



FROM FARMLAND TO “NEW TOWN”



Aerial photos of Don Mills in 1939 (above) and 1965 (right). The edges of the community are defined by two valleys of the Don River, by Eglinton Avenue to the south, and by York Mills Road to the north. Colours added to the 1965 image indicate land use: red (retail and civic centre), purple (industries and offices), yellow (residential).
City of Toronto,
Survey and Mapping Services.



In the midst of a housing shortage after WW II, E. P. Taylor, one of Canada's most powerful businessmen, acquired over 2,000 acres of farmland here. From 1953 to 1965, Taylor's companies transformed the farmland into one of the world's most innovative “New Towns”, complete with 28,000 residents, over 70 industries, one of Canada's earliest suburban shopping plazas, schools, and recreation facilities.

Don Mills was the first North American land development of its kind to be entirely planned and funded by the private sector. Its master plan was designed by Macklin Hancock in consultation with some of the world's leading urban planners. Centred around a common commercial and civic area, neighbourhoods are isolated from heavy traffic by looping roads and *culs-de-sac*. Light industry was welcomed on the edges of the plan.

In an effort to create a landmark Modernist community, careful attention was paid to everything from the architectural style and position of buildings to their exterior materials and colours. Existing trees were retained wherever possible and generous green space was provided.



In 1953, a young Macklin Hancock (with pointer at right) introduces the Metropolitan Planning Board to the Don Mills development using a topographical model.
City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1653,
Series 975, File 1886, Item 22552-7.

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THE DON MILLS LEGACY



The Don Mills Shopping Centre, 1959. The commercial hub of the Don Mills community, the original, award-winning centre was designed by the firm John B. Parkin Associates. It was expanded several times before the mid-1960s, and became a completely enclosed mall in 1978. The site was entirely redesigned beginning in 2007.

Panda Collection, Canadian Architectural Archives, University of Calgary, Image 59963-48.

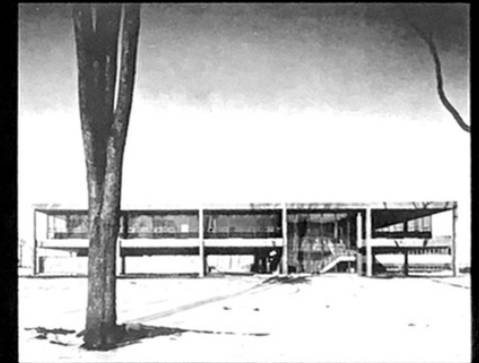
Don Mills has become one of the most discussed planned communities in Canadian history. Challenged, on the one hand, by critics of sprawling suburban development, it has also received praise from around the world for its attempt to create a fully functioning town where residents can live, work, and play.

The development's success inspired imitation. After Don Mills, large private developments became the norm, with developers assuming the costs for the construction of public infrastructure such as roads and services for water and sewage. The road system of traffic-calming *culs-de-sac* and looping streets, popularized here, became synonymous with the suburbs.

The central commercial core in which you stand has changed over the years, with a major redevelopment beginning in 2007. Don Mills' striking master plan remains largely intact — a landmark in urban planning.



Designed by architects James A. Murray and Henry Fliess, these rental row houses won a Massey Medal in 1958. The men behind the development of Don Mills, including Karl Fraser, Angus McClaskey, Macklin Hancock, and Douglas Lee, were determined to offer residents everything from rental apartments to single-family homes. Canadian Architect, February 1957.



Ortho Pharmaceutical's Don Mills building, designed by the firm John B. Parkin Associates, was awarded a Massey Medal in 1958. Note the generous green space, characteristic of Don Mills. NORR Limited.