

The Landscapes of Winnipeg's Wildwood Park

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article fait le bilan du développement historique des différents paysages formant le Parc Wildwood à Winnipeg. L'article élabore sur les origines et les transformations du parc, et ce, depuis la fondation de la communauté dans les années '40 par l'entrepreneur et promoteur Hubert Bird. Bird établit son projet suivant les idées de Stein and Wright, portant sur certaines parties du concept de « cité-jardin » de « Radburn ». Mais le caractère spécifique de Wildwood est tout autant fondé sur sa transformation historique provenant du paysage régional, de la géomorphologie ainsi que de la culture locale d'après-guerre de la région de Winnipeg. Avec ces aspects caractéristiques de design de quartier, Wildwood mérite une attention particulière pour les historiens de l'urbanisme qui désirent étudier les concepts reliés à ce quartier. Les concepts intrinsèques reliés à sa forme suscitera l'intérêt des historien(e)s attiré(e)s par les constructions sociales ou par les paysages culturels. De plus, la forme du parc pourrait inspirer les designers contemporains qui sont à la recherche d'un esthétique de structure formelle (grille ou quadrillage) d'avant la deuxième guerre mondiale.

Puisque que le parc utilise à la fois les concepts de « cité-jardin » (par la circulation limitée aux piétons dans le parc) et ceux du « nouvel-urbanisme » (par l'interaction des voies piétonnes et véhiculaires), il peut servir d'étude de cas très intéressante. Ces deux alternatives complémentaires permettront de tirer plusieurs leçons de design concernant la structure de design pour la communauté et sur son évolution morphologique à travers plusieurs décennies.

The Landscapes of Winnipeg's Wildwood Park

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Abstract

This paper is a review of the history of the differentiated landscapes of Winnipeg's Wildwood Park—their origins and their transformations since the community's establishment in the late 1940s by builder/developer Hubert Bird. Bird patterned his scheme after Stein and Wright's Radburn garden-city fragment, but the uniquely evolved character of Wildwood Park owes as much to regional landscape, geomorphology, and local post-war culture as it owes to its famed antecedent. As a unique and idiosyncratic community design, Wildwood Park merits attention and further study by planning historians and those interested in alternative neighbourhood forms as social constructions or cultural landscapes. In addition, it suggests many things to designers of contemporary communities, many of whom are currently looking to traditional pre-World-War-II grid-pattern neighbourhood structure and aesthetics as inspiration for (presumably) more socially cohesive neighbourhoods. Whether such designers are inclined toward the garden-city precept for separation of automobiles and pedestrians, or toward this contradictory "new urbanist" premise that cars and people should cohabitate within community open space, Wildwood Park has much to offer as precedent. Both its pedestrians-only park and its highly interactive lanes that do mix people and cars—and particularly these two complementary landscapes considered as a "matched set"—offer many interesting design lessons in matters of two-dimensional platting, three-dimensional neighbourhood structure and four-dimensional considerations for structural and landscape transformations that occur over the span of several decades.

Résumé

Cet article fait le bilan du développement historique des différents paysages formant le Parc Wildwood à Winnipeg. L'article élabore sur les origines et les transformations du parc, et ce, depuis la fondation de la communauté dans les années '40 par l'entrepreneur et promoteur Hubert Bird. Bird établit son projet suivant les idées de Stein and Wright, portant sur certaines parties du concept de "cité-jardin" de "Radburn". Mais le caractère spécifique de Wildwood est tout autant fondé sur sa transformation historique provenant du paysage régional, de la géomorphologie ainsi que de la culture locale d'après-guerre de la région de Winnipeg. Avec ces aspects caractéristiques de design de quartier, Wildwood mérite une attention particulière pour les historiens de l'urbanisme qui désirent étudier les concepts reliés à ce quartier. Les concepts intrinsèques reliés à sa forme suscitera l'intérêt des historien(e)s attiré(e)s par les constructions sociales ou par les paysages culturels. De plus, la forme du parc pourrait inspirer les designers contemporains qui sont à la recherche d'un esthétique de structure formelle (grille ou quadrillage) d'avant la deuxième guerre mondiale.

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Introduction and Overview

Wildwood Park community in Winnipeg, Manitoba recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, a momentous event for past and current residents of the community that was duly reported in the local media. However, this was a milestone that, like the neighbourhood itself, has escaped the notice of most planning historians and those whose interests or professions lie in the realm of community design. It is a curious oversight, given the universal fame of the neighbourhood's antecedents and successors—the primary forerunner is Clarence Stein and Henry Wright's innovative Radburn in Fair Lawn, New Jersey (c. 1928),¹ and one of its famous successors is the Village Homes community in Davis, California (c. 1974). Like Radburn and Village Homes, Wildwood Park's "reversed" design concept—wherein houses orient front façades to a pedestrians-only community park and turn their backs on the realm of vehicular access—grew from a reconsideration of the relationship between people and cars, as well as between the home landscape and the neighbourhood street. Both of the aforementioned U.S. communities have enjoyed extensive study by researchers and make frequent appearances as archetypes in scholarly works on community planning. Wildwood's relative obscurity is not a consequence of it being a mere imitation; while Wildwood Park owes much to Radburn, it most certainly did not simply duplicate Radburn's form.

To convey the significance of Wildwood Park as a unique neighbourhood landscape, there are two degrees of resolution to consider. It is first necessary to identify the "reversed" concept as a radical and rarely implemented design approach in single-family residential planning. To turn a home's traditionally "public" face away from the traditionally public realm has enormous implications for both the landscape of the spurned street (or lane, as the case may be) and for the non-vehicular landscape which develops among the house fronts. As numerous studies of Radburn and Village Homes suggest,² and as this and previous unpublished studies of Wildwood Park validate,³ the reversal of homes creates at once both the opportunity for enhanced connections among residences along with a certain degree of social-landscape ambiguity. In short, the reversed concept has both salient strengths and apparent drawbacks, and because of this the arrangement has never gained any significant degree of acceptance among developers in North America. The reversed concept is precisely what distinguishes the Radburn model from most other "garden city"-inspired arrangements, including many of the large-scale post-war North American "New Towns" and numerous smaller-scale PUDs (Planned Unit Developments) which replicated the Radburn connective open-space pattern without resorting to house reorientation.

The second and finer degree of resolution is to identify what may seem to be minor layout, platting, or structural variations (e.g.,

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building setback, lot dimensions, lane morphology, and legal building restrictions) between Wildwood Park and its better-known “reversed” counterparts that have, over time, fostered uniquely distinctive landscape conditions on both sides of the homes. A simplified plan-view diagram will not reveal any great distinctions (aside from street pattern) between, for example, Radburn and Wildwood Park (A and B in Figure 1), but their respective “lane-scapes” have evolved in dramatically different fashion, which is quite a meaningful distinction in the everyday experience of the residents who live on those lanes. Even an intimate familiarity with Radburn is not a sufficient basis for a genuine understanding of Wildwood Park. Wildwood Park represents a unique approach for the design of medium-density single-family communities, and its history is fertile ground for analysis of the landscape and behavioral adaptations that have emerged in this particular “reversed” neighbourhood—every bit as interesting and pertinent as the landscapes of its more famous counterparts.⁴

Wildwood Park was built on a heavily wooded floodplain in a bend of the Red River in the postwar 1940s by Canadian developer Hubert Bird, who shared Stein and Wright’s vision of achieving separate domains for automobile and pedestrian space. His aim was for safety, as well as for the opportunity to create a commons, oriented towards front doors and “picture windows”, that replaced the traditional streetscape with a park-like pedestrian landscape corridor. This corridor is continuous throughout Radburn, but by virtue of its multiple-loop street pattern (as opposed to the Radburnian cul-de-sacs), Wildwood Park exhibits a modi-

fied arrangement of common space that is occasionally interrupted by these loops (B in Figure 1).

Wildwood Park has developed a strong community identity that is certainly rooted in its historic social and environmental context but is also, in easily recognizable ways, partly a consequence of its unusual form and of the particular character of its unique landscape domains. Its sylvan front-door-facing interconnective park, its division into ten compact sections, its protean back-door-facing “lane-scapes” and the adaptability of its unpretentious prefabricated architecture are the major design elements that have obviously contributed profoundly to the community’s social history—although, as often happens, these planned design elements were influential in a manner unexpected or unanticipated by the designers. Many of the designers’ assumptions about the role of front and back space have not been made manifest in the behavioral landscape—for instance, the front park is less important as a social matrix than designers assumed it would be. Lane-side back spaces, on the other hand, have through the years become articulated in a great variety of ways that link households in a casual, intimate landscape of both service and social functions. Most of the everyday social transactions are occurring on the back side, although the front park maintains its emblematic presence and still serves as a vital open space linkage for the community.

