in the middle of the Ellicott Urban Renewal Site. Note strong horizontal lines and use of pilotis or stilts. Source: author.

Funded by the federal government and designed by Robert T. Coles, a young Buffalo architect, the center was described as “a slim-lined block, steel and glass structure” when the Buffalo Evening News published an article about funding problems
delaying the opening of the facility. Built of reinforced concrete, the building has strong horizontal lines with pilotis allowing the horizontal plane to hover as it abuts against the two-storey larger gym section which has a swept-up roof, adding flair to all the straight edges. An African-American, Coles wrote his Master’s thesis, entitled “Community Facilities in a Redevelopment Area – A Study and Proposal for the Ellicott District in Buffalo, NY” to complete his architecture degree which he received from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1955. His ideas for the District’s recreation facilities were then incorporated into the plans for the $1,326,000 project.

The land assembly needed for the sporting facilities became a modernist super-block. Buffalo erased parts of North Division, Eagle, Cedar and Walnut Streets to achieve the almost 30 acres of sporting fields which included a playground, track, baseball diamond, tennis courts and swimming pools adjacent to the John F. Kennedy Center. A City Planning Board report from 1962 claimed that the soon-to-open facility was “the finest installation in the city.” Elsewhere in the report Buffalo’s population decline was explained by showing that thirty-eight percent of the decrease was due to the clearance of the Ellicott District. The report took some pride in the fact that the ratio of Buffalo’s playgrounds and playing fields to people had actually improved, although the declining population was mostly responsible for this development. With one acre of playgrounds and playing fields for every 1,129 people and one acre of total parks and recreation for every 375 people, Buffalo was still far below the ideal of seven and two-

301 “$1 Million Ellicott Center Lacks the Funds to Open,” Buffalo Evening News, April 10, 1963, 39.
302 City of Buffalo, Parks and Recreation, Division of Planning for the City Planning Board, March 1962. (Grosvenor Room, City Planning Vertical File), 24.
thirds acres of parks and recreational space per 1,000 inhabitants championed by London’s CIAM members. 303

Those committed to the Functional City ideal saw the recreation function as improving life for urban dwellers. The recreational space provided in the centre of the very needy Ellicott District was built after most of the houses had been cleared. Obviously the recreation facilities were built for another group of people the city thought would flood into the flattened community, a more middle class demographic, thereby using the modernist recreational function to solve the deep poverty which plagued the Ellicott District by enticing one economic group to replace another. It did not work. The middle class did not immediately start building new houses in the District. There is no indication that planners recognized the strange irony of the center’s position in the middle of a cleared urban renewal site; the modernist recreation facility and its expansive fields were built in the midst of a misconstrued modernist wasteland.

Buffalo would also initially appear to follow the modernist recommendation to create recreational spaces near natural surroundings like rivers and lakes by taking action on its waterfront. Long considered blighted, the waterfront marked the beginnings of Buffalo’s growth and success as an inland port. The city was the terminus for the Erie Canal which connected New York City and the Atlantic Ocean to the opening of the western American frontier in the nineteenth century. The Erie Canal linked Buffalo to Albany, New York, on the Hudson River. The canal came right into Buffalo but by the mid-twentieth century it was not considered worthy of preservation and was destined for eradication. The new US State Niagara Thruway 190 would be built overtop of the old canal bed.

303 Ibid, 6.
The canal and the buildings which were constructed to service the activities on the Lake Erie waterfront were considered blighted because they were old and no longer fulfilling their initial functions. Modernists like Walter C. Behrendt in the 1930s proposed the razing of the area and starting anew. In 1932 Congressman Walter G. Andrews proposed reclaiming the waterfront area. Planners saw his proposal as “a starting point in planning the City for the future. ‘If carried out the section would be one of the most beautiful in the City, instead of being the picture of blight that it is now,’” said the head of Buffalo’s planning board. In 1933, a civic mall would be suggested to connect the City Hall to the Waterfront with a series of small parks lining the boulevard above the railroad tracks which would skirt the top of a larger park and municipal yacht basin. Still other plans would be recommended and beautiful drawings of parkland and swimming areas prepared in the 1940s, however the perceived blight was not actually addressed until land was cleared for the Dante Housing Project which opened in 1952. The housing project built under New York State’s urban renewal legislation was seen as a means of gaining a toehold in the perceived slum land with the expectation that more action against the blight would be forthcoming.

The City Planning Commission in 1951 recommended that the old commercial and industrial land, no longer of any use nor considered of any value along the waterfront, be turned “wherever possible, into park and recreation.” The report made its recommendation in order to “improve the value of adjacent residential and business areas and add to the livability and dignity of the entire city.”

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304 Buffalo Planning Board Chairman Alfred C. Faul as quoted in Department of Urban Renewal, Appendix II - Urban Renewal in Buffalo 1962-1965, (Buffalo, December 30, 1965), 1.
305 Buffalo Evening News, Dec. 11, 1933 (Grosvenor Room Vertical File, Port of Buffalo-Maps.)
306 City Planning Commission, Planning 1946-51, (Buffalo, NY, September 1951).
the General Plan for Buffalo which had accompanied the city’s application to the federal government for urban renewal funding, as required by the 1949 legislation. The Functional City commitment to recreation areas and parkland along natural waterfronts was definitely reflected in Buffalo’s initial urban renewal efforts.

In 1952 the City Planning Commission reported on the city’s three major recreational deficiencies “which, by reason of our location on Lake Erie and Niagara River, could almost be considered the heritage of a resident of Buffalo.” The Commission determined that the city needed to provide more small boat storage basins, or marinas; sports fields for tennis, baseball etc; and scenic drives and public lawns and gardens. They recommended addressing these shortfalls by providing 2500 additional boat berths at four different marinas along the Lake Erie shoreline, as well as adding bathing beaches and playgrounds, picnic areas and playing fields in three waterfront parks. They also emphasized the importance of “passive recreation” which would include scenic drives, picnic areas and public parks, recognizing that although Buffalo had 9.5 miles of lake and waterfront the city had “provided very little opportunity to its citizens to enjoy these blessings in the form of public park lands.” The Planning Commission’s attempts to bring more people down to the waterfront were in accordance with modernist thinking about improving recreation for the collective and not the individual. Rather perversely they even looked at the proposed Niagara Thruway, which would eventually skirt along side the waterfront, cutting the city off from its historic beginnings, as providing an “unusual scenic route” while helping to “clean up the

308 Ibid.
unsightly and partially used strip. The highway was not seen as a blighting influence and instead was seen as a way to reverse the waterfront’s decline.

In 1955 the City Planning commission would demonstrate its interest in applying for federal government urban renewal funding for the waterfront by submitting studies and maps for preliminary review. After many years of bureaucratic adjustments, the application would be officially submitted in 1962 and was finally approved in 1964 with a capital grant of $21,682,391.00 and a relocation grant of $696,700,00. While planning documentation from the 1950s stayed true to the modernist commitment of redeeming natural sites for the general public, the 1965 urban renewal report would not mention the possibilities for recreational development. Instead, the document would acknowledge the inherent beauty of the waterfront as a reason to make it “a location for gracious urban living.” This idea was supported by the success of the 1960 conversion of the Dante Housing Project into the Marine Drive Apartments, a middle-income cooperative.

Construction companies began requesting land to develop. Some would provide “middle-income housing for limited income families,” presumably close to the Virginia-Carolina highway interchange, while “all firms suggested the possibility of some luxury housing.” Buffalo contractor-developer George C. Weichmann showed interest in the development of a marina, swimming pool and three apartment buildings next to the Marine Drive Apartments, as part of the urban renewal project. Weichmann promised to “start with middle-income apartments, and then possibly go into luxury or semi-luxury

309 Ibid.
311 Ibid, 1.
312 Ibid, 12.
housing on some other acreage.” He expressed confidence in the successful development of these 360 new apartments because 200 people were on the waiting list to get into the refurbished Marine Drive Apartments.\(^{313}\) Urban renewal documentation demonstrated that the Marine Drive Apartments’ renovation and conversion was completed in 1965 and cost $500,000 provided by the Housing Authority and private interests.\(^{314}\)

Meanwhile massive destruction was in the plans for the lower west side of the city as part of the waterfront urban renewal project. The plan for the waterfront had changed from visions of parkland and a dramatic entry into the city to large-scale neighbourhood destruction, almost twice the size and twice the cost of the Ellicott District project. “Negro removal” was not part of this plan. The people who lived in the narrow frame houses between the downtown and the waterfront were primarily of Italian heritage with deep roots in their community. Their backyards were filled with vineyards and fruit trees and they were going to lose it all.

Figure 5.2 - 208 Busti Avenue – destroyed for the Waterfront Redevelopment Plan. Source: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, file: streets.

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These waterfront redevelopment plans for the neighbourhood began in 1954, a year after the Dante Housing Project was completed, not to gain more public housing but instead for “entirely free-enterprise housing” in the words of Redevelopment Board Chairman Herbert J. Vogelson.\textsuperscript{315} The plan would be developed, revised and resubmitted in 1962 to the federal urban renewal authorities identifying the lower west section of the city from Niagara Street to Lake Erie and from Virginia Street to the Buffalo River, an area to be bisected by the Niagara Thruway and Buffalo Skyway. It

\textsuperscript{315} \textit{Buffalo Evening News}, Dec. 12, 1954.
would involve 700 parcels of land and would include land owned by the Erie-Lackawanna Railroad and the Niagara Frontier Port Authority.

Figure 5.4 – Aerial view of the waterfront district. City Hall and Niagara Square are on the top left. The mixed residential, commercial and industrial area extends from City Hall to the north-west and the harbour. This area would be slated for demolition. Source: American Air Surveys, Inc, #493, Archives, Butler Library, Buffalo State College Special Collections.
The waterfront renewal project would target over 1,000 houses, of which forty-six percent were found to be unsound in 1960. An area which had once supported large extended families with a high degree of social interaction gradually began to disintegrate as the news that the neighbourhood was slated for urban renewal spread throughout the community. Residents believed “the prospect of urban renewal constituted a self-fulfilling prophecy because the need for renewal was created by the subsequent neglect in the maintenance of property.”

In 1961 Buffalo’s architects came up with plans for middle to high-income housing for the area along the waterfront, as part of the Buffalo Western NY Chapter of the American Institute of Architects’ contribution to urban renewal:

Most buildings will afford excellent views of the waterfront, will be oriented for sunshine and prevailing winds and be provided with patios, gardens, greenbelts, community swimming pools and club houses. Private marinas are being planned for tenant boating enthusiasts.…

In order to create this community of upscale highrises, townhouses and garden-type buildings an already established community would have to be erased. As journalist Joseph Ritz reported in 1960 “it means the loss of the homes in which many of them have raised their families. It means the destruction of a

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317 Ibid, 98.
neighbourhood in which they have lived for two and three generations and where they hoped to die.”

By 1968 the proposed cost of the 292-acre urban renewal Waterfront Redevelopment Project had risen to $32.5 million, ”the biggest single investment carried out under urban renewal assistance” in Buffalo, earmarked for “relocation, acquisition, demolition and site preparation” with the plan calling for luxury and middle-income housing. Again, no mention was made of parks and recreation for the general population. The urban renewal plan would see the destruction of buildings from Virginia St. to the river and Niagara St to Lake Erie. Row after row of modest homes on such streets as Carolina, Georgia, Fourth, Efner, Trenton, Seventh and Busti Avenue were demolished along with their corner stores, neighbourhood taverns and other small businesses which were all seen as contributing to the overall blighted condition of the Waterfront. The debris would result in 300,000 tons, which was transported as fill for the Waterfront project, presumably to extend Erie Street and the breakwater around the marina, beside the Marine Drive Apartments. The modernist idea of reclaiming waterfront land for the collective enjoyment of all the city’s inhabitants was superseded by the allure of up-scale accommodation with lakefront views and marinas nearby.

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320 “Renewal Tab is $136.9 million,” Buffalo Courier Express, March 12, 1968, 32.
Figure 5.5 – Note how the neighbourhood blocks were changed from the grid to giant superblocks. In 1964 the Waterfront Development area was said to “reclaim for the future prosperity of Buffalo the vast potential of Buffalo’s lakefront. This lakefront area possesses exceptional natural beauty. Its residential redevelopment will provide an unprecedented dwelling opportunity of convenience to the Central Business District and lake vista attractiveness.” Source: Buffalo Evening News, January 25, 1964.

Mark Goldman describes the cleared area west of Niagara as once being “an attractive, lively and interesting neighbourhood with tall, narrow, wood frame and brick Italianate structures that supported later-day East Lake porches and carpenter’s gingerbread, built in the 1850s and 1860s and ornamented into the 1890s.”322 Like other modernist urban renewal projects the neighbourhood’s familiar road system would also be destroyed and replaced by large superblocks to create “shovel ready” sites which a developer could bid on. Busti Avenue, Trenton, Efner, Seventh and Fourth Streets would all be truncated in order to create the large superblocks (figure 5.5).

322 Mark Goldman, 206.
While developers did show some interest in the project, the luxury apartments never materialized and Buffalo ended up turning acres of flattened waterfront land over to the State and New York’s Urban Development Corporation (UDC). The UDC hired architect Paul Rudolph to design a planned community to “sprout a new, like Brasilia, from a jungle of slime and blight” in the words of a Courier Express reporter. Rudolph’s grand view would also fail to materialize and eventually a complex called “the Shoreline” would be built providing low-income housing and a school “surrounded by large empty grass fields and littered common areas.”

Figure 5.6 – Low and moderate income housing eventually was constructed for the waterfront urban renewal project, called the Shoreline Apartments. Note trees marking where the old neighbourhood blocks once were and the highway interchange in the background. Source: Buffalo Courier Express, May 22, 1973.

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323 As reported by Mark Goldman, City on the Edge. (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007), 206.
324 Ibid.
Urban renewal, whether for the construction of middle-class and luxury accommodation and marinas, or low cost housing, was fraught with delays and disappointment in Buffalo. The initial modernist plans for public large-scale waterfront parks and recreation land, to enhance the Functional City, were forgotten and replaced by plans for upscale housing to a city hungry for some glamour and anxious for wealthy customers to establish themselves close to the downtown commercial district. However the glamorous shoppers with waterfront views were not going to be forthcoming during Buffalo’s urban renewal years.

**Hamilton**

Hamilton, Ontario’s urban renewal plans were on a much smaller scale than Buffalo’s schemes but the Canadian city’s urban renewal efforts more clearly reflected success in achieving the modernist Functional City’s recreational function, both in the city’s clearance of land for waterfront recreation and in its clearance of an established residential area to create sporting fields.

The modernist architect and planner E.G. Faludi outlined recreation possibilities in his Master Plan proposals for Hamilton in 1947. He proposed creating parkland in crowded residential areas and acquiring land to make a green belt system, linking existing natural parks to create “a natural barrier between densely built up areas and future developments,” a system which would be “outstanding within cities of this Continent.”

He also presented detailed plans for a possible public beach, north-east of the city on Lake Ontario which he thought could be made into an attractive recreation area with

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swimming pools, wading pools and a beach house, amenities for both adults and children.  

Like CIAM’s members, he recommended that parkland should be designated before large-scale developments were built and that parks be part of the redevelopment plans for blighted neighbourhoods.  

He quoted figures for 1945 which showed that Hamilton already had 11 acres of parkland per 1,000 people – which he acknowledged was an “extraordinarily high proportion.”

In many ways, Faludi’s Master Plan proposals would be reflected in Mark P. David’s 1958 *Urban Renewal Study* for the city of Hamilton. Aimed at identifying deteriorating buildings and improving housing, the study would identify the “isolated residential area” of Van Wagner’s and Crescent Beaches as blighted and in need of redevelopment.  

The area was given the first priority for renewal with David calling for clearance in order to transform the 213 acres into a recreational area. The idea was to link the beaches to other local natural areas such as the Red Hill Creek Valley, King’s Forest, the Escarpment and Cootes’ Paradise in order to allow for a “continuous belt of open space” which “would form one of the most attractive park systems in North America.”  

David was influenced by Faludi’s 1947 Master Plan proposals and Faludi’s desire to preserve natural areas around the city’s periphery. Following the recommendations in David’s 1958 study, Hamilton would identify Van Wagner’s and Crescent Beaches, along the eastern shores of Lake Ontario, as its first urban renewal project. The beaches would be recommended for clearance in 1959.

326 Ibid, 58.  
327 Ibid, 60 and 59.  
328 Ibid, 60.  
330 Ibid, 28
The chaotic assortment of the 192 buildings, which housed 745 people in permanent and more cottage-like residences, did not reflect the usual urban renewal concerns. Urban renewal legislation usually focused on urban blight and congested housing in the core while the Van Wagner’s and Crescent Beaches were decidedly out of the way. However, 77 per cent of the beach housing was deemed blighted and therefore eligible for urban renewal funding. Despite the fact that the other 23 per cent of the houses was considered worth conserving, it would all have to come down. As a modernist project, the mixed use of housing and recreation was not recommended. The total elimination of all the houses was required for this recreation area, whether they were deemed blighted or not. The area needed to be wiped clean of the ramshackle houses and promoters of the project, like Alderman John C. Munro, stressed the importance of
cleanliness and propriety for the new development. There were to be “properly-constructed, clean bathhouses” to give bathers a decent area to change and recommendations were also made to clean the beach and have the sand sifted.\(^{331}\) The clean-sweep of modernist destruction began in the summer of 1961 and the local newspaper was quick to show its enthusiasm for the flattened recreation area: “From the ugly jumble of shacks and debris that once characterized Crescent Beach, the city’s property department has created a broad, clean expanse of bathing and picnic areas.”\(^{332}\)

The modernist commitment to an ordered, recreation-only area was reflected in the flattened land created to fulfill the recreation function. The clean and cleared land offered the potential for immediate renewal which came with grandiose ideas for the soon-to-be-named Confederation Park in honour of the nation’s approaching 1967 centennial.