The adaptability of the landscapes is a critical factor, but apparently there are some adaptive limits that the community is facing as it passes its semicentennial. While Wildwood Park has maintained a remarkably strong sense of community identity—a sense of institutional “belonging” and loyalty which, to a visiting

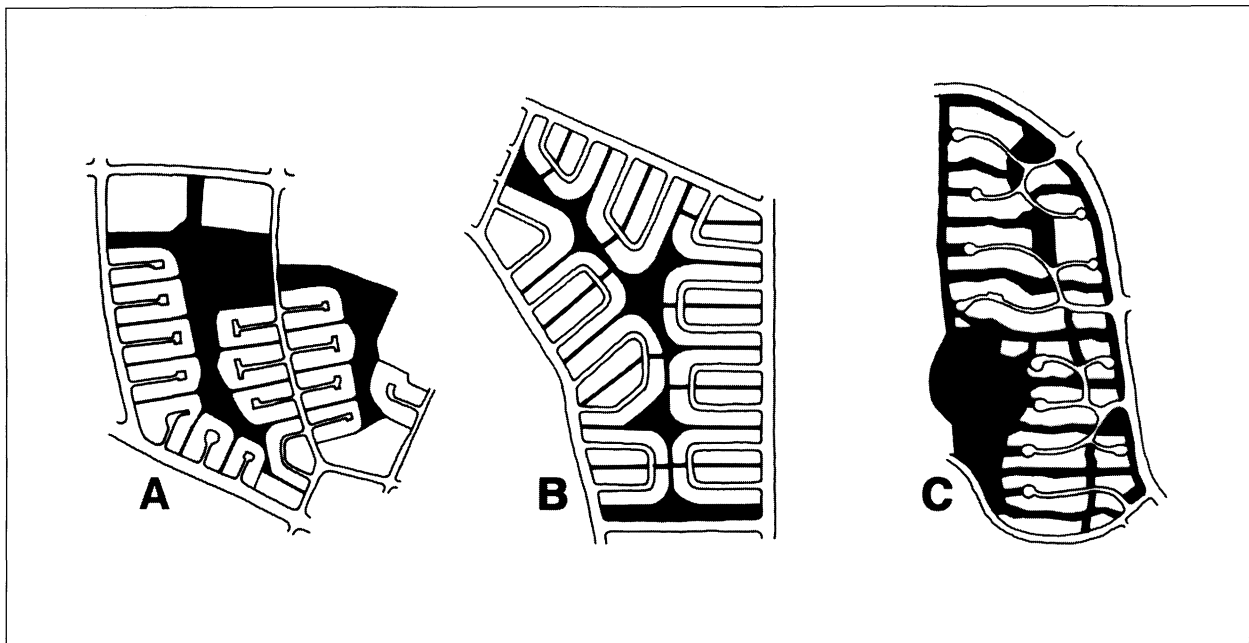


Figure 1.: Same-scale diagrams of “reversed” North American communities of the 1920s, 1940s, and 1970s: Radburn in Fair Lawn, New Jersey (A), Wildwood Park in Winnipeg, Manitoba (B), and Village Homes in Davis, California (C). Areas in black represent extent of community open space. (Diagrams by Michael David

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outsider, seems akin to that of the students and alumni of a small and widely beloved school—in recent years the proliferation of automobiles and the addition of garages to house them has significantly transformed Wildwood's lane-scapes, bringing into question the viability of back-only access in the contemporary two-plus-cars-per-family circumstance—in much the same way that contemporary advocates of back-alleys⁵ question the viability of front-only access (i.e., standard postwar suburban subdivision form).

This paper is a review of the history of the differentiated landscapes of Wildwood Park—their origins and transformations over the decades. Although not documented in published planning/design literature, since at least the early 1970s there has been some local interest in the neighbourhood, especially on the part of university students and academics in various disciplines of environmental design. The author has conducted site visits on two separate occasions (one in September, without snow, and one in April, with), during which time he engaged in behavioral mapping/physical mapping, conducted one- to three-hour focused interviews⁶ in the homes of several residents, circulated a resident survey, and, on the April visit, spent three days living at Wildwood Park as the guest of a resident family. (See appended "Notes on interview, survey and mapping methods" following this article's conclusion.)

The Pre-Development Landscape

Until the early 1800s, the floodplain land within the bend in the Red River now occupied by the Wildwood Park community was part of a broad territory bordering the Red and Assiniboine Rivers (which have their confluence at the site of modern-day downtown Winnipeg) that was alternately occupied by members of the Chipewew, Cree, and Assiniboine tribes. The transformation of the landscape began in 1817, when territorial governor Lord Selkirk persuaded the natives to sign away their land rights in this area for an annual payment of 200 lbs. per year of "good merchantable tobacco".⁷ Selkirk was looking to attract settlers to these lands who would help protect the new British settlement of Winnipeg from incursions, so in the early 1820s he offered soldiers of French, German, and Piedmontese nationality⁸ who had recently disbanded from Napoleon's army, free passage, free river lots, and even the guarantee of free passage back home should they choose not to stay.

Apparently many did not stay, because by 1824 not one of the five settlers remained who had been the first to hold title to the land upon which modern Wildwood Park stands. Some homesteads had changed hands, but several of the river lots had simply been abandoned outright. Conditions could be quite harsh; the winter of 1825 featured a great blizzard, and in May of 1826 there was massive flooding of the area covered by modern Winnipeg (in a foreshadowing of 20th-century events), when the almost six-foot-thick river ice broke apart in the spring thaw.⁹

With widespread abandonment of homesteads, the land was re-acquired by the Hudson Bay Company, which sold or granted parcels to Métis settlers as payment for service to the company. These settlers, whose culture was rooted in river-edge settlements and travel by boat, occupied the river's edge of this land

from 1835 until the 1870s. In the last decades of the 19th century the river lots began to be acquired by land developers and speculators (who saw the extensive and mature woodlands as a potential timber harvest), and by 1905 there were no traces remaining of the Métis.

Col. R. M. Thompson then acquired the property and, with business partner Ralph Connor, submitted in 1908 a plan for an exclusive residential development, platted in a traditional gridiron pattern, which he named "Wildewood" (Figure 2). He extended paved roads well into his property and cleared/graded for the whole of the planned street system; he also intended to be the first resident, engaging Winnipeg architect Cyril Chivers to design an imposing three-story stone and brick Victorian mansion. The house was constructed but unfortunately, he never moved in, as he was called away to war in 1916 and died in battle at the Somme.

After the war, the almost-completed house stood empty and the network of cleared street rights-of-way began to revert to successional growth. However, Thompson's paved access attracted weekend recreational use,¹⁰ and the site became a quasi-public park frequented throughout the 1920s by picnickers, hikers, and fishermen. In 1930, the deed to the Thompson property was transferred to the city of Winnipeg, which sought to make the property's status officially recreational by developing it as a regional park. At this moment, about 1300 miles to the southeast in

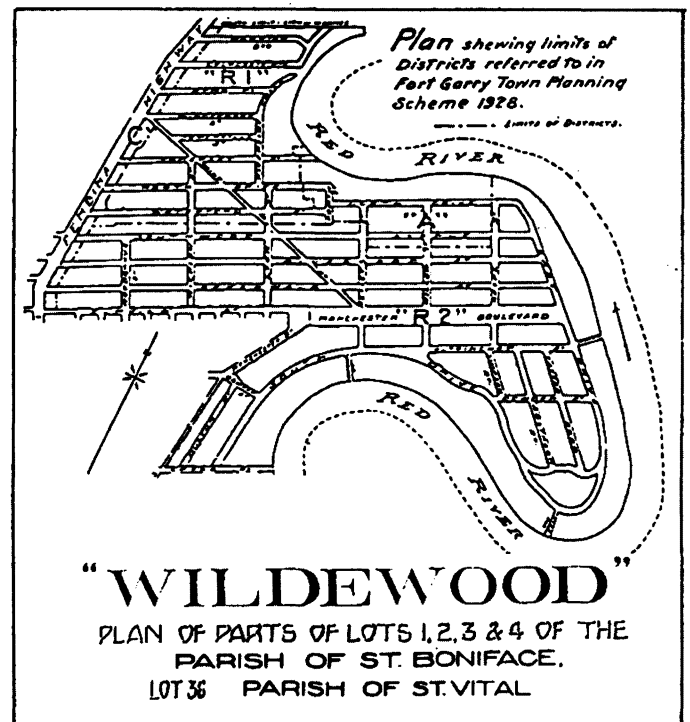


Figure 2: Col. R.M. Thompson's 1908 development scheme for the "Wildewood" parcel, which maintained the gridded street pattern predominant in suburban Winnipeg. (Plan reproduced with permission of Carl R. Nelson, Jr.)