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\(^{331}\) “Joint Effort Hailed,” The Hamilton Spectator, April 9, 1958.

Donald Pettit, a Toronto landscape architect was hired to come up with a master plan for the beach area. His firm initially recommended a five-phased project which would include picnic areas, a marina, swimming pool, amusement parks and restaurants. While the Ambitious City was keen to have extensive modern recreation facilities like other metropolitan centres, Hamilton council would only approve of contracts for a restaurant and change houses in April 1963.\(^{333}\) Although the grand marina complex was not forthcoming and a snack bar and change area were all that opened in 1964, Hamilton was very proud that it had converted the “year-round slum dwellings” into a cleared recreation area with urban renewal funding. In 1970, the *Hamilton Spectator* claimed that the clearance was possibly Canada’s first urban renewal project, a speculation that would have resonance in the city given that Hamilton had, by then, fully embraced the promises of urban renewal and had begun to clear acres of its downtown.\(^ {334}\) The modernist flattening of cottages and houses on the waterfront was also happening to much grander and older buildings in the city core.

The flattening of land for recreational purposes was also part of Hamilton’s second urban renewal project in the North End residential area. As modernists recommended, Hamilton would insert larger playing fields into the centre of the residential district and, similar to the Ellicott District’s sporting fields, they were built as part of a modernist superblock. The 1963 North End renewal plans included the leveling of two old schools and their replacement with three new school buildings, as well as sports fields. A community centre and swimming pool would be attached to the Senior Bennetto Public

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School. Sections of Ferrie, Picton and Macaulay streets would be erased. Century-old homes deemed of historic value by the Hamilton Branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario would be flattened to allow for the sports fields.\(^{335}\) This educational and recreational superblock, with sports fields and playgrounds, was promoted as being able “to do as much or more than any other single improvement to encourage the general upgrading of the whole Area.”\(^{336}\)

Both Hamilton and Buffalo would follow the modernist direction and carve out sport facilities within older residential districts in the hope of reviving their neighbourhoods. Buffalo’s Ellicott District’s expansive facilities would end up in the middle of renewal devastation and appear redundant, given that they were surrounded by empty fields when all the houses were cleared away under the Title 1 legislation. This did not happen in Hamilton where the cleared North End land was for a large sports field in the middle of the community. If the renewal plans had allowed for the preservation of a few of the historic buildings on the edges of the sports fields, as recommended by the Architecture Conservancy, perhaps the flattened landscape would have had more appeal for those times when the fields were not in use. In any case, the surrounding community, for the most part, was left standing and able to make use of the recreational area carved into its midst.

While both cities at one point seemed intent on following modernist recommendations for recreational areas on their waterfronts, Hamilton would stay true to the modernist ideal of creating recreation for the greater collective in its urban renewal plans. Buffalo initially thought of creating public recreation space but would end up

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\(^{335}\) Two stone houses at 60 and 62 Ferrie St were built in the 1880s and were seen as historically significant because of their stone walls.

using its waterfront urban renewal plans to encourage an upper and middle-class housing experience on the lakeshore, enhanced by the development of marinas. Ordinary citizens were expected to enjoy the waterfront from the Thruway, built over the old canal bed, however this was not the natural setting for a recreational experience that the modernists initially had in mind.

The recreation function was considered an essential part of the Functional City. An industrial city needed its workers to find some escape where bodies and spirits could relax and revive. Recreational areas were to provide a specific and important function for all the city’s inhabitants; a place to enjoy their hard-earned leisure. Sports fields, swimming pools, beaches and community centres were designed to bring people out of their individual homes to find a collective experience in the recreational spaces.

Both Hamilton and Buffalo would reflect the modernist ideas about the recreational function at some point in their urban renewal projects. Both would attempt to carve out recreational sporting facilities within needy residential neighbourhoods. However, Hamilton’s urban renewal plans stayed true to the modernist ideal of providing workers with a recreational area in a natural setting, when it cleared land to create Confederation Park on Lake Ontario, providing a space where all the city’s workers could collectively find refreshment on the beach after long hours on the job. The concept of creating public beaches for the greater population had its roots with Faludi’s 1947 Master Plan and would carry through to the urban renewal years a decade later.

Buffalo’s urban renewal waterfront developments would be designed with the middle class in mind and while some up-scale buildings and marinas were eventually constructed, the large-scale middle-class development would, in the end, not be realized.
Initially, during the 1950s, planners had tried to add public recreational land to the waterfront urban renewal plans but by the 1960s those ideas were replaced by upper middle class residential ambitions. While planners thought that the Thruway, encircling the downtown, would create a way for people to experience the Waterfront, in actual fact it created a barrier dividing Buffalo from its waterfront heritage and further limiting recreational opportunities for its citizens.
Chapter Five – Work, the Third Function
Key to the Industrial City

For modernists, who promoted the Functional City ideal, work was a key component of the industrial city. The industrial city was where the workers could connect to the means of production. As Sert explains, the village and the farm did not offer the same opportunities for success and “work in itself, to most people, therefore justifies the existence of the city.” Given that residences were supposed to be set apart from the work function, connecting workers to their work sites was a high priority. In order to achieve efficient connections within the Functional City, the structure of the city would rationally determine places of work, whether industrial, business or government, according to their functions, as specified in the “Town Planning Chart” or Athens Charter.

Le Corbusier’s Radiant City laid out the specific zones for the different types of work to be carried out in the industrial city, separating the residential area from the work areas by green spaces. Also surrounded by green belts would be the government or academic research sites and the business centre. These work areas would be on one side of the housing function with the factories, warehouses and heavy industry located on the other side of the residences. This arrangement would supposedly allow workers easy access to their work sites, whether in government, business or industry, because there would be efficient and direct transportation links between the residences and the places where work was carried out. As Mumford explains, Le Corbusier’s view of the industrial city caused ideological divisions within CIAM because the Radiant City was

337 Sert, Can Our Cities Survive?, 106.
338 Ibid, 108.
seen as a reactionary plan by the younger, more left-wing members of the organization. They complained that Le Corbusier’s Radiant City “made the business centre and the transportation system the defining elements of the new city.” As French CIAM-member André Lurçat declared, “Le Corbusier speaks of Authority, I speak of the dictatorship of the proletariat.”

339 While Lurçat would do what he could for the revolutionary movement in the Soviet Union, CIAM began to distance itself from its radical beginnings. The organization had started “as a coalition of architects who had sought to more closely link architecture to radical collective politics of both the left and the right,” but by 1933 the Soviet Union and National Socialism would reject CIAM’s Functional City ideology and “the urbanistic ideology of CIAM was now available to any modernizing ‘Authority’ willing to risk its application.”

340 The Functional City idea was going to define CIAM after 1933, as it began to assert itself as an international ‘building movement.’

341 Le Corbusier’s ideas for the Functional City, with heavily zoned and segregated functions, would become CIAM’s main recommendation for urban transformation. Business and industry were positioned as key elements in the Radiant City and would continue to be key components of the Functional City, as reflected in the Athens Charter, also known as the “Town Planning Chart,” presented by Sert in his CIAM-inspired book, Can Our Cities Survive? These ideas would be presented to young American architects and planners when Joseph Hudnut made Sert’s book a Harvard School of Design textbook.

342 Modernists like Sert, Giedion and Le Corbusier liked to position their ideas as essential to the grand historic span of urban development, particularly regarding the

339 Mumford, The CIAM Discourse, 92-93.
340 Ibid 94.
341 Ibid.
342 Ibid, 134.
progress of work and man’s tools. From ancient Egyptian slavery, through industrial advances in the Middle Ages and royal authority’s eventual control over the national economy to the machine age, work is presented as an evolving function hampered by the “uncontrolled and disorderly development of the Machine Age,” responsible for the “chaos of our cities.” The evolving new technologies and tools would help to remake the modern city, as in Le Corbusier’s words: “Industry, invading like a river that rolls to its destiny, brings us new tools adapted to this new era, animated by a new spirit.” The growth in production, technical progress and industrial expansion of the late 19th and early 20th centuries led to the development of new construction techniques which would contribute to the efficiency of the machines through the construction of large factories in industrial zones and the intensification of business centres through the construction of skyscrapers downtown, made possible by new architectural techniques. The efficiency of the modern look brought about by the new construction techniques and materials like glass, steel and concrete, would aesthetically mirror the efficiency of the new Functional City. While skyscrapers were recognized for increasing density downtown and providing a smooth, efficient modern look, Sert objected to their positioning on small sites, up against the city sidewalk, as in Manhattan, preferring the skyscraper to be set back from the street to allow for some surrounding green space and to permit more light to enter the downtown area.

Modernists wanted the city to be healthier by increasing opportunities for light and fresh air. They, along with many other urban observers, opposed the proliferation of polluting factories around, and in, the city, which they saw as threatening the urban

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343 Sert, 138.
345 Sert, 149.
environment and causing disorder because truck routes had to expand throughout the city to reach the diffuse industries. Issues of pollution and travel distances would be solved if the factories could be concentrated in industrial zones, separated by green belts and at a distance from residential areas, with easy access to railroads, harbours and other transportation routes. Sert suggested that a master plan for industrial zones would help the industrial city as a whole, for “without the zoning of industries, the control of other urban functions becomes impossible.”

The distance traveled by workers to their workplaces, whether industrial or commercial sites, was also a concern and modernist planners called for well-thought out zones for these different work functions. It was also recommended that the business areas, while distinct from residential and industrial zones, should have efficient transportation links to both functions. Given that most business centres were established long ago and had become more developed and congested over time, the need for express highways, called “parkways,” was recommended so that “the evacuation of great masses of the population in the business district may be accomplished with a minimum of time.”

Efficient links between the segregated work functions and the workers’ residences, in addition to new construction techniques for both skyscrapers and factories meant that the Functional City would require new master plans to accommodate these changes.

Initially urban renewal legislation in both the United States and in Canada focused on housing redevelopment, however by 1954 in the US and 1964 in Canada, the legislation was widened to include civic improvement plans. Therefore those concerned

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346 Sert, 146.
347 Sert, 153.
about what was happening in their downtowns could demand the rebuilding of their commercial cores under the urban renewal mandate. Modernist practices were endorsed to ensure quick action and an efficient look. Those who saw their downtowns as chaotic and ugly, believed that order was needed. Modernism promised to bring order through the strict segregation of uses, which would mean downtowns would no longer tolerate housing above shops, nor the chaotic assortment of building styles and building uses. The look was to be efficient with tall office towers surrounded by wide plazas, clean-edged shopping malls, direct access routes and the use of steel, concrete and glass to ensure a modern look which would inspire new investment and confidence.

The urban renewal plans for both Buffalo and Hamilton would reflect many of these ideas as business leaders joined with politicians in both cities to push for the changes which they believed would make their cities more efficient, and modern, and thereby enhance their industrial capacities while also benefiting their businesses and improving their downtowns. Business leaders in both cities would become major promoters of urban renewal. In both cities businessmen and downtown interests would initially push for the urban redevelopment of residential properties close to the downtown. Eventually, when the legislation allowed, they would lobby for their own downtowns to be put forward as urban renewal projects. Buffalo’s business leaders’ profound conviction in the benefits of urban renewal for their downtown meant that they would decide to practice urban renewal on their own, without federal help, after growing frustrated with the way the city was administering the government-funded program.
Buffalo – Commercial

Buffalo’s business leaders demonstrated their interest in redevelopment and their concern for blight before the enabling 1949 urban renewal legislation was passed by the U.S. federal government. City planning was promoted in Buffalo in the 1920s by downtown business interests through an organization called City Planning Associates which managed to get the city to establish Buffalo’s first official planning body called the City Planning Committee in 1921.348 As car ownership became more common, the CPA actively promoted highway construction and regional planning as well as city beautification through the hiring of Chicago architect Edward Bennett to complete their master plan of 1926 which, like modernist plans to follow, recommended the separation of urban functions. After the Second World War the interest in planning among business leaders would continue to grow.

Downtown business interests wanted to ensure the prosperity of their businesses and industries that had expanded during the intensity of the war effort and had begun to decline after the war. In 1947 representatives of Buffalo’s Chamber of Commerce would participate in the Conference on Urban Problems, which addressed the issue of blight in American cities and recommended ways that public authority could take over blighted private property in order to rebuild areas seen to be in decline. Buffalo’s growing concern for its downtown was a reflection of what was happening nationwide with the Urban Land Institute estimating that one-quarter of all city land in America was

To counter Buffalo’s blight problem business leaders joined together in 1951 to establish the Buffalo Redevelopment Committee of 100, which would raise funds and lobby various levels of government for action against the perceived growing threat. Their organization, which would also be called the Buffalo Redevelopment Foundation and later the Buffalo Development Foundation, would work with city officials to try to gain slum-clearance programs for the city and to establish limited-dividend corporations which would take on the rebuilding of the cleared land. Buffalo’s business elites were enthusiastic supporters of urban renewal and would direct their energy to encourage the clearance of the Ellicott District and the Waterfront area which were close to the downtown core.

In 1958 the Keith and Feiss report, *The Future of Buffalo*, confirmed many business leaders’ fears that the downtown was diminishing as a retail centre. “Much of Buffalo’s central business district is shop-worn and unattractive,” the planners explained. “Even on Main Street, there are many ugly, dirty and obviously outdated structures, fit only for a wrecking crew.” Keith and Feiss did not hold out much hope for rebuilding using the old established city lots and they urged the city to reexamine its “design and character.” They wanted the core to be reimagined and redeveloped so that it would look very different from the established downtown.

By 1959 the businessmen’s anxiety over growing blight and the downtown’s decline meant that their Foundation joined with the City to hire the Arthur D. Little Co. Inc. to investigate what could be done to improve the situation. The study led by

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352 Ibid.
architect C. Harry Broley Jr., a graduate of the Harvard Graduate School of Design, would offer modernist planning solutions and recommend the destruction of blocks of old downtown buildings, the construction of a superblock and the reconfiguration of downtown streets. It heralded the “frontal assault on residential blight in the heart of the city,” in reference to the Ellicott District and the Waterfront, but was concerned that there was no plan to deal with the “commercial blight and decay that is sapping the competitive vitality and appeal of Buffalo’s CBD.”

The main recommendation of the Little study was the establishment of a downtown shopping mall to counter the popularity of the suburban malls which were drawing shoppers away from the downtown. The study recognized the importance of the “constantly expanding mobility” brought about by the automobile, which the study believed was imposing “a discipline on the American landscape.” The solution to the downtown’s decline was to take advantage of an expanding road and highway network to connect the centre of the city to the suburbs and to create a destination “intown shopping centre.” The modernist notion of isolating the functions, making sure to separate the commercial district from the residential neighbourhoods and industrial zones, was also part of the report, which recommended that as the urban densities declined land could be converted into greenbelts to further segregate the zones. Parkways and roads were also

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354 Ibid, 122.
proposed as potential barriers to “incompatible development.” While recommending the segregation of the residential areas from the commercial area, the report also suggested high-density and high-rise developments within those peripheral residential areas, like the Waterfront, which would be linked to the downtown through the new highway network. As the *Buffalo Evening News* reported, the new apartment projects should be “keyed as high up the income scale as the demand for urban housing

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355 Ibid.
permits.” The higher valued apartments would bring higher paying patrons across the greenbelt and into the downtown department stores as paying customers.

The Little report recommended that the entire CBD be upgraded. It predicted that the region around Buffalo would continue to grow and in order to share in the positive projections, the downtown core would have to undertake private and public redevelopment to make the downtown more attractive. The report called for “dramatic physical change” with “the consensus being that changes of a lesser magnitude than those shown will result in mere palliative gestures and that a massive effort is called for.” The Little report recommended a modernist redesign and would mean wholesale redevelopment on a massive scale.

Like many modernist urban renewal projects, land assembly would be key. The report recommended private redevelopment along the west side of Main Street from the Liberty Bank on Court Street to Niagara Street, which would involve the closure of a section of Eagle Street (figure 6.2). This would make the two blocks into one, so that the superblock would be able to accommodate the new downtown shopping mall. It would also mean the destruction of what was known as the Kremlin Block, between Eagle and Niagara Streets. This very small block, “named for its fortress-like sense of strength and stability,” was made up of small mid-nineteenth-century buildings containing businesses and offices ranging from restaurants, bakeries, drugstores, bars, and liquor stores to shoe stores, men’s clothing stores, loan companies and jewelers.” The oldest building in the block was the lavish Kremlin Hall built in 1832.

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357 Little, 124.
358 Ibid., 114.
359 Goldman, City on the Edge, 197.
Given the need to bring people to the shopping mall, a parking ramp garage was also recommended for the corner of Franklin and Court Streets, to the west of Main St with the Eagle and Washington street parking garage recommended for an upgrade. The report wanted the downtown core to contract into a smaller area to allow pedestrian shoppers easy access to the stores once their cars were parked. With the pedestrians
isolated to one area, the report recommended that traffic should be encouraged to flow east-west as well as north-south.

While the report recognized that Buffalo’s port was going to suffer because of the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the city’s banks were expected to do well as a result of increased marine traffic and the report recommended that a high-rise tower be part of the development for an institutional tenant such as a bank, in order to draw more people into the area. The images that accompany the report are of an architect’s white 3-dimensional model showing wide streets and tall modern buildings with strong horizontal lines where the window bands would be but with no other ornamentation (figure 6.2).

There is no indication of Buffalo being a nineteenth century city, instead downtown Buffalo is presented as a smooth and efficient urban place where business could be done unencumbered by its architectural heritage.

The press reported that over 160 city leaders listened in “rapt attention” to the plans for the rejuvenation of the city when the Little report was presented at the downtown Statler Hotel. The report was said to offer “a message of hope for the redemption of downtown.”360 With its promise of the renewal of city blocks and the construction of a new shopping centre to replace the 19th century buildings, which seemed to carry the blame for all of the downtown’s problems, the Little report was readily accepted, with private financing for the project said to be “going over the top.”361

By the summer of 1961, Mayor Frank Sedita issued the city’s response promising to carry out the Little report’s recommendations. Wanting to achieve even more, Sedita

promised to extend the consultants’ plans beyond the west side of Main Street. The city wanted to undertake “a complete redesign of the downtown core” which would include “virtually all of Buffalo’s original and oldest commercial and business district.” Sedita said the downtown renewal would “create the image of a new, vibrant, revitalized metropolis” by physically transforming the downtown, doing away with the old radial cross streets, widening peripheral streets around the core area, getting rid of the “ugly ancient buildings” and replacing them with larger sites for new buildings. This remaking of downtown was important to Sedita because he saw the downtown as the symbol for the city and linked to the Waterfront Project, which visitors would pass through along the new expressways and highways. He saw the expanded, downtown plans as essential to how the city was perceived and he believed the proposed urban renewal project would easily gain the approval for funding from Washington because of the benefits which the city would enjoy from what he called the “planned face-lifting.” Not only would it make Buffalo prosper but the massive urban renewal projects would help the Queen City regain her dignity. “With the development of the Waterfront on the west and the Ellicott Project on the east, Buffalo can again be proud to show its Downtown to the world,” the city report enthused. Clearance of the two residential areas which abutted against the commercial district and the major renewal of the downtown would help to create a modern Functional City, with its functions well delineated and its buildings glistening new.

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363 Ibid.
364 Ibid, 2.
365 Ibid, 2.
366 Ibid.
367 Ibid.
The city designated 11 downtown blocks for urban renewal in 1963, south of Court Street and running along both sides of Main St. When the urban renewal blocks were identified there was already enthusiasm for the potential modern buildings offered to the “wrinkled old face” of Main Street. The new buildings promised to transform the skyline and to “demonstrate in mortar, steel and glass that there is another aspect to urban renewal than the providing of new housing.”

Not all the modern buildings were part of the urban renewal project. The Tishman Building on Lafayette Square was the first “to be built in modern architectural design” but was not part of the urban renewal projects. Conceived by New York modernist architect Emery Roth, the twenty-story glass, curtain-walled building replaced a six-story cast iron building dating from 1863. The Liberty Bank added a modern block-like extension, without any ornamentation, to its 1920’s exterior, and also on Lafayette Square, the old Victorian public library was demolished and replaced by the flat-roofed modern building of marble and steel. The excitement over all that was modern meant that the plans for the downtown shopping centre block were extended further south to create a fourteen-acre superblock by the Architects Redevelopment Collaborative, made up of five different Buffalo architectural firms. The updated plan would eradicate a portion of Niagara Street and Eagle St. in addition to the razing of a great variety of stores and businesses that lined these streets.

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The most dramatic demonstration of Buffalo’s business leaders’ commitment to both modernism and urban renewal was the destruction of the triangular Shelton Square dominated by the elaborate, red granite, Romanesque Revival Erie County Savings Bank (figure 6.3). The magnificent 19th century building, with turrets and arches, stood nine stories tall and its steel frame meant that it was very difficult to destroy. But it too would be forced down to allow for the construction of a modern bank tower which would be part of the new Main Place Mall, designed by Viennese architect Victor Gruen, who

Figure 6.3 – Red granite Romanesque Revival Erie County Savings Bank, built in 1903, on Shelton Square. Source: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.

370 Images of the demolition are available on line: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DL9YLSOlOso (accessed February 1, 2013).
had designed the United States’ very first downtown shopping mall in Detroit.\textsuperscript{371} The long horizontal slab of the mall building, with its bank tower rising above it, would now occupy the flattened fourteen acres where old brick buildings had once served a variety of different functions within the downtown core. The planners, represented by the Architect’s Redevelopment Collaborative (ARC), saw it as a “bold step toward reshaping the very heart of our city.”\textsuperscript{372}

Directly across Main Street from the proposed mall other shops and offices were quietly purchased in another large land assembly project. The entire city block bordered by Main, Washington, Eagle and North Division Streets, would be demolished so that the M&T plaza could be built, to house the bank’s headquarters. Designed by modernist architect Minoru Yamasaki, the 21-storey white slab building, made of structural steel and clad in glass, was set back from the street, as Sert had recommended, and surrounded by a pedestrian plaza (figure 6.5). Yamasaki, who designed the Pruitt-Igoe housing development, was working on his plans for New York City’s World Trade Centre when his Buffalo skyscraper was built.

\textsuperscript{371} Goodman, \textit{City on the Edge}, 196.
\textsuperscript{372} Ibid.
Figure 6.4 – Modernist Triumphalism – Destruction of the old bank and the rise of a new modernist bank building. Minoru Yamasaki’s M&T Bank can be seen in the distance. It is across Main Street from the rising Erie County Savings Bank Tower. Source: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.
Figure 6.5 – Gleaming white model of Minoru Yamasaki’s Manufacturers and Traders Trust Company Building, 1967. Source: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, File: Buildings.
All of this urban renewal activity was done without federal dollars. The city and New York State would be actively involved in the land assembly and street reorganization but most of the financing came from private local business and bank initiatives. The Chairman of the Greater Buffalo Development Foundation, Charles H. Diefendorf, explained that the urgency of the downtown renewal meant that they couldn’t wait for federal funding. “To pursue the Downtown program under the federal program would have meant putting it in line behind Ellicott, Waterfront, Masten Park, and Thruway Industrial Park projects,” he was reported as saying in 1963. At this point the business organization was thoroughly frustrated by the length of time the Ellicott Project was taking and with the difficulties they were having coordinating private investment within the public program. They felt that the downtown revival was already delayed and they couldn’t wait any longer. The business community’s substantial private investments in downtown urban renewal demonstrated their whole-hearted support for the modernizing project.

The business leaders’ conviction that the new buildings would improve Buffalo influenced investors from outside the city. Edmund Fusco, President of the HF&A Development & Management Corp of New York would invest $20 million in the Main Place development, “the nation’s only downtown redevelopment centre to be entirely erected with private capital.” Fusco praised the city’s bankers, in particular, for

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endorsing the project, which he compared to a work of art. “Buffalo,” he said, “as a city, will be a product of the image it creates.”

*Buffalo Evening News* journalist Bob Watson’s reporting reflected the general excitement and anticipation of the ongoing modernist destruction:

> The wonderful sounds peculiarly identified with old buildings coming down and new buildings going up finally filled the air in downtown Buffalo in 1963. There will be more of this in 1964, still more in 1965 and 1966 when the rebuilding of downtown, particularly along Main Street reaches a probable peak.

While the $15 million M&T Bank’s modern slab and plaza, and the $20 million shopping mall positioned on the other side of Main St. were exciting for those seeking signs of development, they were only part of the $132,746,000 worth of projects directed towards the city’s sweeping downtown rebuilding and modernization program. Nine other new buildings would be built in the downtown core and extensive modernization projects were also being carried out on already standing buildings, like the Liberty Bank.

By 1966, a writer would compare Buffalo’s skyline to a Mondrian painting, as the grid-like cranes and scaffolding of renewal began to dominate the downtown. The traffic tie-ups and construction detours were not seen as a problem for the city that had enthusiastically embraced renewal. The delays could be taken in stride because of the belief that it was all foreshadowing a new modern image on which the city could stake its future.

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376 As quoted in Mark Goldman, *City on the Edge*, 198.
And somehow, the monster construction machines become beautiful in themselves as they topple down the old and begin the new. The skyline becomes honeycombed with its own image. Cranes become soldiers on sentry duty against a dusky sky. Buffalonians welcome the signs and sounds of their expanding metropolis…

The transformations promised a new modern look which included the eradication of residential units above the old shops, different road patterns and new clean-edged buildings, embodying both beauty and efficiency and accepted as harbingers of a better future. It was a vast project which reflected Le Corbusier’s call to destroy the old and rebuild the city using modern techniques.

Figure 6.6 - Skyway Bridge under construction, 1955. Note how Main Street, running up the middle of the photo, went right to the harbour. Source: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, file: Bridges.

A “ring of expressways” would isolate the commercial function from the city’s residential and industrial functions by serving as a physical barrier around the Central Business District’s 350 acres. Once isolated and protected, a 1966 report recommended that “the ‘image’ of downtown should be improved by programs of maintenance, street lighting and code enforcement.” Pedestrians were to be encouraged to move freely and easily within the CBD and the metaphor of good health for the downtown was used for the “area to function efficiently and to accomplish the desired objectives.” The rational application of health-inducing modernist planning techniques would revive the old city because it would be transformed into something completely new. This new and refined commercial and business district would not only be isolated from other functions but the 1966 urban renewal report maintained that “less desirable retail groups should be discouraged from relocating in the planned CBD, while those of a CBD character should be encouraged to concentrate into the Central Business District.” Therefore retailers like hardware stores selling lumber and building supplies would not be welcome. The specific function of the new and improved downtown would have to be carefully maintained in order to keep up the refined appearance offered by all the new modern buildings.

By November 1966, Buffalo’s planners were recommending that Main St. be converted into a shopping mall and closed to vehicles, allowing for mass transit only in the form of a rail line. The Main Place Mall and the two new high-rise banks were seen as strengthening the area south of Court Street while the elimination of the “pockets of deterioration” north of Court was encouraged. At this point, the wholesale

378 City of Buffalo, Looking at the CBD. (Buffalo: Planning Board, June 1966), 23.
379 Ibid.
380 Ibid, 4.
block clearance of the 1950s and early 60s was no longer being recommended for the downtown and the discourse regarding the threat of blight was no longer as aggressive. However, the modernist disregard for the importance of the city’s waterfront heritage and the desire to build new tall buildings continued.

Figure 6.7 - Marine Midland Centre, 1972. It straddles Main St. and cuts the city off from the harbour. Although this model is gleaming white, the building is actually beige. Source: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, file: Buildings.
The Marine Midland Bank’s 40-storey tower would rise to dominate the city from the foot of Main Street, as part of the Waterfront Renewal project. The hope was that it would encourage more development to the south of the downtown but what it actually achieved was the further severing of the downtown from its historic connection to the harbour. The tower, built between 1969 and 1972, straddles Main St. and effectively blocks the city from the water by physically cutting off the connection the city once had with its port lands.

Figure 6.8 - Marine Midland Bank, 1981. The bank cuts the city off from the water at the foot of Main Street, as do the raised thoroughfares. Source: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, file: expressways.
In 1970 architects and planning consultants were still coming up with ideas to improve the downtown in order “to maintain the development momentum” of all the preceding projects. In their continued effort to fight the suburban shopping centre, they recommended enclosing and converting all of Main Street (and some side streets) into an air-conditioned mall which they maintained was “not necessarily a radical departure from programs of the past, but rather an extension of the evolutionary process in redevelopment of central city areas.” This idea would be carried into 1971, endorsed by the city in its comprehensive plan, which, in addition, called for the construction of a convention centre. While the city was still trying to come up with solutions to its declining downtown, modernism’s Functional City recommendations were no longer dominating the agenda.

In a rough draft for the 1971 comprehensive plan someone inserted in pencil the phrase, “to increase residential opportunities close to jobs and social activities” as the second goal for the downtown plan. Residential opportunities had been left off the initial draft and were not a goal for the Functional City, which tried to isolate the different functions. The modernist belief that the separated functions, gleaming new buildings and renewed road patterns would bring people back into the downtown were no longer reflected in the plan. Now jobs, housing, and tax revenue had taken over as the three main goals for the city and there was a hint of desperation in the rough draft which suggested that the city of Buffalo’s fiscal solvency was at risk. In the final draft, the old ideas about parking and expressway enhancements were still being recommended but

new ideas were also included with vital policy implications. The one that stands out most significantly, after over a decade of demolitions and urban renewal, is number “7” which says: “Protect and preserve buildings or spaces that have historic or architectural value.” Here the plan was no longer full of modernist hubris. In 1971, Buffalo recognized that the modernist aesthetic wasn’t going to save it. The modern image it had tried to build around itself and the use of modernist planning techniques, as reflected in the Functional City ideal, had failed. Buffalo was now reaching out and “importing complementary functions,” like the convention centre and exhibit hall which would help the city serve as a regional centre. While most of the modernist Functional City ideas, so familiar in previous reports and plans, were discarded, there remained the consistent call to action. Whereas the call once encouraged radical transformation, this time the call for action wasn’t full of optimism. This time, the modernist expectation of future greatness brought about by urban renewal no longer rang true and the 1971 comprehensive plan’s call to action was one of desperation, with a warning that without action “the City will wither.”

384 Ibid.
Buffalo – Industry

Buffalo’s urban renewal agency identified 1957 as the year when the city became aware of the need to develop “modern industry” in order to improve job prospects for its citizens while enhancing the city’s economic base. The 1958 Keith and Feiss report recommended the development of industrial districts within the city limits to encourage industrial growth. These central industrial parks were presented as the new and contemporary approach to development.

Modern industrial plant planning and industrial real estate disposal is moving in the direction of planned industrial districts in which off-street parking, rail facilities and water facilities are combined with industrial acreage planned on the basis of contemporary requirements of industry for warehousing and fabrication.

The consultants recommended that Buffalo follow cities like Norfolk, Virginia’s example and find a site, between a highway and railroads, which could be transformed into an industrial district after the removal of blighted residences and sub-standard non-residential buildings. In their report on redevelopment they encouraged the city to take action on its sub-standard industrial areas where “pockets of residential slum and blight are to be found.”

In 1959 members of Buffalo’s business sector, through the Buffalo Redevelopment Foundation, sponsored a task force of industrial and real estate experts to study possible industrial redevelopment sites, including the “Thruway Industrial Park” which covered

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387 Ibid.
over 1000 acres in the south-east part of the city. This site would generate studies, conferences, surveys and reports until it was officially designated as an urban renewal area in 1961. Feiss and Keith, hired by the city to study the industrial area, were enthusiastic about the venture, foreseeing hundreds of millions of dollars in investments, thousands of new jobs and millions of dollars in new city taxes. The consultants encouraged Buffalo to invest in the development of this massive industrial area. Their enthusiasm was supported by the city’s business sector. The business leaders established the Buffalo Thruway Industrial Park Inc. to help the city set up the park, to liaise with industries displaced by the waterfront redevelopment, and to attract new businesses to the Buffalo area. Buffalo businessmen were fully immersed in urban renewal. They encouraged the city to speed up development in the Ellicott District and Waterfront projects, embraced Downtown development, and promoted massive industrial transformation in the east of the city. For these businessmen, the different urban renewal projects, separated by the different functions they served, were interconnected. The Foundation planned to assist those industries uprooted by the renewal in the Waterfront Project by finding them an industrial site in the new industrial park. Urban renewal for the business community was seen as a way of creating economic growth. They invested heavily in the belief that all that was new and looked modern, and was rationally planned and efficiently organised, would help the industrial city to thrive.

When the federal government refused to support the industrial park because of the delays in the city’s other urban renewal projects, the business community would support the city’s decision to identify a small section of the industrial park site to redevelop without federal support. The 40-acre Thruway Industrial Park Pilot Project was initiated
in 1963 to “replace a blighted, worn-out tract of industrial land with attractive sites for the development of modern industrial and commercial uses.”388 This “worn-out land” was the old stockyard complete with cattle pens, railway spurs, a condenser pond and meat packaging buildings, in addition to other industries within William, Howard, Babcock and Lewis Streets. The area would be cleared; new streets, water and sewer lines would be introduced; and companies would be encouraged to develop industrial sites, accessible to rail and the new Thruway. If all went well, the hope was that the redevelopment of the 1,196-acre renewal project would soon follow with federal support.

While the industrial park hoped to attract displaced waterfront businesses, most of the 186 businesses from that urban renewal project either closed or moved elsewhere in the city.389 However the Crane Supply Company, a plumbing distribution operation, did make the move (figure 6.9). Displaced from its original location at 201 Church St. in the Waterfront area, the company moved to the industrial park to be close to the city’s newly-constructed modernist main post office, with access to the Thruway. It took over the lease of its new building in the fall of 1967.

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The efficiency of pooled resources and economic operations of the industrial park promised new industrial growth which would help employ people and bring in high city taxes, or so Buffalonians were led to believe. Established industrial parks in nearby North Tonawanda, Cheektowaga and in Syracuse, NY, were presented as success stories and Buffalo planning publications suggested that their success could be replicated in Buffalo with the pilot project expanding to include the almost 1,200 acres of federally
supported urban renewal land.\textsuperscript{390} While the pilot project saw the flattening of the old stockyard area, and the building of some new low industrial buildings, the federal urban renewal dollars needed for the expansion were not forthcoming and the large Thruway Industrial Park was never achieved. By 1986 the park had grown to 75 acres but over half the industrial land was unoccupied with the city actively trying to encourage development of 38.5 acres, offering “an attractive and aesthetically pleasing industrial park environment for the location of light manufacturing, warehouse, and distribution facility users.”\textsuperscript{391} Long after the end of the urban renewal effort to achieve a robust and economically successful Functional City, Buffalo still chased the dream of a prosperous industrial park.

\section*{Hamilton}

Hamilton, Ontario’s industrial might began to develop in the late $19^{th}$ century with the establishment of the city’s port, rail lines, steel mills and factories. As Ken Cruikshank and Nancy Bouchier have demonstrated, “key public and private decisions had ensured that the waterfront would develop as an industrial zone, particularly in the northeast of the city.”\textsuperscript{392} With industry solidly ensconced in a well-delineated zone in Hamilton, and pockets of industry developing around the city, the other commercial

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work function, associated with the central business district, would dominate the
Canadian city’s urban renewal agenda.