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Fair Lawn, New Jersey, Stein and Wright's innovative Radburn development¹¹ was being curtailed due to lack of development funds available at the onset of the depression. The widespread economic plight put a stop to Winnipeg's ambitious park-planning projects as well, and the "Wildewood" property continued to be used "unofficially" by local residents.

Hubert Bird and the Making of Wildwood Park

Ironically, while Col. Thompson lay dying in France, a 27-year-old Canadian officer named Hubert Bird (Figure 3) was engaged in another aspect of the war effort, gaining valuable building experience supervising the construction of aerodromes in Europe. When the war ended in 1918, he returned to Canada and spent the next 25 years operating a construction company that specialized in building military barracks and airports all across western Canada. Eventually, he moved to Winnipeg and settled on land adjacent to the late Col. Thompson's tract.

Meanwhile, the "Wildewood" property next door remained undeveloped, as a succession of weeds and underbrush slowly crept over Thompson's forlorn and moribund street pattern. Apart from the road clearings, it remained heavily wooded with green ash, Manitoba maple, American elm, basswood, bur oak, and giant cottonwood.¹² Bird apparently would hike the land regularly and

occasionally even paddled a canoe along its river edge, admiring its beauty but at the same time contemplating a form of development that would preserve the character of the existing landscape. Legend has it that one day, on a return flight from New York to Winnipeg, he looked out his airplane window shortly after takeoff and saw Radburn arrayed below him. He was intrigued by the pattern of cul-de-sacs, by the interconnective park that all residences abutted, and by the idiosyncratic reversal of the house/street relationship. Whether or not this is the actual manner by which he learned of Radburn,¹³ that New Jersey community became his inspiration, and he was thus motivated to propose a similar housing pattern for the Wildwood property. He began to explore possibilities for acquisition and re-platting of the old Thompson property,¹⁴ and then war once again intervened. Bird put his project aside for the duration, turning his attention to military construction projects in Canada, including nineteen air training facilities and hundreds of wartime housing barracks.¹⁵

Canada, like the United States, found itself with a housing shortage on the return of its soldiers from both theatres of World War II in 1945. Bird sought to help meet that need by reviving his project, and yet he did not want to create a veterans-only enclave, believing that a diversity of residents would be beneficial for the



Figure 3: *Wildwood Park developer Hubert Bird (second from right) presents Green, Blankstein and Russell's model for Wildwood Park to representatives of the Great West Life Assurance Company, which provided financial backing for the project. (Photo reproduced with permission of Wildwood Park History Book Committee)*

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new community.¹⁶ Rather than seek government financing for veterans' housing, Bird obtained backing from the Great West Life Assurance Company, and purchased the 74.7 acres from the municipality of Fort Garry for \$15,000. Having expertise in prefabricated barracks and hangar construction, he quickly developed plans for housing units using similar construction practices, so that houses could be roughed into place on-site in a matter of a few hours,¹⁷ and homes could be sold at a significant reduction in price from those built utilizing slower and more labor-intensive "stick-built" construction methods. He hired the architectural firm Green, Blankstein and Russell (GBR) as planning and architectural design consultants, and directed them to produce a preliminary plan based on the Radburn model, incorporating the following general principles:¹⁸

1. Superblock plan (breaking from the generally gridded pattern of surrounding development)
2. Dendritic street pattern (feeding neighbourhood traffic outward to peripheral collector streets)
3. Separation of pedestrian and vehicular circulation
4. Interior open space linking all homes
5. "Reversed" house plans (backing to lanes, with front doors facing pedestrian-accessible interior open space)
6. Housing stock diversity (for architectural variety and to attract a range of family sizes/income levels)
7. Maximum practicable preservation of existing woodland

This preliminary plan (Figure 4) was submitted to the Housing Administration in Ottawa for approval in April 1945, and was reviewed by Sam Gitterman who, as it happens, became a key figure in the early era of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), which was established by the *Central Mortgage and Housing Act* later that year. Gitterman had a reputation for innovative community design, having directed the planning of several wartime housing communities since 1941.¹⁹

Gitterman was very impressed with the preliminary plan; he prefaced his written review comments by noting that Bird's project "was one of the best that has yet come to our attention" and "the result should be an extremely interesting, attractive and utilitarian development."²⁰ He did have some suggested modifications, the most significant of which concerned the scheme's six Radburn-style "hammerhead" cul-de-sacs. This design meant that it would be necessary for vehicles to back up when exiting, and Gitterman predicted this maneuver would prove awkward and difficult, especially for larger delivery vehicles. He was not opposed to cul-de-sacs, but suggested terminal circular turn-arounds be substituted for the hammerheads. In response to the review, Bird and GBR opted to eliminate cul-de-sacs altogether, and the final plan consisted of ten loop-lane sections (or "bays," as they came to be known among Wildwood Park residents) serving a total of 286 lots.²¹

Taking great care to preserve as many trees as possible (Figure 5) and to stockpile topsoil for replacement after construction,

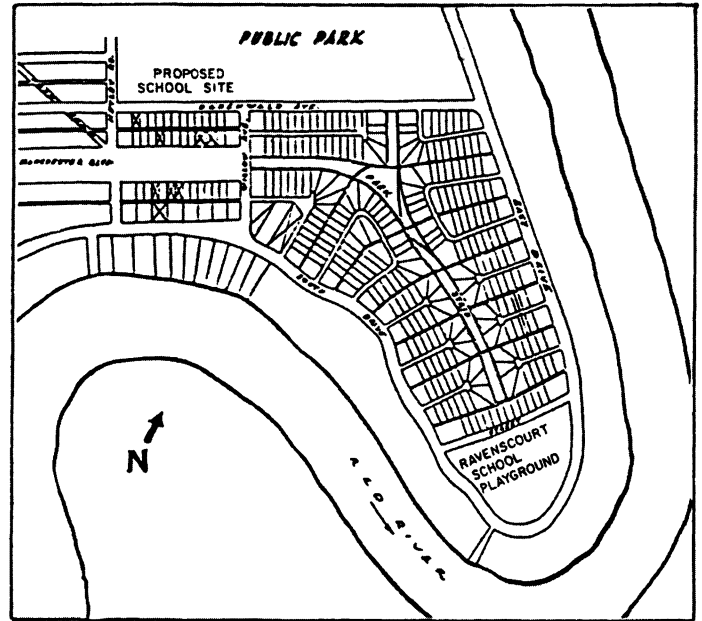


Figure 4: GBR's 1945 preliminary plan for Wildwood Park, later amended following review by Sam Gitterman, Director of Housing for the Canadian Housing Administration in Ottawa. Note the six Radburn-style cul-de-sacs, which were eliminated in favor of loops for vehicular accessibility. (Plan reproduced with permission of Carl R. Nelson, Jr.)

Bird's highly organized and ultra-efficient construction operation completed houses at the rate of three a day. There were five house plans available (one, one-and-a-half, and two story), averaging about 1000 square feet and ranging in price from \$6570 to \$9300.²²

Moving In: The First Families (Antediluvian Era)

"The spirit of community in Wildwood Park was built by those first families of the little experiences and commonplace exchanges of everyday life", noted neighbourhood historian Mavis Reimer.²³ The pace of construction and occupation was rapid, and virtually every home-buyer was a young family with little discretionary income. This necessitated a sharing of resources which, in turn, tended to facilitate relationships among neighbors. For instance, very few Wildwood Park families owned automobiles in the late 1940s,²⁴ so those who owned cars offered rides into town to those who did not. The scarcity of cars also created heavy reliance on the single bus which connected the neighbourhood to Pembina Highway and beyond, which meant that residents shared time both at the bus stop and on the bus itself. Also, phone service was slow to arrive for new homes everywhere in the immediate postwar era, as the telephone utility (M.T.S.) was working on a tremendous backlog of service connections. As a result, the few residents with phones shared them, and the Bird Construction office made their phone available for free use after work hours. Standing in line to use the company phone became a happenstance social gathering tradition in its own right.²⁵

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Figure 5: *Bird Construction Company workers carefully excavate around existing mature trees to preserve the woodland. Prefabricated house walls were constructed and stored off-site for eventual on-site assembly via “cranemobile”. (Photo reproduced with permission of Wildwood Park History Book Committee)*