As in Buffalo, Hamilton’s business community was solidly behind the city’s early
urban renewal efforts. They campaigned for a master plan for the entire city and lobbied
hard for the 1954 Canadian urban renewal legislation to be extended to allow for the
planning and redevelopment of the commercial district, which had always been their
main goal and overriding concern. The amending legislation would be passed by the
Canadian government in 1964, extending federal funding beyond housing to include
municipal and community buildings and privately-owned facilities. The legislation
would allow urban renewal plans to be developed for Canadian cities’ downtown cores.
Property could be purchased with the help of federal dollars, the land assembled and
cleared, and then resold for commercial development, opening up “a veritable Pandora’s
box of local greed and boosterism.”393

The shops in downtown Hamilton, like the stores in Buffalo, were challenged by
the development of other retail opportunities outside the central core. In 1955 the city’s
first shopping mall was built on the old Jockey Club race track in the city’s east end. By
1960, this new Greater Hamilton Shopping Mall had parking spaces for 25,000
automobiles, which was a direct challenge for the downtown where parking was not as
easy to find. People were moving into suburban homes and new suburban shopping
experiences were enticing them way from the downtown.

Hamilton’s business leaders and politicians grappled with the lure of suburbia as
well as the increase in automobile traffic into the downtown core. A protracted debate

393 John C. Bacher, Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy. (Montreal:
McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 213.
after the Second World War between the growing desire to accommodate cars and Hamilton’s historic central market illustrates how modernists solved problems at the expense of community and tradition and how their solution represented the importance of function. Characterized by Danielle Robinson as a debate between traditionalists and modernizers, those who wanted to control the seeming chaos of market day and provide more parking downtown were able to push the market in under a four-level carpark, or parking ramp.394 The modernizers’ solution was to corral and control the market under three layers of parking, physically illustrating the modernist desire to come up with solutions to the tired city as well as their disregard for historic precedence. The new carpark was a physical manifestation of a controlling modernist aesthetic in which the horizontal lines of the carpark’s four levels dominated the structure’s look. The building’s form did not hide its function (figure 6.10). The colourful chaos of the old market was effectively extinguished when it was confined to the lowest level with cars able to find parking spaces above the market stalls in 1960. Ironically this modernist carpark would end up destroyed when the modernist superblock was constructed as part of the city’s large downtown urban renewal project.

Figure 6.10 – Hamilton’s Market Square Carpark, 1959. This modernist structure physically represents the aesthetic authority of the straight line and the automobile over the historic market tucked in beneath the parking ramp. Source: Tom Bochsler, Hamilton Public Library, Local History and Archives Dept., neg. 11856-C.

The carpark, while a good illustration of the modernist aesthetic, was not going to singlehandedly update the city’s look. As early as 1957 Hamilton was getting advice on rejuvenation from American urban renewal experts. Baltimore’s director of urban renewal, Oliver C. Winston, was quoted as saying, “Hamilton hasn’t any problems that a long-range renewal program cannot solve.” 395 He also recommended that Hamiltonians learn to get over their sentimental attachments to the old city and to adapt to change. Chicago’s authority on redevelopment, James Downs, told the city to plan for the future and to prepare for a renaissance of the downtown. 396 Hamilton’s business leaders were anxious to adopt the American urban renewal plans on a large scale. They invited

William Zeckendorf, Jr, an American urban renewal expert and President of Webb Knapp Inc, a real estate development firm, to speak to the Downtown Association in 1962. He told the business leaders that the downtown was “on the brink of decay.”\textsuperscript{397} Zeckendorf compounded their fears by saying that among cities of its size, Hamilton was the “least developed” in North America.\textsuperscript{398} He recommended clearance and the “complete revitalization of the downtown core,” calling for the expropriation of 20 to 30 acres, and the replacement of the old buildings with new taller buildings which would allow for extra parkland downtown.\textsuperscript{399} 

\textbf{Figure 6.11 - The Dominion Bank at King Street West and MacNab Street in downtown Hamilton would be demolished. Note the apartments and offices above street level. Source: Local History and Archives, Hamilton Public Library, File: Streets.}

The Hamilton Downtown Association listened to the Americans’ appraisals of their downtown. The businessmen supported the city’s urban renewal study of 1958, which focused on residential areas, but they wanted action for the commercial district, like the US experts recommended. They saw the “ramshackle, rundown, dirty, smelly premises” as a threat to their downtown and they wanted the old Victorian buildings razed and replaced with something new.\(^{400}\) Without the legislation to support urban renewal of the commercial area, the business leaders produced their own plan for the future in June 1963, entitled Enrich Our Leisure Hours. Their booklet called for a transformation of

\(^{400}\) “Plan Campaign to Spruce City’s ‘Blighted Areas’,” Hamilton Spectator, May 5, 1959.
the downtown by providing cultural, scientific and athletic buildings in the centre of the city and thereby embracing the “fifth function” proposed by CIAM in 1951, at CIAM 8: The Heart of the City. Sert would open the conference with a talk on the “Core” which was later re-titled “Centres of Community Life.”401 The Downtown Association called on Hamilton, the “Ambitious City,” to focus on what gave the city its vitality and

seek fulfillment of its destiny by planning a fully-integrated community whose facilities provide broader opportunities in Hamilton’s commercial life, recognize this city’s achievements in the field of science and technology and answer the growing need for the cultural development and physical improvement of its people in their leisure hours.402

Their plan was to create an urban square, using modernist land assembly techniques, to replace the old buildings, which were believed to be holding the city back. The square would draw people to the downtown by providing an athletic centre with an arena and bowling alley; an auditorium; a national science and technology centre; and a planetarium. A steel pylon was part of the plan, symbolically connecting Hamilton’s industrial prowess to the future and the exciting sky where the Apollo space program was racing to the moon. A razed downtown space would provide a large area for modern civic buildings and symbols of modernity, demonstrating that the commercial core was not moribund but very much connected to the modern world.

The business leaders’ idea for a civic square, steel pylon included, was reflected in the city’s urban renewal plans for the commercial district presented in April 1965 by the Toronto-based planning consultant Murray Jones, now that federal support for commercial areas had become available. The plan included an education centre, across

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from the new city hall; a planetarium; a library; an art gallery; an auditorium; a hotel; parking garages; and mall-like shops. The plan was intended to “re-awaken an interest in the downtown area and make it meaningful.”\footnote{“Blueprint for a city’s dream,” \textit{Hamilton Spectator}, April 9, 1965.} It would clear away the “century old retail outlets with no breath or vitality” and replace them with a large superblock on the north side of King St. which would change the look of the downtown by altering the street pattern, removing and realigning the streets.\footnote{Ibid.} The modernist plan to remove the historic streets in order to create the civic square was met with resignation and a desire not to stand in the way of the future. “A lot of tradition and history will be lost but it had to come,” said Alderman Dudzic.\footnote{“‘Most Exciting Thing… Ever’ – Copps,” \textit{Hamilton Spectator}, April 9, 1965.} Those living in apartments above the King St. shops would be forced out but the planners predicted that new apartment buildings would soon form a ring around the civic square, attracted by all that the square had to offer. Another modernist component of the plan was its commitment to providing open green spaces in the old city, airing out the perceived blight with light and fresh air. The proposal called for pools, gardens, a sculpture court and a skating rink, creating a park-like atmosphere to encourage citizens to come downtown.
After completing his plans for the downtown, Murray Jones produced *The Central Hamilton Urban Renewal Study* in September 1965 which examined 1,150 acres including all of the central business district and half of the older residential part of the city’s west end, which meant the majority of the old section of the city, containing buildings over a century years old. Holding true to the modernist ethos, Jones’ report found almost all of the old buildings in this huge stretch of the old city as having “little or no historical or architectural interest,” except for ten churches and a few other
buildings identified by the Architectural Conservancy Society of Ontario.\textsuperscript{406} Within this large part of the city he identified five districts in need of urban renewal with two sectors, the Civic Square and the York Street areas, as being most in need and therefore urban renewal schemes were immediately prepared for them. While Jones believed the majority of central Hamilton was in need of renewal, time restrictions limited him to identifying only five areas and to starting on the two most urgent urban renewal cases right away.

York Street, identified as the main entry to the city back in the 1920s, was seen as “a shabby entrance to nothing” by 1965.\textsuperscript{407} Jones drew up plans to transform and upgrade York Street as the new and efficient entry to the renewed civic core. As a diagonal road its position created “small, oddly shaped blocks” which modernist planners, like Jones, found “wasteful of land and inefficient in terms of traffic flow.”\textsuperscript{408} Not only was the old street inefficient but it was seen as a threat for it “would severely prejudice the comprehensive and effective renewal of the lands north of King St,” so it would have to be moved out of the urban renewal area and its traffic was rerouted.\textsuperscript{409} Widened into a boulevard, York St. would be realigned to square off the north section of the superblocks which were bounded by Bay Street on the west, Main Street on the south, James Street to the east and Merrick Street on the north (figure 6.14). While York Street would be realigned and pushed north, Charles Street and parts of Market and Park Streets were to be erased entirely, as would the historic market area where Hamiltonians

\textsuperscript{407} “Blueprint for a city’s dream,” \textit{Hamilton Spectator}, April 9, 1965.
\textsuperscript{409} Ibid, 45.
had shopped and connected with each other since the mid-1800s. The urban renewal study indicated that action was needed because the Civic Square area was “extensively blighted, with a mixture of obsolescent commercial, warehouse, manufacturing and residential buildings in generally poor condition.” The area, “made up of some of the oldest buildings in the city,” was no longer valued. Five hotels – Fisher’s, the King George, the Triton, the Iroquois and the Whitmore – would be torn down and the “antique” shops facing the Market Square would be “replaced by a modern shopping mall.” The old buildings, considered tired and inefficient, would be flattened, which was the easiest, and most efficient, way to start afresh.

Figure 6.14 - Within the Urban Renewal Scheme the two superblocks were created on either side of King St. West, eradicating the short blocks and the old street pattern. Ten full blocks were flattened. Source: author and Urban History Review 37, No.2 (Spring 2009), 59.

410 Ibid, 4.
411 Ibid.
412 “Blueprint for a city’s dream,” Hamilton Spectator, April 9, 1965.
Although urban renewal would mean a lot of disruption and dramatic changes to the core, most Hamiltonians accepted the plans with enthusiasm, wanting to achieve something big for their “ambitious city.” There was no time for sentimental regret, as Milford Smith wrote in 1957, instead, he believed one should adjust to the changes for the good of the future.\textsuperscript{413} The urban renewal plans represented a means for Hamilton to look towards the future with pride, as David Proulx wrote in \textit{Pardon My Lunch Bucket}, published to honour Hamilton’s 125\textsuperscript{th} anniversary in 1972.

\begin{quote}
…. a few years back this town had what you might call a bad case of inferiority complex. A real bad case. It was always Toronto’s doing this, Buffalo’s doing that and we’re doing nothing.

You know, things like that. Down-in-the-dumps talk. Well, all of a sudden some of the boys downtown and the boys at the city hall got talking and decided they were sick and tired of wearing Toronto’s hand-me-downs.

There was nothing wrong with that city that a new spirit and a few new buildings wouldn’t cure…say a new downtown core…somewhere the people could go and shop and look around, a place where they could take their friends from out of town with a little pride.\textsuperscript{414}
\end{quote}

The modernist plans, which allowed for the wholesale destruction of 12 blocks of downtown real estate, promised the city a new start. Perhaps it was the modernist flattening of all that land which looked like action and encouraged the city’s ever-present big dreams about the future to grow while muting any regrets. The \textit{Hamilton Spectator} envisioned the old Hamilton growing into “the modern, attractive, clean and pulsating giant it has long been destined to become.”\textsuperscript{415} This sense of destiny and future greatness convinced the politicians that a major disruption to many citizens’ way of life and the destruction of a large section of downtown Hamilton was worth it. The demolition of blocks of old buildings considered blighted and inefficient would allow the city to adopt

\textsuperscript{413} Milford L Smith, “Looking at Business”, \textit{Hamilton Spectator}, Feb. 2 1957.
\textsuperscript{414} David Proulx, \textit{Pardon My Lunch Bucket} (Hamilton: Corporation of the City of Hamilton, 1972).
a transformative plan, which included gardens and pools in the centre of the city, promising to “leapfrog Hamilton into the 21st century.” As the Hamilton Spectator commented, “Nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of making the dream come true in our lifetime.”

The dream involved the flattening of the old and inefficient to build a civic square, surrounded by public buildings in the “heart” of the city. This reflected CIAM 8’s interest in the public development of the core which was discussed at the 1951 conference in an “effort to find some new basis for an architecture of social collectivity other than socialism.” Hamilton chased the dream and hired a local developer to undertake the transformation. Joseph M. Pigott, who had deep family ties to the construction industry in Hamilton, was chosen and he did not downplay his contempt for the core. He saw the downtown as a slum, “dirty, shabby and rundown.” His family firm had worked on the Mies van der Rohe Toronto-Dominion Centre in Toronto and he believed a new tower would help draw people to Hamilton’s core. “If it’s done right,” he was quoted as saying, “the centre of the city will have a continuous flow of architecture which complement each other, rather than a hodge-podge of creations.” Modernists wanted a visual regularity that had no room for the diversity of buildings constructed in the city over time. The visual flow would complement the flow of traffic and pedestrian movement, everything moving efficiently through the downtown space. The visual flow would be maintained by smooth surfaces of glass, steel and concrete. The 26-storey Stelco Tower would be an anchor for the Jackson Square shopping mall, increasing the

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417 Ibid.
419 “We’ve got to densify; City Centre a Slum,” Hamilton Spectator, December 14, 1967.
numbers of workers in the downtown, while providing Stelco with a way of showing off its new steel products and how they could be used in a modernist tower with a curtain-wall design, said to be “functional, good-looking and economical.”

Figure 6.15 – An artist’s conception of a proposed “modern, up-to-date commercial centre.” Source: Urban Renewal Newsletter, September 1969.

In June 1968 merchants and tenants along King Street were given six months to vacate their buildings to make room for the new office tower. Restaurants, banks, barbershops, bookstores, shoe stores, a bakery, butchers, a grocery store, a corsetry, a milliner, hardware stores, an optometrist, clothing stores and beauty salons were all forced to close. The city set up a temporary steel mall building on Park Street between King and Main Streets during the construction where eleven businesses located while waiting for the new shopping mall to be completed. The old stone walls, cornice moldings, dormers and mansard roofs along King Street began to fall as the city went about replacing its old “lunch-bucket” image with a more youthful and positive look, a look that would “swing” in time with other modernist forces. \(421\) “Hamiltonians still can’t believe they’re going ahead with the square: it’s bigger than anything else in North America now under way: it’s bigger than the United Nations was when they assembled it,” boasted Jack Moore, the City Economic Development Commissioner.\(422\) This urban renewal project was said to be the largest downtown urban renewal land assembly project in Canada.\(423\)

\(422\) Ibid.
While buildings were being destroyed, financial troubles threatened the plans for the big project. The developer couldn’t afford to complete the project and the plans had to be redrawn to accommodate less public space in July 1968. Eventually a new developer from Montreal, Yale Properties, would take over the entire Civic Square project. The scheme had to be reworked. King St. West would no longer cross through a public space with gardens and pools but would instead become a one-directional transportation corridor crossing between two large superblocks delineated by concrete walls. The stores to the north turned their backs to the street, with their doors now
opening inside to the new shopping mall. The civic buildings, now forced into the south superblock, were also behind forbidding concrete walls. The pedestrian had to relinquish the street to the automobile.

The planners tried to mitigate the situation by suggesting that the separation of the pedestrian from the street was a positive development, and that the gardens were still part of the scheme, only now they had been raised up onto the roof of the mall, satisfying the modernist desire for segregation to promote efficiency. Hamiltonians were not convinced that this was a good thing and they began to organize under the desperate initials “SOS” for “Save Our Square”. Despite their protests, the dream could not be revived and there was no going back because demolition crews had already turned blocks of the old city into rubble. More plans were released and the street-level gardens and pools were lost to the commercial space forever.

For some the destruction was positive for the city and more was encouraged. City planners and some officials wanted to project their vision “beyond the distinct urban renewal area boundary to encompass the entire downtown.” Some envisioned a futuristic city working on two-levels and some planners were determined to encourage pedestrian movement above the street level between the superblocks and beyond through a network of pedestrian bridges. As with other modernist ideas, the vision was massive. The green space was to be fifteen feet or more above the street level as part of a complete raised pedestrian network, sometimes referred to as a “plus 15” skywalk system or pedway. The massive system of sky bridges however was never built and only one crosses King Street today. The architect for the Civic Square, Arthur C. F. Lau was

quoted as saying “a building cannot be attractive if it isn’t created and functional for people.” Sometimes, however function can be totally bereft of beauty. The rooftop pedestrian walkways never were able to satisfy the expectations promised by the gardens and pools in the initial plans and today the rooftops are eerily empty and uninviting.

Figure 6.17 – Revised plan for Downtown Hamilton, showing the pedway across King St, May 1969. Source: “Hamilton square with square a heartache for some residents,” Globe and Mail, May 6, 1969.

During the period when the city and the developer faced the growing pile of rubble in the downtown and the growing realization that they did not have the funds to complete the project, the Canadian government began to suspect that urban renewal was not the cure-all for the nation’s downtowns. The Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development suggested that urban renewal, “with its standing offer of federal bills for
locally-raised quarters, was becoming as much a matter of municipal financing as municipa
planning.426 The Task Force criticized the way the citizens were left out of the process and how social and cultural aspects of redevelopment were ignored. By 1969, the Canadian government no longer endorsed urban renewal, other than for the rehabilitation of houses and buildings, but Hamilton was too far along the urban renewal road to be able to turn back.