The Great Flood of 1950: Devastation and Recovery

Wildwood Park was essentially built-out by 1950, when its defining moment came in the form of massive flooding over the levees along the Red River on Saturday, 6 May 1950. As the water rose slowly but inexorably (Figure 6), residents at first fought to protect their new homes with sandbags and shovels. At nine p.m. on Friday evening, women and children were given the order to evacuate; in the pre-dawn darkness on Saturday, sirens sounded to give the order for complete evacuation.²⁶ Throughout the neighbourhood, water rose to near or above the levels of second-story floors (Figure 7). All homes were heavily damaged, but no homes were completely destroyed—although many of the few garages that had been built just prior to the flood broke free of their foundations and floated away.²⁷ The Red River finally crested on May 19th, only two feet short of the level that would have necessitated the total evacuation of Winnipeg.²⁸

For all the havoc and damage wrought, the flood and its aftermath had an immediate and everlasting community-building effect. The residents had worked furiously to sandbag the dike; when those efforts failed, they worked in unison to salvage belongings and to help each other find temporary shelter. Returning weeks later to moldy, waterlogged houses and a landscape of muck, they cooperated in a massive clean-up effort which lasted throughout the summer. “The stories told about the weeks that

followed the deluge are not about despair or capitulation, but about the resiliency and adaptability of human beings,” notes Reimer. “(T)here is no doubt that the aftermath of that disaster confirmed and strengthened the spirit of solidarity among park people.”²⁹ Hubert Bird himself was instrumental in the effort to restore and rebuild the community, taking on the job for anyone wanting to rebuild,³⁰ and by the winter most residents were once again living at home.

After the Flood: Fifty Years of Postdiluvian Landscape Evolution

For several years after the 1950 flood, Wildwood Park and other low-lying areas around Winnipeg remained vulnerable to seasonal flooding. This precarious circumstance greatly concerned residents each spring when the Red River’s ice layer broke apart³¹ and had the effect of temporarily depressing home values. All of that changed when the city undertook extraordinary regional-scale flood-control measures in the late 1950s, upgrading dikes and creating systems upstream for floodwater diversion.

Landscape as community park: the preservation of the commons

The “front yard” of every home in Wildwood faces the park, and if the 1950 flood is the defining moment for this community, the park is its signature element and, of course, its namesake. The

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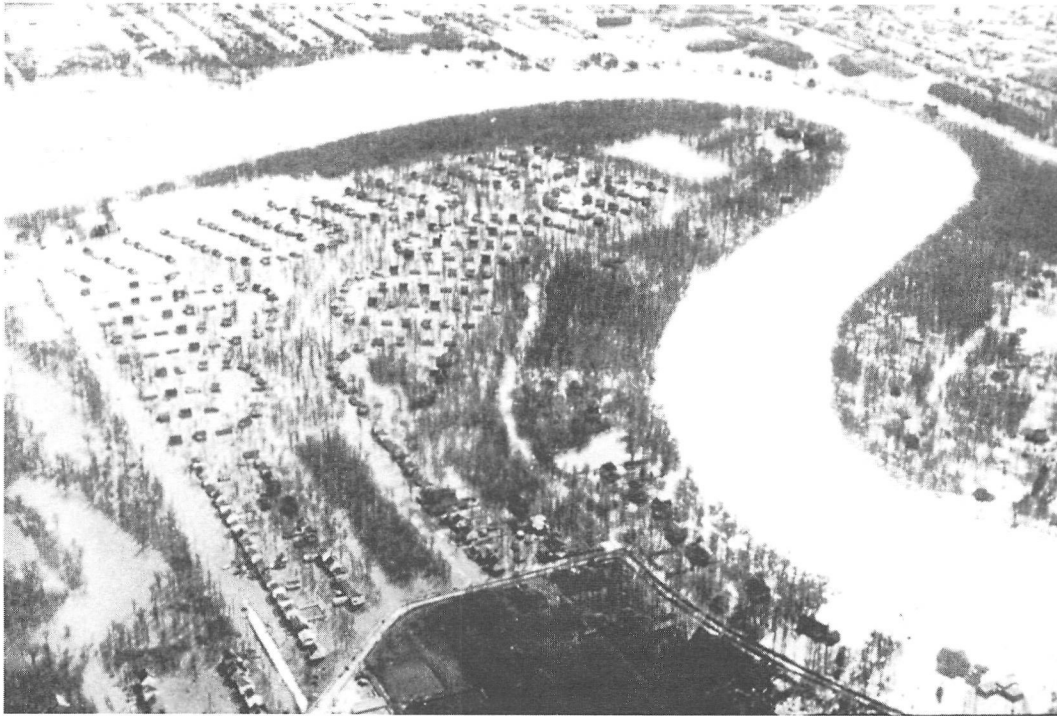


Figure 6: *The Red River floodwater inundation at its maximum stage on May 19, 1950. Residents had been ordered to evacuate ten days earlier, at the moment it became evident that exhaustive efforts by residents and other volunteers to shore up the surrounding levees had been futile. (Photo reproduced with permission of Wildwood Park History Book Committee)*



Figure 7: *Many homes were flooded to the level of first-floor ceilings in 1950. While all homes were severely damaged, none were destroyed, and most were substantially restored by later that year. (Photo reproduced with permission of Wildwood Park History Book Committee)*

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mature, umbrageous trees have always been “a huge appeal”,³² distinguishing the neighbourhood from other developments that lack this common-space concentration or quality (Figure 8). Bird, like Clarence Stein at Radburn, intended the park to be the primary circulation system for the community. Unlike Radburn, which was developed with a paved walk system in place, there were initially no paved paths in the front park.³³ Also unlike Radburn, the developer did not install “territorial” planting on the park-facing sides of homes in order to create transitional space between private and public realms.³⁴ Conceptually, the park has always “belonged” to everyone,³⁵ its management and preservation have been the major theme that has bound the community together for over five decades. The park is visually transparent, with long views through the high-branched trees. The architecture responded to this condition; all Wildwood homes originally featured living-room “picture windows” looking out onto the park (Figure 9).

In legal terms, the park land is held in common by the community association. There is a powerful tradition of maintaining the visually open quality,³⁶ and an equally powerful tendency to conserve the park as a neighbourhood resource. Until 1956, when the Municipality of Fort Garry made the commitment to maintain the common spaces, residents were collectively responsible for routine landscape maintenance such as snow removal, leaf raking/disposal, and lawn mowing.³⁷ Snow removal in the park was especially important in the early years, when the large number of

children and the scarcity of cars caused residents to rely on the park as connective space. Ironically, even though walks were paved in concrete throughout the park by the 1960s (and later still, lighting and playground equipment were installed in strategic locations), nowadays these walks are not all routinely snow-shoveled throughout the winter³⁸ (especially those walks in the open-space extremities of the bay interiors)—a testament to the lifestyle changes wrought by automobile culture and, perhaps, by the aging and diversification of the neighbourhood population.³⁹

Landscape as Home: Fronts, Backs and Territory

1. Front yard landscape

The front yards are part-and-parcel of the park; the houses were conceived as having a formal relationship with the park, similar to the relationship between a house and its street in a typical neighbourhood. Bird and GBR intended residents to use the park side as the formal approach to the house, as when calling on a neighbour; likewise, it was intended that “outside” guests approach homes this way. For purely practical reasons, these habits never developed: neighbors tended to approach each other through the lane-side “back” door because this was the “working” side of the house⁴⁰ and the setting for most family activities. Outsiders, typically arriving by car, were naturally inclined to park on the lanes and then to approach the home in the least round-about manner.⁴¹



Figure 8: *House-hunting is of necessity conducted on foot in the extensive and connective park, which houses actually face in this “reversed” community. (Photo by Michael David Martin)*



Figure 9: *An architectural response to the park and a park, in turn, maintained for visual openness: a living room's "picture window" outlook. (Photo by Michael David Martin)*

Through the years, there have been modifications to some front-yard landscapes. Carl R. Nelson Jr. and Donald G. Crockett's 1984 study⁴² is one of a handful of landscape assessments performed during the past three decades; theirs stands as the most comprehensive investigation of the nature and scope of landscape and architectural adaptations. Although fences were in fact not forbidden, "rumored regulation"⁴³ against them persisted for many years, which for a while was an effective means of control over "territorializing" the front yards.⁴⁴ It was not until the early 1980s—when the neighbourhood was no longer so demographically homogenous and when the "once open green space" was beginning to be "modulated and partitioned through individual action"⁴⁵ (Figure 10)—that a new zoning amendment was proposed and passed with only one dissenting vote among the hundreds cast. The ordinance reads in part: "No fences shall be permitted in a front yard; and trees, shrubs or similar landscaping features shall not be placed in a front yard in such a manner as to provide a fence effect."⁴⁶ The zoning amendment was

the single most significant factor since 1946 to assure a change to the nature and the pace of transformation of the Wildwood Park environment. (The amendment) prohibits physical means of territorial definition and allows . . . only *symbolic* definition of private and semi-private zones within the fifty foot front yard setback."⁴⁷

Walking through the park and the ten bays today, the overall impression is one of openness and connection of houses to landscape commons—even in the leafy verdure of summer. There are a few exceptions, mostly eye-level plantings that partially screen views, and at least one instance of screening with berms. Some houses have added park-facing decks (decks detached from houses are permitted within front yards, subject to height restrictions) or have enlarged their front stoops to the point where they have become habitable spaces. Despite these interventions, the front-side landscape remains a landscape of spatial and temporal continuity. It is both beautiful and relatively static; it is the least adapted or transformed landscape within Wildwood Park.