In the spring of 1972 the Hamilton Spectator ran an article entitled: “Rehabilitation: The New Approach.” In it the journalist Paul Wright suggested that Hamilton could preserve its landmarks and turn-of-the-century buildings, as recommended by Toronto architect Jack Diamond, and become a model for other cities in addition to avoiding the “cold, antiseptic blocks of steel, glass and concrete” which dominate other North American cities.427 Dissenting voices were beginning to criticize the modernist aesthetic which had inspired much of the urban renewal destruction. The federal government had by now turned away from the program and Diamond was looking at parts of Hamilton to preserve. Sadly it was too late for a large portion of Hamilton’s downtown but those historic buildings left intact were now seen as worthy of preservation. The modernist push for the clearance of blocks of old downtown buildings had lost its momentum.

Figures 6.18 (above) and 6.19 (below) - James Street at King Street, before and after Urban Renewal. 
Figure 6.18 – September 1955. Source: Hamilton Spectator, Hamilton Public Library, Archives and Local History Department. Figure 6.19 – Jackson Square with the Stelco Building on the far left. Note staircase for pedestrians to climb above the street level. Source: author.
For CIAM modernists the residential function was considered superior to the work function and was given priority in their plans. Likewise, urban renewal legislation in both Canada and the United States was at first intended only for housing. Business leaders, in both Hamilton and Buffalo, supported urban renewal for residential areas close to their downtowns, while lobbying to extend the program into their commercial districts. The business elites saw the urban renewal program as essential to the revival of their downtowns particularly when combined with modernist planning and building techniques that promised direct action and a solution to “blighted” buildings and declining profits. When both countries’ federal legislation allowed for commercial projects, the business elites in both cities were prepared with urban renewal schemes for their downtowns. Buffalo’s leaders were so committed to the idea that urban renewal would bring efficiency and prosperity that they found private financing for the modernist transformation of their downtown to avoid being frustrated by the bureaucratic delays they saw as inherent to the federal program. Buffalo business leaders also promoted the creation of an industrial zone for companies uprooted by the strict zoning in the renewed residential and commercial zones. Hamilton’s downtown transformation would rely on the federal funds.

Buffalo’s urban renewal efforts were massive compared to Hamilton’s experience. This was mainly due to the large residential areas which were cleared next to Buffalo’s downtown core. Over 2000 buildings were demolished in the Ellicott and Waterfront Districts surrounding the downtown area, while in Hamilton’s North End only 250 buildings were demolished. While both cities’ residential urban renewal projects, near
their respective downtowns, were very different in scale and implementation, similarities are more apparent in their downtown commercial urban renewal experiences.

Both cities would create modernist superblocks over small downtown streets. The streets which once crossed through their downtowns, were bifurcated or erased entirely. Intersections and irregular city blocks were lost. To complete their central urban renewal projects, both Buffalo and Hamilton would flatten central blocks with their downtowns. Small shops, hotels, department stores and large stone banks gave way to allow for the construction of a large downtown mall and modernist towers in each city. While Buffalo’s Main Place Mall and Manufacturer’s and Traders Trust Company’s skyscraper were major privately-funded urban renewal projects downtown, other private construction projects were also undertaken in what was seen as a sweeping rebuilding program for the city; whereas Hamilton’s focus was mainly on its publicly-funded civic square urban renewal area and Jackson Square Mall. Buffalo’s Midland Bank tower, constructed at the southern end of Main Street, was part of its Waterfront urban renewal project.

The downtown projects exhibited the importance of order, efficiency and separation which were essential to the modernist aesthetic. When Hamilton’s initial vision was blocked for lack of funds, planners persisted with the plan by moving the pedestrians up above the street level, separating them from the street. In the end, both Hamilton and Buffalo discovered that the destruction of downtown blocks and the addition of suburban style malls - where the shops are indoors instead of facing the street - do not necessarily make a city great. The ensuing economic downturn combined with the destruction of so many residences near the downtown area, in Buffalo’s case, and the
removal of apartments above the downtown shops, in Hamilton’s case, meant that there
were not as many available shoppers living nearby.

While some of the modernist buildings were truly impressive, like Hamilton’s City
Hall and Yamasaki’s bank tower, the downtown malls, which dominate both cities’
modernist superblocks, lack originality and a strong sense of place. The modernist
aesthetic, with its smooth, unencumbered surfaces reflecting the efficiency of the
Functional City, did not attract throngs of new shoppers, nor did it fulfill either cities’
great expectations for a thriving and modern downtown.
Chapter Six – Transportation, the Fourth Function
To create an Efficient and Flowing Modern System

The image of a massive expressway dominates the 1941 cover of Sigfried Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture*. Giedion, an art historian, was a founding member of CIAM and an enthusiastic promoter of modernist architecture. The book was based on lectures and seminars he gave at Harvard University during the 1938-39 academic year and, reflecting its success, the book would sixteen editions between 1941 and 1967. Its first edition cover was designed by the Bauhaus-trained, Austrian émigré Herbert Bayer and shows a highway superimposed over a drawing of the Chateau de Versailles’ formal gardens and vistas. The wide thoroughfare disappears into the distance, representing the new ideal for beauty, which could only be fully appreciated by getting into an automobile to experience the freedom of the open road, described by Giedion as “the space-time feeling of our period.”

No longer would beauty be admired from one static perspective, as from the window of the chateau, where a huge expanse of nature, presented in a planned garden form, was accessible to the admirer. The beauty of the modern age, as expressed through the modern parkway or expressway, could only be grasped through movement, according to Giedion. Movement was to be achieved through “a steady flow as the rules of the traffic prescribe.”

Lanes of asphalt, fed by a mammoth intersection, were presented, by the modernist art historian, not only as objects of beauty and desire but as solutions to the problems which confounded the congested industrial city of the mid-twentieth century. Unleashing the power behind this new mobility and the aesthetic beauty found in a smooth, open road, would require the functional division of both the city and its transportation networks, a fundamental

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429 Ibid.
restructuring which urban renewal planners would attempt to realize across North America in response to the growing dominance of the automobile.

For Giedion, as for Le Corbusier, the machine held great promise. It was a powerful inspiration to modernists, who admired its functionality and aesthetic appeal as an agent of efficiency. The initial parkways, which developed around New York City in the 1930s, allowed the automobile to fully exhibit these traits. Giedion recognized that the word “parkway” no longer described a pleasure road through a park, but meant something much more in the context of the future city. On these parkways - which he also called highways and which CIAM would refer to as thoroughfares, with North American planners later using the term expressways - the automobile could travel freely, not interrupted by either intersections or stop-lights. Giedion evocatively described the “graceful sequence of its curves” and “the uninterrupted forward motion” which could be experienced on the open highway. This joy-inducing freedom of mobility achieved on the parkway held great promise for the modernist because the functional isolation of the open, unencumbered road apparently presented a solution to the problem of city traffic. The future expressway would allow for the separation of the various road functions as well as the separation of the pedestrian from the automobile. As part of future city planning, the parkway would thereby restore the “rights of both traffic and of the pedestrian: it harmonizes the functions of both: in separating them definitely from one another, it gives full freedom to each.” Separation of the functions permitted freedom of motion for both the driver and the pedestrian and offered the corresponding efficiency to the city, an essential component of the modernist aesthetic.

430 Ibid., 728.
431 Ibid., 729.
432 Ibid., 728.
Giedion was inspired by New York’s parkway initiatives of the early 1940s put forward by Robert Moses, the controversial “master builder” who would champion the construction of thoroughfares, bridges and tunnels, particularly around New York City.\textsuperscript{433} The Northern State Parkway went up to the eastern edges of Manhattan but was forced to stop at the edge of the city. Giedion saw the highways constructed around the circumference of New York City as pointing to the future city’s form. He foresaw the highway’s eventual penetration of the congested city which had not yet happened “because the city has persisted in remaining an inflexible structure.” Supposedly the great promise of the wide and separating parkway would only be realized when the city “changes its actual structure.”\textsuperscript{434} Giedion identified the parkway as the ultimate in modernist tools which would transform the old city and erase the congested streets from the old neighbourhoods. He saw it as the best way to finally confront the tired and congested old neighbourhoods which were made up of small residential streets running between small blocks of houses; these streets he called the “rues corridors.” As Le Corbusier recommended in \textit{The Radiant City}, the small city blocks would be destroyed when the highway was allowed to finally penetrate through the old-fashioned urban structure. Restricted parkways would divide, connect, encircle, and enforce the city’s specific functions, thus transforming the city itself. The unrestricted asphalt would be an essential addition to CIAM’s modernist city, as presented in modernist architect Jose Luis Sert’s \textit{Can Our Cities Survive?} and would appear on the urban renewal maps as integral to achieving the post-war program’s modernist goals.\textsuperscript{435}

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\textsuperscript{434} Ibid., 735.
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Published in 1946, *Can Our Cities Survive?* presented the proposals developed by CIAM and elaborated on the modernists’ commitment to the remaking of the city, reprinting CIAM’s “Town Planning Chart” in its appendix. Sert wanted to introduce CIAM’s ideas to a wide American audience and discussed the importance of a new urban street system to reflect the needs of modern traffic and the growing popularity of the automobile.

Sert began the section on transportation by showing how horse-drawn vehicles were responsible for the layout of the city, reworking Le Corbusier’s earlier complaint about the circuitous donkey path, which curved and meandered and thereby provided an inefficient route for modern urban life. Le Corbusier blamed the inefficient road on “happy-go-lucky heedlessness, of looseness, lack of concentration and animality.”

The city street, whether it curved or narrowly followed the city’s grid, was not seen by modernists as a rational addition to the city. As Le Corbusier wrote in 1929:

> It is the well-trodden path of the eternal pedestrian, a relic of the centuries, a dislocated organ that can no longer function. The street wears us out. And when all is said and done we have to admit it disgusts us. Then why does it still exist?

In 1933, Le Corbusier wrote that “the present idea of the street must be abolished:

**DEATH OF THE STREET! DEATH OF THE STREET!**” The old city’s structure was seen as an anachronism and as CIAM’s “Town-Planning Chart” asserted, the old street systems “no longer fulfill the requirements of modern types of vehicles or modern traffic

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Le Corbusier’s denunciation of the street in the 1920s and 1930s would lead to CIAM’s “universal revulsion” against the street and Giedion and Sert’s belief that the freeway would confront it, thereby solving all of the city’s transportation and structural problems. While acknowledging that over time improvements had been made to the old city, Sert showed that the speed of the motorized vehicles had overwhelmed and disorganized the traffic situation, rendering the traditional old street pattern obsolete and the world’s cities paralyzed.

A major modernist preoccupation was the functional separation of the city’s different districts into strict zones, made possible because of more effective means of transportation. This concern over functions was extended to the urban street systems which CIAM’s “Town Planning Chart” described as failing “to exhibit any differentiation among themselves according to their possible functions – a circumstance which excludes an efficacious approach to the modern traffic problem.” This situation could only be solved, according to CIAM, through new city planning. It was accepted that streets would be more efficient if they were identified with a particular function. Industrial, commercial, residential and business traffic should have their separate streets, and pedestrians should also be separated from the traffic flow. The functional differentiation would allow greater freedom for all concerned and greater efficiency of movement, particularly for the fast-moving automobiles.

Sert used statistics from London, England to demonstrate how traffic congestion was caused by narrow city streets that had difficulty accommodating parking, moving

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439 Jose Louis Sert, *Can Our Cities Survive?*, 162.
441 Sert, *Can Our Cities Survive?*, 164.
442 Ibid., 168
vehicles and pedestrians. Crowded streets negated the freedom modernists associated with the automobile and in Sert’s words, which he italicized for emphasis, “the street of today has handicapped man’s movements and reduced traffic mobility.” While castigating narrow streets, Sert admitted that widening did not completely solve the problem. Not only did streets need to be wider but they also needed to be liberated from intersections. The frequency of the crossings cutting across the street was identified for having a negative effect on the street, and was presented as “probably the principal contributing factor” to congested street traffic.

The frequent cross streets were presented as a problem in the city because the automobile wasn’t able to use its full power but could only progress “by spasmodic leaps from stop-light to stop-light.” Therefore the machine had to limit its performance when driving in the city, which was another example of inefficiency and waste, according to modernist critics. The stop-lights forced cars and buses to stop in clumps, leaving wasted unoccupied spaces between the stop-lights which impeded the flow of the traffic. On an ideal modernist street, traffic would flow continuously without interruption or even slowing, allowing the motorists to efficiently move with the flow, like a well-oiled mechanical part.

This idealized notion of traffic “flow” was non-existent in the city and instead urban traffic was seen as “steadily approaching a state of actual paralysis.” Modernists questioned why the machine’s potential was wasted on an obsolete and inefficient road system. For Sert, Giedion and other modernists, “our mastery of speed had become

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443 Ibid., 172.
444 Ibid., 174.
445 Ibid.
useless in our cities. The machine needed an open road and therefore the city needed to allow the impressive machines to function efficiently by destroying the archaic urban structures.

Methods to control automobile traffic “in most cities” had proven insufficient. CIAM’s “Town Planning Chart” called for “a new street system, designed for modern means of transportation.” Going slow was not an option. The machine’s potential had to be satisfied and slowing things down was not a serious solution. Sert was prepared to take risks, to attempt “new and untried measures” because of the urgent desire to affect change.

The old “academic” solutions were disparaged by CIAM members as city planning in “the grand manner,” and criticized for making congestion worse. Just as modernist artists attacked the academic paintings of the nineteenth century, CIAM members, like Sert, had no respect for the “Beaux-Arts” approach to city planning, which favoured magnificent vistas using diagonals and radial streets, much like what Buffalo had inherited from Joseph Ellicott who laid out the city in 1805. Sert had no time for this “unanalytical” approach which he claimed only complicated the traffic situation and interrupted the traffic flow. Modernists didn’t want a response which favoured a grand design and an elegant vista, they wanted designs which favoured movement and brought efficiency to the renewed city.

Modernization, for them, meant classifying and separating streets by their particular functions. The new street system would necessitate the introduction of highways into the

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446 Ibid., 177.
447 Ibid., 179.
448 as shown in Sert, Can Our Cities Survive?, 248.
449 Ibid., 180
city. Referred to as “the great traffic arteries,” they would have to be wide enough to ensure traffic flow and would have to rise above or below the rest of the city in order to eliminate grade crossings and reduce traffic accidents. Forcing the expressways into the heart of the city was seen as a great accomplishment and a solution to the city’s problems which, when accomplished, would “proclaim a new urban rhythm.”

This new rhythm, introduced by the functional thoroughfares, would require additional planning initiatives for the city as a whole. According to CIAM’s “Town-Planning Chart,” residential areas would have to be isolated from the heavy traffic. The modernists recommended landscaped bands of green, with trees planted as screens, on either side of the highways. Other buildings were also in need of protection from the highway’s noise, dirt and fumes, so the space required for the expressway would also include enough green space to allow for trees and other green features in order to transform the expressway into a parkway for both the pleasure of the drivers and the safety of the city’s buildings. No concern was expressed by those recommending these new highways for the number of properties which would have to be bulldozed for such a wide expanse. They believed they were allowing for efficient travel while at the same time protecting the population by isolating the highway as it penetrated through the centre of the city. Controlling policies were needed to prohibit the construction of buildings beside the highways but the structures of the past were not a concern.

While happy to impose major changes to the old city, the modernist planners were not prepared to eliminate walking. In fact, their documents encourage walking in the city but only by isolating pedestrians from the street through separate pedestrian pathways

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450 Ibid, 188.  
451 Ibid.
and crossings. Close encounters between the pedestrian and the automobile would only take place where necessary, as in parking areas; otherwise the goal was to allow pedestrians to move freely away from the automobile-dominated street, preferably through isolated green areas, and only crossing the street by bridge or tunnel.

The modernist reorganization of the city’s street system would involve a massive transformation of the way the city looked and functioned. Sert and other modernists called for most cities to completely change their street patterns and to divide their space into separate sectors. The new roadways would service the newly zoned areas of the city, to operate as a streamlined system. The modernist approach involved an aesthetic of efficiency and motion which required total planning and little concern for the subsequent destruction. In fact, Sert explained that the losses due to the destruction would be regained because the original streets would also be eliminated, and “a new economy of road surface” would be achieved - an economy which would only be realized after all the structures were destroyed. With the adoption of a rational multi-laned highway system, the automobile was set up as the agent of change which just “might stimulate a total reorganization of life.”\textsuperscript{452} The automobile and its parkways and functional street networks, as prescribed by the modernist planners, would become part of the urban renewal plans to change the city.

These ideas informed the thinking of planners everywhere, and politicians too. Both Hamilton and Buffalo would adopt new streetscapes as part of their urban renewal schemes. While Buffalo developed the modernist transportation function on a much larger scale, using large-scale planning techniques, roadways and freeways to totally transform that city’s downtown and surrounding residential areas, Hamilton’s much more

\textsuperscript{452} Ibid., 194.
modest urban renewal schemes also provide examples of modernist rethinking of the street and visions of what freeways could achieve. Although the scale was different, as were the federal incentives, the vision remained the same. The border made little difference to what planners and politicians tried to accomplish. Their efforts reflect the modernist desire to transform the street and to solve particular urban problems by promoting the freedom of the open road within the city itself.

Buffalo

Modernists proposed new roads and freeways to achieve the Functional City. Freeways were seen as essential components of the urban renewal effort to make America’s cities efficient and prosperous once again. Immediately after the Second World War, American engineers promoted the “modern expressway” as a means of preserving the city and they connected slum clearance to road construction, envisioning themselves working “hand-in-hand” with urban planners “to obtain the maximum benefit in cleaning up those blighted sections.”