2. Back-yard Landscapes

The lane-side landscape is another story entirely. This is a scene of remarkable transformation and adaptation, in no small part due to the control, convention, and formality that governs the opposite side of the homes. The lanes are places of phenomenal variety and intensity of use. They are at once back alleys, accommodating service functions such as car storage, trash collection, and utility metering;⁴⁸ *de facto* "front" entries for visitors;⁴⁹ daily arrival/departure sites for residents; social nodes for outdoor family activities, a use often manifested by patios, decks, gazebos, etc.; social nodes for interactions with section (lane-side) neighbors, hard-surfaced play space for children—especially those needing to be supervised by a parent through the kitchen window;⁵⁰ staging area for miscellaneous outdoor projects; and so



Figure 10: An “aftermarket” deck and walkway on private property but nevertheless “in” the park. Concerned about privatization of the common landscape, residents modified neighborhood bylaws in 1984 to restrict the extent of permitted structures and screening in front yards. (Photo by Michael David Martin)

on (Figure 11). If the front yards can be described as pastoral, serene, passive, broad, sylvan, controlled, contiguous, and public, the back-yards can be considered urban, variegated, active, intimate, fortuitous, libertarian, partitioned, and, very often, private.

It was not always so. In the early days, the lane-side landscape was very open, and there were few garages.⁵¹ Long-time residents can recall large groups of children playing ballgames that crossed the lanes and transcended the boundaries of several lots; nowadays that would be inconceivable, because of the proliferation of garages, fences and other physical or symbolic subdivisions of the landscape. Wildwood lanes are fascinatingly diverse, giving full expression to an inherent individuality, unlike the park-side view of the neighbourhood.⁵²

Urban landscape as local neighbourhood: The genius of the “bay” as social unit and the eventual dilemma of car storage

A discussion of Wildwood lanes is inadequate without acknowledging their context. As noted, the front-side park is Wildwood’s “signature” landscape. The park is that for which the neighbourhood is locally renowned and by which it is identified. Internally speaking, all Wildwood homes “belong” to the park and the park belongs to them, in a collective sense; upon closer inspection, however, at least as significant a factor in the uniqueness and cohesion of this community is the design and scale of the ten sections or “bays” (Figure 12).⁵³

Because (as noted earlier) the lane-side of the home is the locus of family life, its collective association is the lane and the back yards abutting it. For 50-plus years, this “lane-escape” has been the primary site of incidental social activity for residents.⁵⁴ The lane, in Wildwood, is a loop, usually with three sides—and hence more spatially complex and diverse than a straightforward cul-de-sac such as those in Radburn. The average bay in Wildwood Park serves about 29 home sites.⁵⁵ This number is significant; each bay was sufficiently populated that bays were reinforced as sub-elements of the broader community, and individual bays took on distinct identities. Residents have traditionally identified their home as belonging to a particular section (which have only letter designations, A-J). In the early days, it was typical for daily morning “coffees” (gatherings of mothers with pre-school children in tow) to be organized by individual section. To this day, the section is the logical political unit within the neighbourhood association, each one contributing a section representative for overall neighbourhood governance. At Wildwood Park reunions, this organization and identification by section has been maintained.

In 1947, when Wildwood was first occupied, there were typically only a few cars per section, roughly one car for every ten households.⁵⁶ A little over ten years later, at the end of the 1950s, most residents owned one car—in other words, the number of resident cars had increased practically tenfold. Construction of garages, naturally, followed acquisitions of cars, and at first these garages were all of the one-car variety.⁵⁷ The lane-side landscape began to evolve from a linkage of open yards to one of varying degrees of yard enclosure, for the protection of children and the storage of automobiles. Nowadays, the average resident family owns two-plus cars, which constitutes another doubling of the vehicular population. The lane-escape transformation in response to an influx of vehicles was the most often-cited concern among residents, according to both interviews and surveys: longtime residents especially lamented the incremental “walling off” of the lane edge, as two-car garages have become more and more the norm (Figure 13). There were other concerns raised about parking “territorial prerogative” along the lanes, as often happens in communities that rely on on-street parking for residents and/or guests. There simply is insufficient space to store all the resident cars, not to mention those of visitors—especially for those reduced-frontage lots on the outside corners of the looping lanes.

The Landscapes of Winnipeg's Wildwood Park

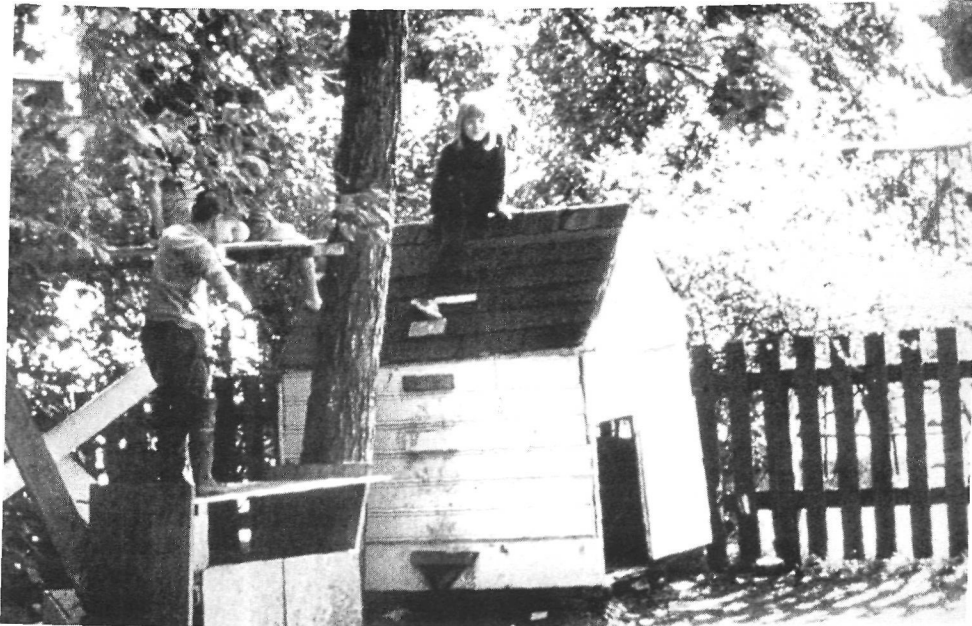


Figure 11: Wildwood children and their playhouse, built within the “libertarian” lane-side yard. Back yards, unlike park-facing front yards, have never been subject to by-laws which restrict landscape modifications. Photo by Siegfried Toews and reproduced here with his permission

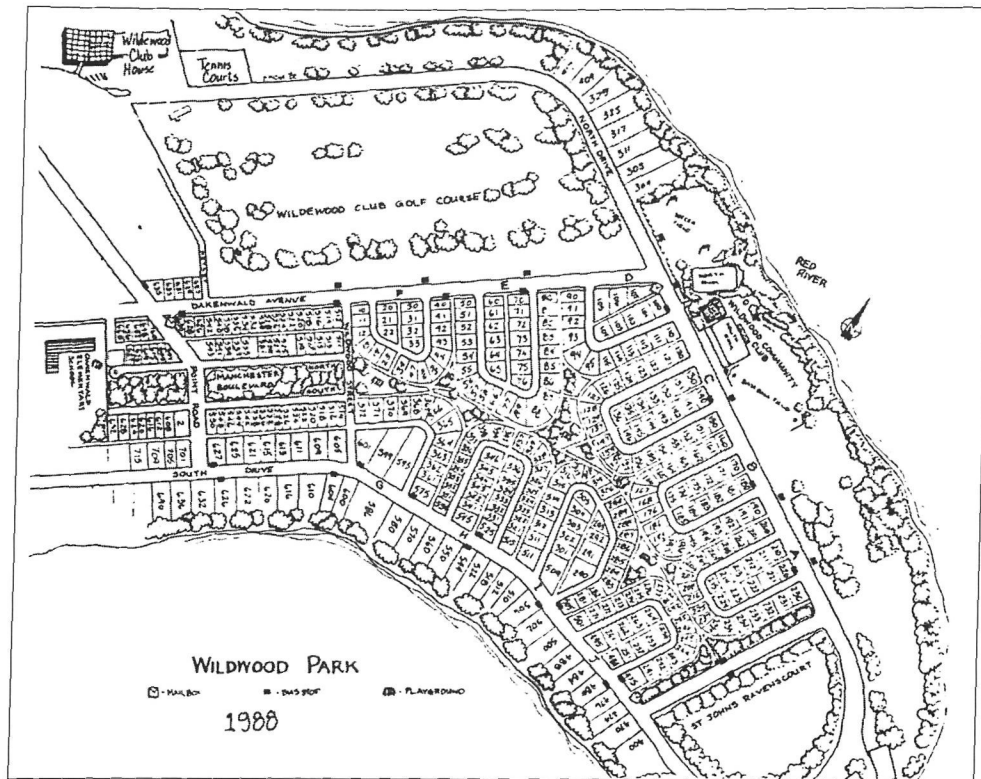


Figure 12: 1988 Wildwood Park illustrative plan, including recreational facilities and adjacent development. (Plan used with permission of Wildwood Park History Book Committee)

The Landscapes of Winnipeg's Wildwood Park



Figure 13: *The proliferation of two-car garages has begun to wall off the Wildwood Park lanes, a concern for some long-term residents who recall the openness of the “lane-scape” in earlier years. (Photo by Michael David Martin)*

The “tightness” of the lane-scape does, however, have its advantages. To quote a contemporary Wildwood Park resident (from a letter written to this author):

Part of the uniqueness of Wildwood Park, and the failing of newer “back-lane” designs is this narrowness. This narrowness is extremely conducive to a feeling of community, makes it easier to meet and greet your neighbors, and simply enforces a slower, more sedate traffic flow through the lane by virtue of this narrowness. (Figure 14)

The Wildwood lanes are in effect functioning as *woonerven*,⁵⁸ or traffic-calmed streets. It should also be noted that although the “walling-off” issue is, as noted, a critical one for outside corner lots, the lane edge for the majority of homes is a highly differentiated/articulated boundary, offering occasional glimpses into the diverse and spatially layered back yard landscapes—especially for slow-moving, strolling pedestrians.⁵⁹

Conclusions

It is of the utmost importance that we are constantly reminded that the so useful art of architecture achieves its greatest potential when it is most beautifully attuned not only to spectacular special needs, but also to the undramatic and even intimate everyday needs of people when they are functioning individually or in groups.⁶⁰

—Ralph Erskine

Wildwood Park, as a unique and idiosyncratic community design, merits attention and further study in its own right by planning historians and those interested in alternative neighbourhood forms as social constructions or cultural landscapes. In addition, it suggests many things to designers of contemporary communities, many of whom (particularly those who espouse “new urbanist” principles) are currently looking to traditional pre-World-War-II grid-pattern neighbourhood structure and aesthetics as inspiration for (presumably) more socially cohesive neighbourhoods. “New urbanist” authors such as Peter Calthorpe and Alex Krieger disdain all garden-city-based forms as anti-urban “failures”,⁶¹ and advocate a return to streetscapes as primary community open space. Whether inclined toward the garden-city precept for separation of automobiles and pedestrians, or toward this contradictory new urbanist premise that cars and people should cohabitate within community open space, Wildwood Park has much to inform the neighbourhood designer looking for useful precedents. Both its pedestrians-only park *and* its highly interactive lanes that do mix people and cars—and particularly these two yin-and-yang landscapes considered as a “matched set”—offer many interesting design lessons in matters of two-dimensional platting, three-dimensional neighbourhood structure and four-dimensional considerations for structural and landscape transformations that occur over the span of several decades.

Hubert Bird’s vision for Wildwood Park was nowhere near as ambitious as Stein and Wright’s regional approach in the conception of Radburn. Despite intentions, however, the two neighbourhoods ended up at roughly the same size. As Jane Holtz Kay recently noted, Radburn became “unhinged”⁶² from its garden-city context.

The Landscapes of Winnipeg's Wildwood Park

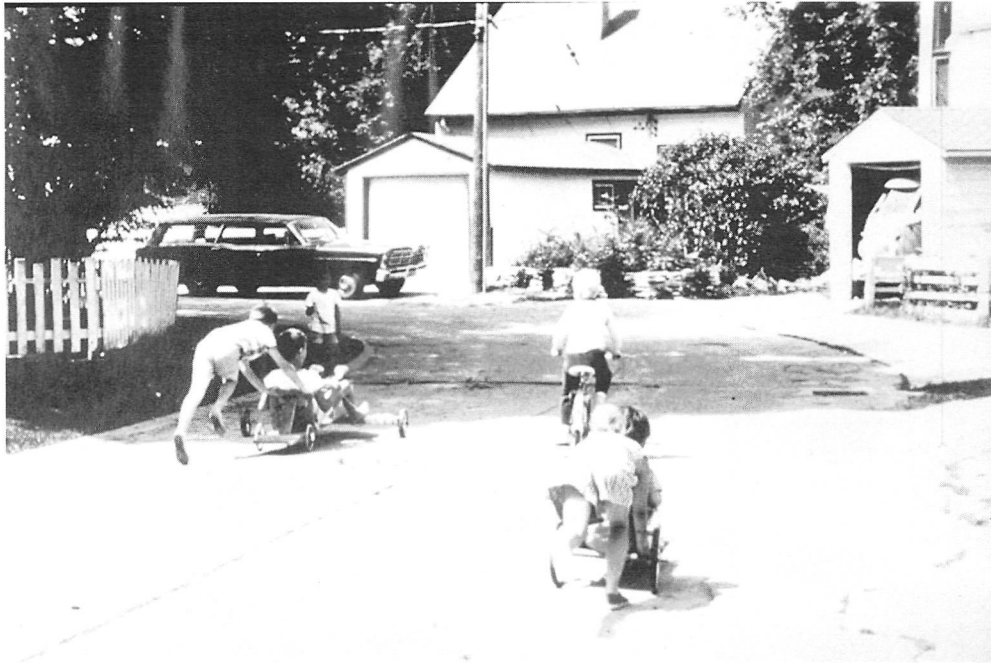


Figure 14: *A Canadian woonerf: the intimate dimensions and tight geometry of the looped lanes pose problems for guest parking while creating a safe zone for resident children. (Photo by Siegfried Toews and reproduced here with his permission)*

Kay and many others through the years have tended to dismiss or minimize the significance of Radburn for this reason, just as criticisms are often leveled at the aforementioned new urbanists who, it is charged, are merely building prettier suburbs instead of attending to more pressing and important regional planning and environmental issues. From the regional perspective, Wildwood Park could be criticized on much the same basis, for it is and always has been something of a detached oasis within the suburban Winnipeg landscape.

And yet—the significance of Wildwood Park's neighbourhood-scale landscape planning innovations are inescapable. The common ground of the park is truly a "sacred grove", and is the organizing principle for all homes; it is a landscape that represents unity, continuity, and tradition. The sections, on the other hand, contain within their intimate limits the expressive and personal landscapes—the unruly sense of freedom in counterpoise to the regularity and conformity of the park. Through the years, as houses change hands and the population's demographics shift and diversify, there have been two constants: the collective stalwart allegiance to the protection of the park, and the assertion of the prerogative to mold or re-make the individual landscapes in any manner that suits the individual resident. This duality is the "landscape dynamic" which contributes so heavily to the community's cohesion and stability.

There are, of course, other factors in community-building that transcend the realm of physical planning/design and the human responses to those conditions. One could begin with geomorphology: the neighbourhood is located in a bend of the Red River that is so extreme that the river flows on three sides (Figure

15); it is a landform extremity, and hence attracts no through-traffic⁶³—a circumstance that isolates as it protects. The neighbourhood underscores this self-containment by its street pattern and house orientation; it is difficult for the newcomer to comprehend the pattern from the outside or to even understand the proper approach for a visitor.