Road builders were recognized as important partners in the rebuilding of the American city. The US Federal Works Agency identified roads as part of the urban redevelopment solution and this was clearly articulated in 1949 to the Road Builder’s Association by Agency Administrator, Major General Philip B. Fleming who saw the “need for the provision of new free-flowing arterial highways” in order to save the city. A general plan would divide the city into its modernist functions and direct the “proper placement and design of the new arterial highways that will both

conduct to, and serve the intended land uses.” The construction of roads and highways was “to have an important place in urban redevelopment.”

While the U.S. Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954 would satisfy the housing and planning components of urban redevelopment, the expressways would receive funding through the U.S. federal road aid program. In 1952 and 1954, federal officials agreed to finance highway construction as determined by the local political situation. As Rose points out, this arrangement allowed “engineers, truckers or planners to remodel American cities” depending on who had the politician’s ear. When President Eisenhower signed the Interstate Highway Act on June 29, 1956, engineers were able to count on increased funding for their highways. Cities would be able to access more federal dollars for expressway construction, which was particularly expensive when pushed through densely populated areas, and the highway would become an even more effective tool in the urban renewal process.

The City of Buffalo’s urban renewal projects were linked to highway and road construction. Freeways were built to contain as well as to connect the different zones of the rebuilt city and were included as essential parts of the urban renewal plans, particularly for the downtown and the waterfront schemes. Planning enthusiasts recognized the many planning initiatives that had taken place in Buffalo during the 1920s and felt that the pent-up demand of the “essentially barren” Depression and the war years was finally going to be met as the city and county entered “a new phase of expansion and

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455 Ibid, 5.
A phase which would address two major concerns: increased traffic and run-down housing. Massive expressway construction was going to be an important part of this urban redevelopment.

Buffalo’s connection to Albany, NY and Pennsylvania was assured when Governor Dewey signed state legislation in early 1950 authorizing the construction of the New York State Thruway. The plan had the Interstate highway approaching the city from the east and southwest with a spur circling up around the south and west of downtown Buffalo and then north to Niagara Falls. In this way central Buffalo would be contained to the east and the south with other highways and arterial roads, encircling and connecting the city’s different functions. As Sert had explained, the modernist road systems “permit a complete separation of dwelling and working areas and the establishment of direct means of communication that save time even though distances are greater.”

When the Thruway’s route was extended east from the city, planners were expecting it to resemble a “huge ‘strip city,’ studded with industrial complexes near the interchanges and a green belt of residential areas in between.”

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458 Sert, Can Our Cities Survive?, 194.
Nathaniel Keith and Carl Feiss’ modernist “Action Program” report, which was very influential in Buffalo’s urban renewal plans, endorsed the “new superhighway program” for its promotion of “horizontal development for industry and retail commercial facilities on suburban acreages.” The highways themselves were contributing to the horizontal spread which encouraged suburban sprawl and a flattening towards the horizon which a modernist might see as a potent mix of progress and unlimited potential. This horizontal flattening would see the layered warehouses of the downtown core, emptying out and being replaced by the flat-roofed low commercial and industrial buildings on the city’s periphery.\textsuperscript{460} City dwellers were also leaving to new homes in the suburbs. It was important for the city to be linked to these suburban

\textsuperscript{460} Nathaniel Keith and Carl Feiss, \textit{The Future of Buffalo: An Action Program for Community Development}. (City of Buffalo: Grosvenor Room, Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, 1958), 2
developments and the numerous highways under construction during the 1950s and 1960s would “facilitate the flow of traffic in and out of town.” In addition, particularly for highways funded by the state and federal governments, the Keith and Feiss report recommended that the city’s general plan consider how best to reconfigure city land before more highways were constructed. Here, when they discussed the transportation function, the importance of the modernist aesthetic is obvious. The systems provided for vehicular traffic were seen as essential for the requisite efficiency of the city, or as Keith and Feiss put it: “At all times the flow of vehicles must be kept liquid.” Cars and trucks were to move through the city unimpeded. The modernist transportation links were to favour the automobile.

The Arthur D. Little Report, which would define Buffalo’s urban renewal vision for its downtown in 1960, demonstrated the importance of repositioning the roads and highways to control and contain the downtown core. It suggested that the horizontal expansion, encouraged by highway construction, could also be contained and counteracted by increased highway development. The Report recognized that the automobile had imposed “a discipline on the American landscape” which was drawing people away from Buffalo’s downtown and it recommended that the city use the same highways that were drawing shoppers to the suburbs to entice them back to “an in-town shopping center.” It called for a smaller, more compact downtown and predicted that the circumferential highway system under construction would help to draw people back

461 Ibid., 12.
462 Ibid.
463 Ibid., 11.
to the core if a mall was built. The report saw the car and the “mobile shopper” as essential to the future of the downtown.465

The designated residential urban renewal areas surrounded the downtown core and the proposed and existing highways would also circumnavigate the downtown. The Niagara Thruway, a spur off the New York State Thruway, would delineate the south and west boundaries, the Kensington Expressway would come into the city from the east and join the west side expressway across the north and the Oak-Elm diffusers would run up the east side of the downtown (figure 7.3). The area would be contained on all sides by renewed residential areas and expressways that would serve to make the downtown accessible but also help to define its borders.

Figure 7.3 - 1966 highway projections for downtown Buffalo. The diagram on the left shows existing highways. Note how the proposed highways, on the right, help to contain the downtown. The Elm-Oak freeway, far right, is below grade; Thruway 190 and the Buffalo Skyway are above. The original radial plan was to be replaced by the grid. Source: City of Buffalo, Division of Planning, A Central Business District Proposal for Buffalo, New York. (Buffalo, New York: Grosvenor Room, Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, 1966), 11.

465 Ibid., 113.
Emboldened by the Little report, the city would recommend that the street pattern within the downtown core be realigned. Like the CIAM modernists had recommended, Buffalo was eager to encourage a complete redesign of the downtown. Streets around the core would be widened, new green areas would be created, and promenades would allow for “pedestrians to stroll at leisure.” A new superblock would not only erase the bisector streets between Court and Church Streets but would also be pushed into Pearl St. to “enable better design of the projected plaza” and to eliminate the causes of traffic congestion.466

In 1965, when urban renewal schemes were promising to demolish thousands of additional buildings across the city and modernist plans were seen as the way to secure the future, Buffalo presented its Niagara Frontier Transportation Study and called for the construction of 126 miles of new expressways. Identified as “a long-range, scientifically-tested plan,” the Corridor plan recommended the addition of 126 miles of new highways to be added to the 120 miles of expressways already built or being constructed.467 The assumption was that the population of the two-county area surrounding Buffalo would grow from 1.35 million in 1962 to 2-million in 1985 and employment opportunities would increase from 499,000 to 683,000 jobs.468 Computer-generated traffic projections presented a network of concentric loops around the downtown core with radial roads cutting through the centre of the city and linking to the loops. The Elm-Oak and West Side Expressways would complete the inner loop (figure 7.3). A radial route would pierce through the centre of the city from North Tonawanda. The middle loop would

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468 Ibid.
circle the outside of the city limits while an outer loop and more radial highways would extend the network into the countryside with an additional 200 miles of highway being added after 1985 if there was a need (figure 7.4). The engineers behind the automobile-dominated plan saw it as being flexible enough to extend ever outward as progress permitted.

The Corridor Plan was to form “the backbone of future transportation development” and would separate through traffic from local arteries by offering high-speed, limited-access routes that would “reduce the losses and the blighting effects of traffic congestion.” When announcing the new highway network, the chairman of the transportation study group, J. Burch McMorran, emphasized that the network would be the key to the future of transportation around Buffalo and was “the first element to be developed in the comprehensive planning process.” The development of the arterial roads and public transit options were touched on in the report but it was the speed-promoting and expansive highways which had captured the imagination of the time. Caught in the same commitment to the automobile which modernist Sigfried Giedion had described, Buffalo saw the highway construction as the key both to the region’s growth and to the city’s salvation.

By 1966, Buffalo was promoting the eventual highway ring around its 350-acre downtown core as “a physical barrier that will definitely form a boundary for the Central Business District.” The boundary would isolate the functions of the downtown and permit pedestrians to walk within the circumscribed shopping district, surrounded by the

469 Ibid., 24.
470 Ibid.
wall of expressways which would separate the commercial function from the urban renewal residential projects, with the new residences providing a source for additional shoppers to the downtown core.

Figure 7.4 - 1966 Plans for additional highways to encircle Buffalo. The Elm-Oak and West Side Expressways would complete the inner loop. A radial route would pierce through the centre of the city from North Tonawanda. The middle loop would circle the outside of the city limits while an outer loop and more radial highways would extend the network into the countryside with an additional 200 miles of highway being added after 1985 if necessary. Source: “Blueprint presented for area expressways,” Buffalo (August, 1965), 24.
Figure 7.5 - The Elm-Oak Expressway running along the east side of the downtown was to provide a barrier between the Ellicott District to the east and the downtown to the west. The downtown and cleared Waterfront area are encircled by freeways which cut the city off from its historic harbour and Lake Erie.

The Elm-Oak Expressway stands out as a barrier in the 1970 and 1971 planning maps for the downtown (figure 7.5). Initially the route was conceived as a depressed limited-access six-lane expressway separating the downtown from the Ellicott District in the east, a segregated African-American district which had experienced a great deal of demolition. It was to be used as a means of separating the downtown from the East Side in the drawings presented as part of the 1971 Comprehensive Plan for Downtown Buffalo, which Goldman describes as an “uber-urban renewal plan.”

While the images, included in the report, present a sunken high-speed expressway, the text suggests that the consultants were also considering an “at-grade junior expressway.” It would connect to the Kensington Expressway which would link to the Virginia-Carolina Interchange of the New York Thruway by another new highway called the West Side Arterial – thereby providing an enclosed circle around the downtown. Whether on the level or beneath the grade, the Elm-Oak Expressway was to be a wide expanse, totally out of scale with the smaller city blocks which dominated the city. The soaring above-ground Buffalo Skyway to the south and the raised Niagara Thruway to the south-west ensured that the south and west boundaries of the downtown were equally out of scale with the city’s original streetscape (figure 7.6).

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Figure 7.6 – The Buffalo Skyway goes over top of Thruway 190. They both cut off the city on the left from Lake Erie on the right. Thruway 190 continues north along the old Erie Canal bed towards Niagara Falls. Note the Dante Apartments on the right, Buffalo’s first cruciform urban renewal apartments. Across the highway from the apartments is cleared land, which was part of the Waterfront urban renewal project. The grain elevators, whose functional appearance inspired the modernists, can be seen in the background, along the banks of the Buffalo River. Source: Ric Delaney, Buffalo Courier Express, Special Collections, E. H. Butler Library, Buffalo State College, October 16, 1969.
The layout of the historic downtown was criticized in the 1971 Comprehensive Plan. Like CIAM’s modernists who railed against the radial street patterns of the past, Buffalo’s planners did not appreciate Ellicott’s original radial street plan and were prepared to impose “a grid pattern in combination with a system of one-way streets,” which they believed would encourage efficiency both for traffic and pedestrians. In addition to the changes to the grid with the additions of the new highways, the Comprehensive Plan also endorsed a rapid transit line along Main Street to connect the
downtown to outlying suburbs. This was a continuation of a 1966 proposal to convert Main Street into a pedestrian mall with a central roadway restricted to light rail only.\textsuperscript{474} Separating pedestrians from vehicular traffic, the 1966 proposal suggested that either an above, or below, ground crossing of Main Street be provided for pedestrians in the shopping district. The 1971 Comprehensive Plan would continue to explore the idea of converting Main Street into a covered shopping area at the same time as offering public transit to bring in shoppers to the downtown. The light rail transit system would end up offering only one rail line along Main Street.

While encouraging more highway developments to surround and define the downtown area, the 1971 plan recommended that traffic in the core be limited and that people leave their cars in parking garages or come into the redesigned shopping area by rail. This plan, like the Little report before it, was dedicated to the interests of efficiency of movement, with a bias toward the automobile (given the limitations of the proposed public transit), while demonstrating no concern for the traditional street structure or the historic buildings which had been part of the city’s streetscape for generations. The building of expressways and efficient transportation routes were intrinsically connected to the post-war urban renewal schemes. Highways and large exclusively residential neighbourhoods, divided from commercial and industrial sectors, relied on each other to complement and enable their distinct functions. The desired free flow of movement was based on an aesthetic which favoured efficiency and straight lines over complex interconnections with roots in the past.

\textsuperscript{474} Division of Planning, City of Buffalo, \textit{A Central Business District Proposal for Buffalo, New York.} (Buffalo, NY: Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, November 1966), 2.
The modernist enthusiasm for efficient expressways, which superseded any concern for natural beauty or historic preservation, was highlighted during the construction of the Niagara Thruway, the Scanaquada Expressway and the Kensington Expressway which together made up the west, north and east sides of Buffalo’s middle expressway loop. In order for these expressways to be constructed the historic significance of parkways and parkland designed by nineteenth century landscape designer Frederick Law Olmsted, considered the founder of American landscape architecture, would be ignored. Olmsted’s historic Buffalo Park and Parkway system would be substantially altered, if not ruined.

Olmsted created the first interconnected parkland in the United States for the city of Buffalo in 1876. His first parks were designed for the north of the city, after which he would also create parks to the south. When he was finished there would be six parks in addition to the adjoining parkways and circles winding their way around the city. By the turn of the century, Buffalo would be the only city in the United States with two Olmsted park and parkway systems. The landscape architect saw his linked parks and parkways as an example of comprehensive city planning. He appreciated Ellicott’s radial street pattern and fit his park systems over the original city plan, declaring Buffalo to be “the best planned city, as to its streets, public places and grounds, in the United States.”

The northern park system started in the west with a small park, called The Front, overlooking Lake Erie and the Niagara River. It was linked through tree-lined parkways to The Park, which is now known as Delaware Park. Its 243 acres reflected “Olmsted’s ideal of pastoral scenery” with a large meadow and a lake, “suitable for quiet, restful


476 From a letter sent to George Waring Jr., April 13 1876, as quoted by Carson, ibid., 74.
enjoyment and restoration.”

To the south-east of the Park, the Parade, today known as Martin Luther King Jr. Park, was built on higher terrain to be used for civic gatherings and military manoeuvres and these two parks were linked by the beautiful, tree-lined Humboldt Parkway.

Figure 7.8 - Olmsted’s two separate park systems. His parkways were tree-lined and not meant for speed. Expressway construction would seriously damage, if not ruin, the system of parks and parkways to the north. Source: Olmsted Parks and Parkways in Buffalo New York, Vertical File: “Parks-Olmsted”, Grosvenor Room, Hamilton and Erie County Public Library.

477 Ibid., 89-90.
Engineers and modernist planners would force highway construction through this historic park system, effectively ruining Olmsted’s vision, in a concerted effort to build efficient traffic corridors around and into the downtown, linking the different zones undergoing urban renewal with each other, the suburbs and beyond. The goal of constructing wide multi-laned expressways trumped the allure of the historic parkland system, and the promise of efficient movement assumed a higher priority than that of protecting the parks’ natural beauty and the historic significance of Olmsted’s designs.

In his master’s thesis, landscape architect Scott Carson shows how changes to Olmsted’s original vision for the parkland was put into effect by the City Beautiful movement at the turn of the twentieth century with the imposition of civic additions and public displays into the park setting, such as the recreational facilities and statues which were added in the Front, Delaware Park and Humboldt Parks. While these additions would challenge Olmsted’s original attempt to achieve beautiful landscapes and pastoral calm, the City Beautiful philosophy of parks, which emphasized civic display and embellishment, would not have any where near the impact on Olmsted’s parks as would the construction of the expressways fifty years later. The new expressways transformed the gentle parkways into multi-laned thoroughfares, cutting through the parks, across and around the once tranquil waterways, and bringing expanses of asphalt and high volumes of automobile traffic into areas once dedicated to leisurely Sunday drives but rearranged to become agents of efficiency. The horse and buggy of the nineteenth century had given way to the automobile. While Buffalo’s population grew so did the numbers of vehicles and the pressure for functional highways would also increase. What is disappointing is

478 Carson, ibid., 191.
that modernist highway builders did not try to protect Olmsted’s legacy and build their highways elsewhere.

Three different expressways would transform Olmsted’s park system. The Niagara Thruway’s lanes and access ramps along the western side of the city would destroy Olmsted’s original intent for the Front because they blocked the Front’s view of the Niagara River and Lake Erie, in addition to diminishing the park’s size from thirty-two acres to just over twenty acres.\(^{479}\) The highway would also cut off the Front’s access to the water.\(^{480}\) Olmsted’s Park, now known as Delaware Park, would also be irreparably damaged. Construction began in 1959 on the Scajacuada Expressway, a mid-town expressway linking the east to the west and dividing Olmstead’s pastoral prospect in two. Newspaper editorial writers would present their outrage using an aesthetic argument: “The city’s parkways were planned by early citizens who weren’t experts or planners but had a concept of beauty lacking today.”\(^{481}\) Those early citizens had hired Olmsted who was obviously an expert but perhaps expertise was only credited to modernist planners in the 1950s. Despite the protests, the expressway would go through the parkland. The original stone bridge was dynamited, replaced by an expanded highway bridge and the sinuous curves of the lake, the Gala Water shoreline, were smoothed over with fill, in true modernist fashion, allowing the lake’s polluted water to move more quickly with less stagnation.\(^{482}\) Recreational boating was stopped and the park was now penetrated by a fast-moving, efficient expressway that divided the park in two.\(^{483}\)

\(^{479}\) Ibid, 189.
\(^{480}\) Ibid, 206.
\(^{481}\) Buffalo Evening News, December, 1954, as quoted in ibid., 192.
\(^{482}\) Ibid., 194.
\(^{483}\) Ibid.
While the Front and Delaware Park were seriously damaged by highway construction, Olmsted’s Humboldt Parkway was irreparably ruined when the Kensington Expressway was built to connect the downtown to the New York State Thruway in the east. Three hundred eighty-year old elm trees were cut down and the once tree-lined central boulevard and spacious parkway would be dug up so the Kensington Expressway could use the gracious and historic scenic route as a below grade conduit for speed. The Humboldt Parkway, which was the first parkway to connect two of Olmsted’s parks, was
destroyed and excavated for the expressway.\textsuperscript{484} Again, the pressures created by city growth and growing car ownership had destroyed a beautiful part of the city. The public’s demand for express routes was reflected in the modernist commitment to efficiency and its disregard for heritage. The parkway was seen as anachronistic and it was sacrificed for the excavated highway.