These factors that baffle or discourage outsiders, of course, are the very factors that have strengthened the ties among residents. Nelson and Crockett found that an overwhelming majority of residents felt Wildwood was a safe place to live. Reasons included

friendly and caring neighbors who watched out for [others'] property when they were away, [residents] who cared about the neighbourhood, and the general opinion that children were safe because vehicles were separated from play areas and the bay system reduced internal traffic . . . Wildwood "was off the beaten path" and almost never intruded upon by outsiders.⁶⁴

Noting the neighbourhood's "stand-apartness" the question occurs: do neighbourhoods perhaps need to be inwardly-focused as here in order to have this powerful sense of place, identity, and community? Is there also a minimum/maximum-size aspect to consider, in terms of sections or of the overall community? Is it merely a coincidence that Radburn, Wildwood Park, and Village Homes (Figure 1)—each of which enjoys a reputation for unusual social cohesiveness—are not only related by design concept, but are all roughly similar in both area and population?

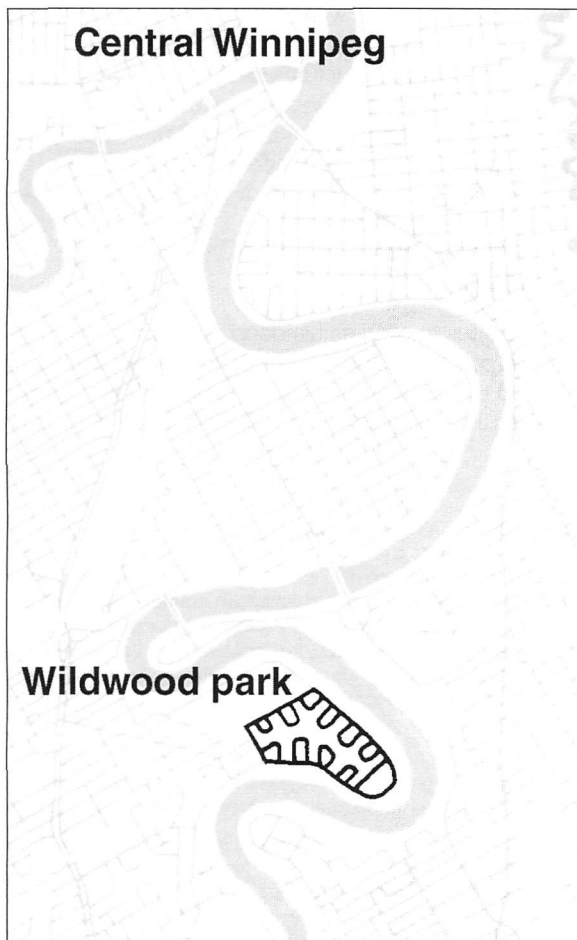


Figure 15: *Wildwood Park depicted within the geography of suburban Winnipeg, the urban core of which lies north at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. The meandering Red River isolates as it protects, contributing to the inward focus of the community. (Map by Michael David Martin)*

The sense of community can also be understood as a fifty-year legacy, tied to events from years gone by. Wildwood Park was, like many postwar housing developments of the era—and, perhaps, like “starter-home” communities of any era—in that

[the original] families were much like one another in age, stage of life, and economic standing . . . It was undoubtedly the homogeneity of this first group of families that allowed residents to define themselves so quickly as a community.⁶⁵

Lean times in the immediate postwar years, as noted, led to a sharing of resources among residents, and this helped build community spirit. The disastrous flood of 1950, which occurred 50 years ago at this writing, remains a significant oral-tradition shared history, a sense of communal victory in overcoming the displacement and devastation. The importance of the commu-

nity's heritage must not be overlooked; what is noteworthy is that the powerful sense of community has outlived most of the residents who helped establish it in the first place.

Finally, the importance of Hubert Bird's vision and ongoing influence during the formation of the community cannot be understated.⁶⁶ Hubert Bird and GBR implemented that vision by rejecting the purely conventional and creating what stands today as a fascinating and edifying experiment in the social construction of neighbourhood landscapes.

Notes on interview, survey and mapping methods

As stated, the author utilized a variety of information-gathering methods during his site visits to Wildwood Park. The primary method was the “focused interview”, a method described by John Zeisel in his 1982 book *Inquiry by Design*. The focused interview combines the structure and consistency of a questionnaire with the flexibility and interactive nature of an extended discussion; the interviewer uses the same series of questions at each session, but during responses to the questions the discussion may range freely, leading to the discovery of information well beyond the immediate scope of the question set. The interviews took place in the residents' homes; in several cases the interview included not only a sit-down discussion but also was enhanced by a “walk-through” of the subject's property. Of the eleven individual focused interviews conducted, nine involved participation by multiple household members, and the total number of participants interviewed in this manner was 26. The interviews were set up by the author's host, who considered availability, diversity of age, gender, ethnicity, family structure, and tenure of residency in establishing the list of subjects.

In this study, the focused interview questions and the questions asked on the survey were identical. The survey was designed as both a secondary source of information and as a way to broaden the number of residents whose responses could be considered. This survey was distributed after the author's departure to thirty-five households, with thirty-one ultimately returned to the author. The author's host took responsibility for distribution and collection of the survey forms; in this case he selected households based primarily on geographic diversity, in order to reach residents throughout the neighbourhood's several sections.

The author did not design the interview or survey process to ensure statistically accurate sampling. The purpose of these interactions was to gain a general sense of attitudes, concerns, and behavioral practices with respect to the utilization of the neighbourhood's differentiated landscapes, and to determine whether contemporary resident attitudes and perceptions were consistent with those reflected in prior research conducted in the 1970s and 1980s (Nelson and Crockett's comprehensive 1984 study, for example, included interview and questionnaire results from a sample which encompassed nearly 2/3 of all households). A third method was informal mapping of “behavioral traces” (again, see Zeisel), in which the author made detailed notes of the visible manifestations of activities in both the common and semi-private outdoor zones within what appeared to be representative portions of the neighbourhood. (The author also used both videotaping and still photography to record these landscape conditions

for later review.) This mapping accounted for the sort of incidental and highly individualized "yardscape" detail such as the existence of added-on decks, patios, landscape screening (or lack thereof), ornamental plantings, outdoor furniture, play equipment, gardens, walkways, fences, gates, etc.; it also accounted for the apparent number of resident vehicles and their manner of accommodation or storage such as driveways, garages, carports, and paved parking pads.

Generalizations from interviews, survey forms, and observation

Virtually every interview or survey respondent, prior to moving to Wildwood Park, had lived in a "standard" street-facing suburban development, and so had a basis for comparing the Wildwood arrangement to the more typical pattern. In every case the respondent expressed a preference for the Radburnian "reversed" Wildwood scheme. The reasons most often cited for this preference were the living-room's picture window outlook to the park (front side) and perceived neighbourhood safety (especially for children). Every respondent had (or at one point had) one or more young children living at home.

Most residents said their children played more frequently on the lane side of their property than the park side, although many noted that both sides were used extensively by children. Residents noted that the lane-side areas were easier to monitor, simply because adults tended to spend more time in rooms that faced the lanes (such as the kitchen) than rooms that faced the park (such as the dining room and living room). Also, adults tended to spend much more time in back yards when they were outdoors, and the great majority said that there was a much greater frequency of incidental socialization with neighbors on the lane side than on the park. Perhaps because of this, residents were much more likely to have formed friendships with neighbors sharing their lane than with neighbors who shared the portion of the park contiguous to their home.

About half the respondents allowed that their own lane-side yards were fenced to at least some degree, although observation indicated that this had been done for at least two-thirds of the properties overall. The reported subjective sense of privacy afforded by front and back yardscapes was about the same—this may seem odd in light of the great difference in the typical degree of physical enclosure for fronts and backs, but interviewees explained that front yards, though visually open, felt secluded by virtue of the general lack of everyday activity in the intermittently used park.

Most residents said there was sufficient parking for their personal use, but that there was inadequate parking for visitors. About half at least occasionally made personal use of the lane-edge parking, and a similar percentage felt some "ownership" of the lane edge that abutted their property—however, most indicated that conflicts with neighbors over the territoriality of these lane-edge parking spots was "seldom" an issue. However, many expressed concern with the inability of the lane to accommodate large numbers of visitors (as during a party).

When asked what they would most like to change, irrespective of cost or feasibility, the most frequent issue cited was parking prob-

lems; next most often cited was control of pets and pet droppings in the park. A few expressed a desire for more freedom to build larger outdoor-use structures on the park-facing side of their homes (a practice, as noted, proscribed by neighbourhood by-laws), and a few—generally, those who had longer tenancies at Wildwood park—expressed concern that the lane-scapes were becoming too walled-off by the recent construction of larger garages and opaque fencing.

Acknowledgement

The author wishes to express his deep gratitude for the essential contributions of Carl Nelson, Ted McLachlan, Barrie and Phyllis Webster, and the many Wildwood Park residents who were generous with both their insights and hospitality.