Figure 7.10 - Humboldt Parkway 1915, designed by Olmsted in 1876 before it was excavated and became the below-grade Kensington Expressway in the 1960s. Source: “Humboldt Parkway” file, Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{484} Ibid, 199.
Figure 7.11 – Trees cut down along Humboldt Parkway, 1960. Cutline in the March 3, 1960 *Buffalo Courier Express*, which accompanied this photo, reads “Stumped by Progress – Rows of tree stumps stand as forlorn reminders of the once picturesque centre mall on Humboldt Parkway near Kingsley – they’re coming down in the name of progress to make way for Kensington Expressway exits.” Source: “Highways-Kensington Expressway” File, Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.

Buffalo’s expressways were integral to the urban renewal dream of saving the industrial city from itself through demolition and rebuilding. They would help to remove the perceived blight and delineate the urban renewal areas, particularly the downtown core. They would also help to contain the freshly destroyed and rebuilt residential areas, demonstrated by the Elm-Oak Expressway that appeared intent on isolating the Ellicott District from the Central Business District (figure 7.5). Highways radiating out of the city would also encourage the linear expansion of industrial zones, like the proposed Thruway Industrial Park. Just as Le Corbusier and Sert had envisioned, the expressways
would help to connect and contain the modernist zones and in post-war Buffalo they would have an essential role to play linking the different functions of the city’s extensive urban renewal program with the growing suburbs. While highway construction was intense in Buffalo, across the Canadian border similar ideas were recommended, and some were implemented, but on a much smaller scale.

**Hamilton**

Canadian cities did not have the same government support for road building specifically connected to urban renewal that existed in the United States and there was no federally sponsored highway building initiative like the one U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed into law for the United States in 1956. While there was less road construction funding available for Canadian planners to work into their city plans, expressways and road systems were still very important to Canadian urban renewal planners. In Hamilton, Ontario freeways were included in the city’s urban renewal plans, even if there was no indication of where the funding would come from to build them. Freeways were drawn onto maps as part of the modernist vision for the renewed city, providing a solution to the moribund industrial city’s tired and congested physical structure.

Although highways were not intended to be part of the Canadian urban renewal schemes that initially focused on improving housing conditions, Hamilton’s urban renewal planner Murray Jones and consulting engineers inserted freeways and more efficient roadways into plans for the centre of the industrial city (figure 7.12). The East-West Expressway, York Boulevard, the Perimeter Road and King Street, cutting between
the downtown superblocks, all represent important elements of Hamilton’s urban renewal plans, whether completed or not, and demonstrate the importance of traffic flow and efficiency to the modernist Canadian urban renewal planner.

Before the urban renewal plans were drawn up, highway engineers discussed using highways to try “to solve in advance the traffic problems of the future.” 485 Insuring that traffic would flow freely was the objective behind the discussed widening of arterial roads, the new plans for the Red Hill Creek Expressway and the provincially-funded Chedoke Expressway on the west side to the city. Also discussed was the “channelization of traffic flows at Beach Road and Burlington Street to provide free-moving streams without undue impediment either way.” 486 This four-lane “Beach Road Expressway,” which would become known as Burlington Street, would “speed traffic flow from the industrial area in the north-east section of the city to the Queen Elizabeth Expressway and the Burlington Skyway” further east. 487

In 1963, consultants identified plans for a new access route up the escarpment at Gage Avenue as well as the East-West Freeway, north of Barton Street, as priorities for the city. These two throughfares were seen as providing “excellent service to two major traffic generators in the city – the central business district and the bayfront industrial area.” 488 They also proposed a North-South Freeway which would link Burlington Street to the escarpment (locally called the “mountain”).

486 Ibid.
Express highways in North America were seen as a means to save at-risk
downtowns, particularly in the United States. As U.S. expressway historian Mark H.
Rose writes, “Expressway highways, important in the program of every planner, would
play a vital part in molding the new order.”[^489] Could they not do the same in the
Canadian context?

Figure 7.12 - Proposed Highways for Hamilton, Ontario, 1963. The East-West Freeway would go through
Hamilton’s urban renewal areas. Neither the East-West Freeway nor the North-South Freeway were
completed. Source: “New Access, E-W Freeway Get Top Priority,” *Hamilton Spectator*, September 6,
1963.

Hamilton’s East-West Freeway was initially proposed by consultant Alfred Hedefine of New York City. It was to penetrate into and across the oldest sections of the city. The city had developed along an east-west orientation due to its position between the harbour to the north and the escarpment to the south. Industrial, commercial and residential buildings filled the grid between these two natural features and the East-West Freeway, in the form of a six-lane highway, was to force its way through the middle of the century-old developments on an east-west trajectory. Urban Renewal plans for 1966 presented a large swath crossing through the centre of the York Street Urban Renewal area, from Dundurn to Bay Streets, to accommodate the East-West Freeway (figure 7.13). It was to be built south of Barton Street, starting at the proposed Red Hill Expressway in the east and eventually linking up to the newly built Highway 403 in the west. The trajectory was up to thirteen houses wide and would cross over established streets, limiting access to them and dividing neighbourhoods. Murray Jones identified 195 buildings and 302 households to be displaced by the freeway in the York Street area alone, although these figures do not include the buildings along York Street itself. He assumed that the expressway was inevitable and “no further consideration” was necessary for the buildings within its right-of-way. The freeway would facilitate the urban renewal planner’s work with the anticipated removal of so many houses within the York Street Urban Renewal Scheme.

Figure 7.13 – The York Street Urban Renewal Scheme with the area for the East-West Freeway identified in a large blank swath running west to east from York Street, parallel to and south of Barton Street. This wide transportation corridor would rid what was considered “blight” from the renewal area. Source: Murray Jones and Associates Ltd, York Street Urban Renewal Scheme. (City of Hamilton, May 1966), Map 22.

A 1967 Interim Report for the City of Hamilton recommended two alternatives for the East-West Freeway, one to the north of Barton Street along the CNR right of way and the other to the south of Barton Street. This report described the controlled access route as serving the Central Business District and the industrial area of the city, and deemed it necessary as Hamilton’s population was expected to grow and traffic was expected to increase by the year 1985. Approximately 1000 houses would be destroyed to complete the expressway with a great deal of the highway planned for industrial land.492

The highway was drawn onto the urban renewal maps as a wide band. It was presented as a “fait accompli” not needing any further action on the part of urban renewal planners.\textsuperscript{493} The map for the York Street Plan was revised in August 1966 and would be presented in the city’s 1967 application for the York Street Urban Renewal. Here the East-West Freeway was somewhat realigned and straightened suggesting that planners were ambiguous as to its exact placement and had little concern for the destruction that its construction would entail. In 1965, Jones’ map of existing roads for the Central Hamilton Urban Renewal Study shows the “Barton Freeway” flowing to the south of Barton Street and curving at Hess St, whereas the revised 1966 map shows a more direct route (figure 7.14). The wide, imposing east-west express route was drawn with confidence and apparent inevitability on all the urban renewal maps for Jones’ 1966 urban renewal scheme and the 1967 application. The route is shown as a multi-laned freeway dwarfing the original roads and buildings around it. Jones used east-west traffic volumes for the downtown to demonstrate the need for the expressway. His determination to see the large expressway insinuated into the old city of Hamilton reflects the modernist desire to keep traffic flowing through the city. The urban renewal documents show no concern for the impact the destruction would have on the population, the disruption the building of the expressway would cause, nor for the radical difference of scale the highway would impose on the central city.

\textsuperscript{493}Murray V. Jones and Associates Ltd., \textit{Central Hamilton Urban Renewal Study}. (Urban Renewal Committee of the City of Hamilton, September, 1965), 8.
Planning for the urban renewal project was inexorably tied to the plans for freeway development. Jones would force the realignment of many of the York Street area’s roads so that the system would “effectively function subsequent to the construction of the East-West Freeway.”\(^{494}\) In fact the whole 228 acres of the urban renewal scheme was reorganized to accommodate the plans for a much wider York Boulevard in addition to the freeway. The two major roadways would be important additions to the scheme which foresaw modernist apartment buildings, public housing developments, a shopping centre and motor hotel as part of the vision. A drawing included in the 1966 scheme presented both the expressway and the renewed York Boulevard as having shrubs and trees on

\(^{494}\) Murray V. Jones, *York Street Urban Renewal Scheme.* (Urban Renewal Committee of the City of Hamilton, May, 1966), 90.
landscaped berms to separate the asphalt from the buildings, just as CIAM modernists would have recommended.495

Before the York Street project began, an east-west Perimeter Road was announced for Hamilton’s North End in 1963. This expressway would also run on an east-west trajectory, skirting the south side of the community. At first both the East-West Freeway and the Perimeter Road were to coexist; the former moving traffic across the city with the latter deflecting through traffic out of the residential North End. Occasionally the Perimeter Road was presented as a substitute, and the two highways would continue to be discussed at different times during the urban renewal years. Hamilton’s Urban Renewal Committee identified the Perimeter Road, in 1963, as being “of great importance insofar as planning and renewal are concerned, probably equally important to the central park and school.”496 In 1968 the city decided to postpone the construction of the East-West Expressway and the following year Murray Jones prepared an addendum to the North End Urban Renewal Scheme announcing the delay of the Perimeter Road as well.

Although identified as important to the renewal of the North End, due to financial restraints the Perimeter Road was postponed so that money could be directed to other important parts of the urban renewal project. Despite the delay, the removal of the houses for the roadway would begin in 1965. At first houses on both sides of Strachan Avenue were slated for demolition but when the community protested, the city targeted only one side of the street. In all, ninety-five houses, four commercial and residential buildings, two industrial buildings and a church would have to be demolished, along with the less formal dwellings hidden in the alleys which led down to the railway tracks. The

495 Murray V. Jones “York Street Perspective,” *York Street Urban Renewal Scheme* (Urban Renewal Committee of the City of Hamilton, May, 1966), 86.
south side of Strachan Avenue would be flattened except for two houses at 72 and 74 Strachan Ave, whose owners took defiant legal action. These houses stood alone on the south side of Strachan Avenue looking out of place, but eventually triumphant as the years passed and the Perimeter Road was ultimately abandoned.

Neither the Perimeter Road nor the East-West Expressway were constructed, despite the enthusiastic endorsement given by Hamilton’s urban renewal planners. The wide thoroughfares were expressions of the perceived need for continual traffic flow and the rush to serve the automobiles and trucks on wide, obtrusive expressways with little regard for the scale of the existing city and the lives associated with the buildings which would need to be cleared. It is interesting to observe that although neither expressway was built, in the end, traffic was absorbed onto other city streets without the freeways being necessary.

Figure 7.15 - York Street Urban Renewal Scheme map showing its proximity to the downtown “Civic Square” Urban Renewal Scheme, May 1966. Source: City of Hamilton, *Hamilton York Street Application*. (Urban Renewal Committee of the City of Hamilton, November 1968?), map 1.
Part of the through traffic would go onto a widened York Boulevard as a result of the York Street Urban Renewal scheme. The area was first recommended as an urban renewal priority in 1958 by Mark P. David, and, again, in 1965 by Murray Jones. In his Central Hamilton Urban Renewal Study, Jones identified the York Street area as most urgently needing renewal. City boosters saw the plans as promising to “leapfrog Hamilton into the 21st century.” The York Street scheme encompassed over 220 acres of land on either side of the diagonal York Street, going from the downtown Civic Square Urban Renewal area to the western entrance to the city (figure 7.15). This area was identified by Jones as “one of the oldest residential sections of the city with some of its existing buildings dating to the pre-Confederation era.” The area’s age as well as its mixed residential, commercial and industrial functions made it ripe for the modernist treatment. York Street itself, an arterial road, was considered blighted with its stores close to the sidewalk and street; its residential units above the shops and its cars parked on either side of the street threatening traffic flow. Long considered the official entry to the city, it was not the clean, modernist entrance that the planners deemed necessary for a city whose core was undergoing a major transformation. The entrance to the downtown also needed updating.

The urban renewal plans for York Street were endorsed by the City of Hamilton in 1966, a time when the politicians were enthusiastically embracing the possibilities of downtown renewal. York Street would be widened to become a boulevard and the major entrance to the downtown. The street was to “realize its potential in both aesthetic and

498 Murray Jones and Associates Ltd, York Street Urban Renewal Scheme. (Urban Renewal Committee of the City of Hamilton, May, 1966), 5.
functional terms.” Blocks of residential, commercial and industrial buildings were identified for clearance and the expropriation procedures began for the properties on either side of the street. Delays would slow the process. The threat of demolition hung over York Street and caused the street to become further rundown over the years.

Although the Canadian federal government was beginning to question urban renewal initiatives, and Hamilton Member of Parliament John Munro warned the city’s politicians in 1969 not to invest in any more urban renewal schemes, they were determined to forge ahead with the York Street redevelopment. Urban renewal enthusiasts wanted to rid the city of the blight identified along York Street and replace it with a six-lane roadway and a landscaped median. It would no longer be a street of people-centred businesses and residences but a wide expanse to favour the mobility of the automobile.

By 1970 the Canadian government was no longer a source of urban renewal funding and the city cancelled the East-West Expressway. However the idea of the Perimeter Road persisted in the city’s plans. The scheme was to link it up to the modernized York Boulevard. In October 1971, Mayor Vic Copps said York Street “had the worst blight and decay we have in the city of Hamilton. I’m ashamed it has taken this long to get something done.”

Protestors began to organize to protect the residents and businesses along the street. Hearings were held by the provincial arbitrator, the Ontario Municipal Board, at which planner Murray Jones testified that he recommended the widening of the roadway “to

499 City of Hamilton, *Hamilton York Street Application.* (Urban Renewal Committee of the City of Hamilton, November 1968?), 2


meet traffic demands of the future.” For the modernist planner, anticipated traffic flow took priority over homes and businesses, no matter how beloved they might be. The Wilson House, which had been a beverage room for over 125 years would be demolished along with the other 129 properties. Harry Mitsui had to be physically removed from his home and upholstery business by the police.

Figure 7.16 - 1953 to 1975, York Street becomes a modernized York Boulevard. Source: John C. Weaver, *Hamilton an Illustrated History* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1982), 190.

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502 “York Street must be wider,” *Hamilton Spectator*, April 2, 1974.
To add insult to injury, business owners, who thought they would be able to rebuild along the widened York Boulevard, were disappointed because the city had run out of money and was not able to buy up enough land for stores to fit along the entire street. The initial plan was to clear the total frontage along York Street and have it redeveloped. Perhaps if the implementation of the plan had been carried out as initially intended, more shops would have lined the renewed street. It is instructive to note that the priority was to make sure the street was effective at moving vehicles and shop owners were sacrificed when the funds ran out. In any case, the new divided street would make it difficult to attract customers. Where there was room, urban planner Vladimir Matus decided that the businesses should be connected by a three meter canopy to cover the few pedestrians who would walk along the street, thereby forcing businesses to add the canopy to the front of their buildings. The planner was trying to create a particular streetscape which would bring together the isolated buildings while solving a problem for pedestrians. Like so many modernist planning ideas, the solution, although meant to improve the situation, did not end up linking the buildings in a coherent manner. The original streetscape had been much more successful at linking people and buildings. Now along the widened York Boulevard traffic would flow unaware of the people who once lived and worked there when it was a street. Between Queen and Bay Streets large blocks were cleared and a secondary school was constructed on a superblock which cut across Caroline Street. The York Boulevard traffic would be divided onto one-way streets on either side of the superblock.

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504 As told to author by Albert Foreman, whose parents owned and lived above the confectionary and lunch counter at 252 York St.
York Boulevard ushered vehicles towards the centre of town and towards the two large modernist-inspired superblocks which had expunged five cross streets from the core and replaced them with two major traffic corridors in the one-way King and Main Streets. West-bound King Street is a particularly good example of modernist planning ideas for the street, as it crosses in between the two urban renewal superblocks between James and Bay Streets. It is today a functional one-way street, carrying five lanes of traffic through a chasm where the pedestrian is not welcome. Where shoppers once were able to window-shop, King Street no longer makes the pedestrian feel comfortable. The apartment dwellers who lived above the stores would have added to the street life, but those buildings were all demolished. The stores, now part of an interior mall, have turned their backs to the street discouraging strolling and window-shopping and forcing the pedestrian into the mall. Indeed modernist planners wanted the pedestrians off the street level entirely. Instead, they were encouraged to walk in the outdoor plaza built on the roof of the mall, to shop inside the mall and to take the pedway, or the Plus 15 walkway, a bridge above the street level in order to cross King Street West. The modernist street was meant only for motorized vehicles traveling in one direction, thereby achieving efficient movement for the machine by allowing it to move freely along its designated route with the pedestrian taken off the street.
Figure 7.17 - King Street West at James, looking west, May 25, 1960. Pedestrians cross James Street with King Street West’s buildings in the background. Note the apartments and offices above the small shops. These buildings along King Street were demolished during the Urban Renewal redevelopment. Shoppers were no longer encouraged to walk along the street but instead were to do their shopping inside the Jackson Square Mall, which was built on the north side of the street. Compare with figure 7.18. Source: File: “Hamilton Streets,” Local History and Archives Dept., Hamilton Public Library.
Figure 7.18 – Today, the same intersection of King Street West at James Street (compare with figure 7.17). Note the Stelco Tower and Jackson Square mall building with stairs going up to the pedestrian level on the right side of the street. They were all part of the urban renewal scheme. Source: author.
Modernist planning ideas helped to transform Hamilton’s downtown. While the original urban renewal focus was on housing, the most dramatic transformation would be in the commercial district with the addition of the modernist superblocks and the reconfiguration of the downtown streets. While the East-West Freeway and the Perimeter Road were never constructed, York Street was realigned and widened to bring traffic into the central core and the pedestrians were moved inside the Jackson Square Mall. Planners wanted to extend the roof-top pedestrian areas beyond the mall through a series of pedestrian bridges, but only the pedway over King Street West was constructed.
The roof-top plaza, which was envisioned as a separate zone for pedestrians to meet and walk, is frequently empty and its isolation makes lone walkers uncomfortable. The downtown Victorian-era buildings would be torn down for an efficient, enclosed mall surrounded by one-way streets where the vehicle was given priority.

Hamilton’s functional street transformations related to its urban renewal schemes were tiny compared to what happened in Buffalo. It should be noted, however, that while highway construction in Canada was not as closely connected to its urban renewal plans as in the United States, additional expressway construction was undertaken outside Hamilton’s urban renewal areas, linking the lower city to the escarpment within the city and on the western side with the Chedoke Expressway. Also, the transformation of downtown streets into one-way flowing modernist arteries was accomplished in 1956 prior to the urban renewal transformations. Interestingly, the idea for one-way streets, like the plans for urban renewal expressways, came about on the advice of American consultants. Wilbur Smith, a traffic engineer from South Carolina, consulted across North America on one-way street conversions and convinced Hamilton’s aldermen to switch dozens of its downtown streets to one directional roads in order to ease traffic congestion on October 29, 1956. Hamilton’s one-way street conversion is an example of functional segregation to ease traffic congestion and promote efficiency which was implemented before the urban renewal schemes were carried out. The creation of one-way streets was a low cost modernist adjustment, very different from expensive freeway construction.

Financial limitations stopped Hamilton’s projects from being completed and meeting modernist ambitions for the city. However, most of Buffalo’s expressways were

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completed as planned and cannot be seen to have enhanced that city. Buffalo’s Elm-Oak Expressway was never finished, although the old downtown blocks of buildings were demolished for the anticipated route. The empty spaces and new buildings constructed along the cancelled Expressway’s path, do not improve that part of the city. While an argument could be made that the initial plans for a modernist solution were not fully carried out in Hamilton, Buffalo demonstrates that when its expressway plans were almost entirely completed, a modernist utopia was not even partially achieved.

Both cities thought they could draw shoppers back to their downtowns along their free flowing roads and expressways. They demolished smaller shops, which often had apartments above them, believing a functional commercial district should not have a residential side. Parking was provided, but at a cost, for motorists who returned to shop. However, neither cities’ downtown mall was able to attract shoppers like the suburban malls did, where parking was free.

In both Hamilton and Buffalo streets and expressways were planned to assist with the urban renewal agenda. Old street patterns were realigned, superblocks constructed, blighted buildings demolished and limited-access thoroughfares were planned to pierce through the old city - all of which were modernist planning ideas. The functional separation, which was initially applied to built structures and then to segregate the city’s zones, would also be applied to roadways and sidewalks. Expressways were built for efficient vehicular flow, unhampered by stoplights and intersections, and in Buffalo these thoroughfares for vehicles were built both above and below the grade. Pedestrians were also subjected to modernist segregation, such as in Hamilton where the pedestrian was encouraged off King Street West and onto above ground walkways, plazas and a
pedestrian-only bridge over the street, or into the shopping mall. In Buffalo, freeways were planned and constructed to delineate urban renewal borders, to promote functional divisions between different types of traffic as well as different parts of the city, and to encourage the horizontal spread to industrial zones outside the downtown and beyond the outskirts of the city. Buffalo’s modernist practices related to the fourth function favoured the machine’s potential for speed over the city’s heritage and historically significant parkland. While its modernist efforts were far more ambitious than Hamilton’s street realignments and functional separations, both cities would be transformed by modernist planning ideas specific to the transportation function and essential to the Functional City paradigm.
Conclusion

The Functional City paradigm began with modernist architects who were inspired by the machine, functional industrial buildings and the desire to improve life for industrial city dwellers. It grew out of an amalgam of international planning ideas but the aesthetic behind this functional model was rooted in European modernism and the modernist housing designs of the 1920s. The early architect-planners found inspiration in machines with independently functioning parts. The modernist Functional City was to work like a well-oiled mechanism and embody the aesthetic which favoured clean, straight lines and disparaged the ways of the past. The eye was not to be encumbered by ornamentation but to flow over the smooth lines of the new buildings, just as the automobiles in the Functional City were to flow efficiently along the widened city streets and parkways. Favouring all that was new, there was little interest in maintaining older buildings and traditional street patterns; these features of the past were seen as standing in the way of progress and prosperity.

European modernist ideas related to the Functional City paradigm would cross the Atlantic and were reflected in the urban renewal plans made after the Second World War for many North American cities. The desire for a functional and efficient modern city was encouraged by European émigrés who promoted modernist ideas in North America. Their ideas were also adopted by young architects and planners exposed to the modernist approach in their professional schools. The goal was an efficient city that would have its four functions clearly delineated and segregated by following modernist planning practices as initially encouraged by the Congrès internationaux d’architectes modernes (CIAM).
The Functional City paradigm was promoted in North America when federal funding became available and concern for the city’s future was wide spread. City politicians and planners were encouraged to follow the aesthetic and pull down neighbourhood blocks when the urban renewal legislation came into effect in 1949 in the United States and in 1954 in Canada. Comprehensive master plans were drawn which outlined the city’s functions and restricted the zones to particular uses, ie. housing, work and recreation, with the fourth function, transportation, connecting them all into one functional and flowing system. Planners used urban renewal to render the city more streamlined and efficient until criticism of the program’s economic waste and community destruction forced the end to urban renewal funding in Canada in 1970. In the United States, the Community Development Revenue Sharing Act of 1974 would herald the end of its federally-assisted urban renewal program.

This comparative study of urban renewal practices in Hamilton, Ontario and Buffalo, NY demonstrates the importance of the Functional City paradigm and modernist planning ideas during the urban renewal years. Of course, there was a profound difference of scale between the two cities. Buffalo had a much larger population, greater urban renewal ambitions and bigger budgets than Hamilton did. Issues of race played a role in some to the American city’s plans and were not part of Hamilton’s urban renewal experience. American federal highway policies, as expressed through the Interstate Highway Act of 1956, also meant that more money was available for the fourth function in Buffalo, while highway construction was limited in the Canadian context. Despite these dissimilar traits, as well as their political, social, legal and cultural differences, both
cities would embrace the modernist aesthetic as they adopted modernist planning ideas to fulfill their urban renewal objectives.

In addition to illustrating how modernist ideas were applied to North American urban renewal schemes, both cities independently demonstrate how European modernist planning ideas made the transfer to North America before the urban renewal legislation came into effect. In Hamilton and Buffalo, European-educated modernist architects introduced and recommended modernist planning ideas. In both cities, with the introduction of urban renewal legislation after the Second World War, North American-trained planning consultants then presented their own modernist plans for each city. Both Canada’s and the United States’ federal legislation, and the urban renewal funding available for plans and land acquisition, gave the planners the opportunity to create urban renewal studies and to re-imagine the city. These planners would call for the demolition of so-called blighted areas, and their replacement with superblocks, housing projects and eventually new towers, downtown shopping malls and expressways, all in the hope of making the city more modern and streamlined.

The urban renewal programs, funded by the federal governments of Canada and the United States, represented the type of “Authority” to whom Le Corbusier had dedicated his book, The Radiant City, in 1933, where he presented his ideas for the Functional City. The power to destroy and rebuild established city blocks demanded commanding force and federal legislation provided municipalities with that authority, in addition to up to three-quarters of the cost. Urban renewal legislation was directed towards the eradication of the perceived blight. The modernist aesthetic presented the alternative to blight in the goal of a clean, efficient and streamlined city – the Functional City. Urban renewal
practitioners, espousing the modernist aesthetic, would attempt to eradicate all that was considered old and unworthy in the industrial metropolis and rebuild from the ground up.

By examining urban renewal practices in Buffalo and Hamilton through the four functions of the Functional City model, the modernist planning ideas come to the forefront. These ideas included land assembly for the creation of superblocks; the belief in new materials and methods; the rejection of ornamentation and all things old; a dedication to efficiency; opposition to multi-use neighbourhoods; a commitment to strict zone segregation; separation of the pedestrian from the street; and the use of roads and highways to limit zones as well as providing efficient links between the separated functions. They all represent modernist planning ideas which were applied to Buffalo and Hamilton’s urban renewal projects.

It all started out of a concern for housing. Housing was the preeminent function for the Functional City. Hamilton and Buffalo would both initially focus on the destruction of so-called blighted housing for their urban renewal schemes, as directed by the federal legislation. Hundreds of acres of neighbourhood blocks on the Waterfront and in the Ellicott District in Buffalo were flattened and over 2000 homes eradicated. So-called blighted housing in Hamilton was also destroyed, first on the lakefront and then in the North End. While housing initiatives started the program in both cities, business leaders would ensure that the focus was redirected towards their Central Business Districts when the legislation widened to allow for civic enhancements in the downtown core.

The commercial downtown, and Buffalo’s pilot industrial park, make up the work component of this Functional City-based analysis. Business leaders in both cities aggressively supported urban renewal and supported the transformations which saw road
patterns changed, nineteenth century stone and brick buildings toppled and downtown shopping malls and new office towers constructed to try to encourage shoppers to continue their downtown shopping activities and to attract white collar workers into the core. Many of Hamilton’s industries continued to prosper during the urban renewal years but Buffalo saw many industries shuttered, particularly after the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959. Ever optimistic that new industries could be enticed to the city, its planners hoped to establish an industrial park of over 1000 acres through the urban renewal program but the U.S. government did not authorize this destruction and a much smaller pilot project to replace the old stockyards was all that the city could muster.

The recreation function, as interpreted by modernists, inspired urban renewal schemes to provide playing fields for residential zones as well as parkland next to both cities’ lakefronts. The lakeside recreational zone was more successful in Hamilton than in Buffalo. Hamilton created a recreational beach area on the shore of Lake Ontario for all of its citizens while the Buffalo’s waterfront would end up directed at the middle class recreational boater, though early plans called for more public recreational land. The Waterfront land development that would target over 1,000 homes on Buffalo’s lower west side would end up a major disappointment to those forced to see their homes flattened and for the city’s planners, who had difficulty attracting the high end developers they desired.

While the two cities’ housing, recreation and work functions were represented in the urban renewal plans, it is the transportation function that demonstrates most clearly the modernist aesthetic’s commitment to efficiency, the flat plane and the predominance of the automobile, the real machine in the metaphorical machine aesthetic. Urban
renewal facilitated the car’s growing presence in these two cities as planners and officials worked to achieve the modernist’s utopia of a Functional City. Road and highway construction were used to further the urban renewal agenda. Roads were needed to answer the machines’ needs and to connect the different functions to each other, in addition to the suburban areas. Both cities endorsed plans to lay asphalt where homes, coffee shops, corner stores, churches and other community-enriching buildings had once stood. The clean smooth lines of the functional street were deemed essential to the automobile, discouraging use by pedestrians and other users. Through the use of the superblock, greater flow was achieved with the eradication of intersections and stoplights. Asphalt covered over perceived blight, creating perimeters to contain the segregated zones, while connecting these zones to one another and to the expanding suburbs.

The clean, straight lines of a new roadway demonstrate the efficiency and functionality promoted by the aesthetic. The freeway was the ultimate in modernist flattened space because it headed off, uninterrupted, into the future. The machine of the modernist machine aesthetic was most efficient on the flat. There is also potential in a flattened space. Razed buildings offer hope for what will come next and the act of flattening attempts to realize that potential and to answer the call for immediate action. Modernist planners, businessmen and government officials wanted immediate and aggressive action to solve urban problems.

Modernists presented themselves as having answers to the problems of the day. Whether designing buildings which could withstand chlorine gas and aerial bombardments, solving a housing crisis or saving the moribund city, modernists believed
their aesthetically-influenced solutions looked to the future and would do good in the world. The ways of the past were not revered, nor were they deemed useful. The new construction methods of steel and concrete suggested a new look which would help to rebuild the city and at the same time solve its problems whether linked to poverty, racism or unemployment. By tearing blocks down and rebuilding, urban renewal promoters believed the city’s problems, connected to the past, would be erased. A modern city would be streamlined and efficient, no longer encumbered by the past and its recalcitrant issues.

The urban renewal plans for both cities demonstrate that the planners’ ambitions extended beyond what they were able to achieve. In Hamilton, planner Murray Jones wanted to flatten five different sections of the old central city, following the lead of his precursors Mark P. David and E.G. Faludi. After blocks of the downtown were demolished, some Hamilton planners wanted to extend the destruction over the urban renewal area’s perimeter, continuing to separate the pedestrian from the street throughout the entire downtown core. Hamilton’s dreams of urban renewal expansion brought down many city blocks but were extremely modest compared to what Buffalo accomplished. Having flattened almost 500 acres in the Waterfront and Ellicott Districts, the American city’s administrators considered extending the urban renewal project north and east to encompass an expanse over 20 times what they actually managed to achieve.

Planners believed in the curative powers of their plans. They identified neighbourhoods for demolition, not fully appreciating the sacrifice that such destruction would entail. Assessing the cities from above, city planners neglected the human interconnections and street life which make a city livable. They had a modernist solution that
they were determined to apply. The hubristic enthusiasm for the modernist plans is now evident in the empty pedestrian plaza above Hamilton’s Lloyd D. Jackson Square and in the uninviting streetscape where the stores are turned away from King St. West. There is a sense of loss where the Scajaquada Creek Expressway cuts across Olmsted’s lake in Buffalo’s Delaware Park and a feeling of waste for the thousand homes which were destroyed in Buffalo’s Waterfront Urban Renewal Area that were replaced with a much smaller housing development and empty fields. The scorched land of Buffalo’s Ellicott District remains painful to acknowledge and difficult to comprehend.

Buffalo and Hamilton, two industrial cities of different sizes, were compelling subjects for a cross-border analysis based on the modernist Functional City paradigm. They help to illustrate the connection between urban renewal practices and modernist planning ideas, as well as demonstrating how these ideas transferred across the Atlantic. Given the number of urban renewal projects undertaken across North America during the 1950s and 1960s it is probable that the modernist aesthetic was equally influential in other cities. The attraction of the Functional City was obvious in the reports, plans and methods used by planners, business elites and city administrators in Buffalo and Hamilton; it would be worth expanding the modernist focus to other urban renewal studies to try to gauge the impact the aesthetic had on North American urban renewal projects more generally.

The modernist emphasis on efficiency, separation and clean lines reflected a specific era when people believed, and wanted to believe, that there was a quick, clean-sweep solution to urban problems, while at the same time being dismissive of the ways, and buildings, of the past. By following the advice of modernist planning experts who
were convinced that flattening and rebuilding provided the answers, city administrators in both cities caused a great deal of dislocation, heartache and economic uncertainty. The charred empty fields of Buffalo’s Ellicott District, which endured for decades, illustrated the flaws in the dramatic modernist approach, as did Hamilton’s flattened downtown blocks which saw politicians desperately searching for money to finance the reconstruction. The lesson here should be that cities’ problems are complex, and complicated, and that experts offering single-minded solutions should be suspect. A city is healthiest when its complexity and interconnections are acknowledged and celebrated.

Urban renewal was supposed to usher in prosperity and growth for Buffalo and Hamilton. In the end, Hamilton’s North End would see its population decline after the urban renewal changes, but the Canadian city’s population would otherwise continue to steadily grow. The same cannot be said about Buffalo, the American city reached its population peak in 1950 and then would continually diminish in size through the urban renewal years; today its population has decreased from its peak by over fifty percent. Erie County, surrounding Buffalo, would see its population begin to decline during the 1970s and it continues to decline today. Plans are now being discussed in Buffalo to turn the clock back on its expressways by reducing their flow and creating more enjoyable, less efficient, roadways. The Olmsted Parks Conservancy now recognizes the landscape architect’s parks system as a “19th century living landscape masterpiece” and is working with the City of Buffalo to restore the parkland to Olmsted’s original vision. The city’s connection to the waterfront is now being celebrated and the old Erie Canal is recognized and being rehabilitated where possible. How much of this restoration is due to a post-modernist appreciation for the ways of the past and how much is related to the fact that

Buffalo is today a much smaller city? Whatever the answer, professional urban planners have clearly changed their approach.

Segregation is no longer the goal, and mixed-use zones are now recommended for cities. Complete streets, which will equally serve pedestrians, cyclists, as well as vehicles, are recommended over the functional streets which encouraged separation. While steps are being taken to reverse the damage done during the urban renewal years, it is important to understand that the modernist ideas were initially applied with the intent of doing something positive for society.

Separation of functions was key to the new order, as recommended by Le Corbusier. By dividing the city into different functions, an efficient system was envisioned. The rigorous segregation in the Functional City, which modernists sometimes referred to as an organic system, was actually sterile. Cities were built for humans, not machines, and they thrive on a myriad of interconnections, not on divisions. The empty downtown plaza, ghettoized housing projects, distant suburbs and dividing expressways were a machine’s answer to the city and did little to improve the lives and lifestyles of the human inhabitants. Urban renewal and the modernist aesthetic did not improve Hamilton or Buffalo for the future. Instead, buildings were lost, connections ignored and money was spent to enable the automobile and the modernist machine-inspired aesthetic to flourish.
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