Notes

1. Stein's Radburn, "A New Town for the Motor Age", had little immediate influence, due in part to a lack of acceptance of its radical reorientation of house and street. Radburn did serve as inspiration for postwar "New Town" planning, including famous American examples such as Robert E. Simon's Reston (Virginia) and James Rouse's Columbia (Maryland), which began development in the 1960s. Ironically, it is Stein's own Kitimat (B.C.), planned in the early 1950s, which stands as the "first complete new town in North America" (*Architectural Forum* 101, July 1954, 128–47 and 102, August 1954, 158–61).
2. For a concise and generalized synopsis of Radburn's experience as well as for general background on Village Homes, see Cynthia Girling and Kenneth Helphand's 1994 *Yard Street Park* (New York: John Wiley and Sons).
3. Several unpublished studies of Wildwood Park are cited in this article, the most comprehensive of which is Carl R. Nelson Jr. and Donald G. Crockett's "Wildwood Park Study", ©1984 by Carl R. Nelson Jr. Nelson and Crockett conducted extensive fieldwork that was "directed toward examining the resident perceptions and intentions regarding the establishment of territorial definitions, the nature and construction of private outdoor space, the addressing of the public domain, the satisfaction with the Wildwood Park environment, and the extent and nature of architectural change" (Nelson and Crockett, 88.).
4. In Canada, as in the U.S., numerous examples exist of communities planned in the 1960s and 1970s according to "Garden City" principles that provide for clustered housing and significant common open-space areas. In these communities the open space serves as an alternative connective fabric to the street system, because the open spaces knit households together on the side of the residence which is opposite the street. Unlike at Wildwood Park, however, the houses still "face" the street, such that the back of the house connects to the open space. Typical of this pattern is the Revelstoke Demonstration Project in Vancouver, B.C., designed by Meiklejohn Gower Fulker & Wallace Architects, which purposefully intermixes a variety of housing types to suit a diverse demographic range and features both Radburn-like cul-de-sacs and a "municipal park" within the neighbourhood. The project won a Canadian Architecture Yearbook Award in 1976 for "sensitive complex analysis" of the affects of social factors on community design. (*Canadian Architect*, vol. 21, no. 12, Dec. 1976, 28–33). Klein and Sears' Holly-Dunfield Mixed Housing Project in Toronto is a higher-density version of the same concept. Irving Grossman is another Canadian architect known for this approach; his Flemingdon Park housing project features "a ground plane freed for pedestrians and children's play...this at a time when the CMHC was scattering bungalows with nary a thought for the burden of infrastructure." (Baker, Joseph. "Irving Grossman: A Profile", in *Canadian Architect*, vol. 40, no. 2, February 1995, 26.)
5. These back-alley advocates include "neotraditionalists", such as Peter Calthorpe—who admires back-alleys primarily because of their potential to clean up streets by relieving them of service functions such as car stor-

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- age and garbage collection—but also includes those who recognize the essential role of the back-alley as a vital social landscape within many pre-WWII neighbourhoods. See Martin's "Back-alley as Community Landscape".
6. In a focused interview, one "poses questions systematically to find out what people think, feel, do, know, believe, and expect"—from Zeisel, John. 1982. *Inquiry by Design*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 7. Reimer, p. 14.
 8. Reimer notes that land title records from 1822 indicate that Peter Kandrosky, John Visnet, Martin Isack, J.D. Corne, and John Wassilosky held the original deeds to the five river lots of which modern Wildwood Park is a portion. The river lots in this area were typically about 200 feet wide and often a mile or more in depth, extending from the river's edge back to what is now called the Pembina Highway.
 9. Reimer cites an account of the 1826 flood, quoting from E. Patterson's *Tales of Early Manitoba*. In a letter to his brother in England, Winnipeg resident John Pritchard described this phenomenon: "The flood at once rose higher than ever known to man. The crashing of immense masses of ice was loud as thunder; neither the tallest poplar nor the stoutest oak could resist its impetuosity. They were mowed down like grass before a scythe" (Reimer, 13).
 10. Nelson and Crockett, 33.
 11. Radburn's history is a very familiar story, well documented in planning literature. Inspired by England's garden cities, Radburn was envisioned as a whole new town, but only a fragment was ever built because of the coincidence of the stock-market crash just as the project's first phase was being developed. But enough of the community was built to create the essential "superblock" structure Stein and Wright had envisioned. Radburn's great legacy is its extensive and interconnective open space. Within his or her home superblock (and beyond, via grade-separated pedestrian street crossings), the Radburnite could visit any other residence without crossing any street. Also, this open space contained public facilities such as swimming pools and playgrounds. Many accounts of Radburn's history appear in the literature; the most comprehensive sources are Schaffer's 1982 *Garden Cities for America: The Radburn Experience* and Clarence Stein's own *Toward New Towns for America*.
 12. Nelson and Crockett, 33.
 13. The tale of Bird's happenstance aerial-view introduction to Radburn appears in many accounts of Wildwood Park's genesis. According to Nelson and Crockett, who also repeat this tale, in the 1930s Bird was already familiar with the planning theories and built works of Clarence Stein and Henry Wright. This seems likely, notwithstanding the fact that Bird was a builder as opposed to a theoretician, given the prominence of Stein and Wright, Radburn (and other works with which one or both had a hand) and the Garden Cities ideology in general.
 14. In 1941, the Thompson property was deeded back to the Municipality of Fort Garry, in order to save on maintenance costs.
 15. Nelson and Crockett, 36.
 16. Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba. *A Study of Wildwood Park* (no pagination).
 17. The Minneapolis Tribune ran a time-lapse photo feature which depicted the set up of two adjacent houses in just 58 minutes—a sort of on-site assembly-line method. A "cranemobile" lifted prefabricated walls and rafters into place, and various crews assembled the walls, sheathed the roofs, and attached millwork (it should come as no surprise that Bird's introduction to the building industry was as a construction timekeeper). Wildwood Park could be said to have one of its feet in Radburn, its direct design inspiration, and the other in Levittown, where (simultaneously) construction of a great many very similar little houses proceeded at a furious pace on Long Island—though the Levitt brothers and their builders did not stage house construction with quite the degree of Bird's military-style efficiency.
 18. Mubanga (no pagination).
 19. Bacher, 182. Bacher quotes landscape architect, social-housing advocate and progressive civil servant Humphrey Carver, who noted that the War-time Housing projects were "excellently designed under the direction of Sam Gitterman, the architect of CMHC, and represented the accumulated know-how of several years of site-planning and house-grouping."
 20. Nelson and Crockett, 39.
 21. Wildwood Park's population peaked in the 1960s at somewhat over 1100 residents in those 286 households; current population has decreased to around 660. (Projection by Nelson and Crockett, 90; see later note for an account of population trends.)
 22. Although the construction method was unusual, these houses were very typical in size and cost for "starter" homes of that period. Doucet and Weaver note that "In 1949 CMHC published three booklets of standard plans. Out of 75 plans, 57 (76%) presented dwellings with less than 1200 square feet of living area. The mean for all plans was 995 square feet—snug bungalows predominated..." (Doucet and Weaver, 238).
 23. Reimer, 33.
 24. From author's interview with resident.
 25. Reimer, 34.
 26. From author's interview with resident.
 27. From author's interview with resident.
 28. Reimer, 4.
 29. Reimer, 6.
 30. From author's interview with resident. Reimer also notes that Bird purchased a steam cleaner which was used throughout the neighbourhood to clean houses inside and out (Reimer, 10).
 31. From author's interview with resident.
 32. From author's interview with resident.
 33. Concrete paths were added throughout the park in the 1950s. Note also that Radburn was developed on the site of a treeless spinach farm, wholly lacking the dense mature woodland existing prior to development at Wildwood Park (and largely preserved, thanks to Bird's efforts). 70+ years later, Radburn's central space is now heavily wooded. Girling and Helphand note: "The scene [within Radburn's connective open spaces] was a rich one. Densely planted, it soon filled in, affording views to small lawns and gardens, walkways, hedges, and the park." (Girling and Helphand, 65). In Radburn, the front-side "common" space is a subdivided landscape which has parks *within* it; in Wildwood Park, the entire common space *is* a park.
 34. Meyer, 61. Meyer notes the often-overlooked contribution of landscape architect Marjorie Sewell Cautley to the design of the "figured ground" of Radburn's park—Cautley's planting design purposefully demarcated transitional zones between public park and private residence entry. On the other hand, "In the planning and building of Wildwood Park in 1946–47, no conscious effort was given, apparently, to the notions of territory, though the conceptual framework clearly delineated fronts and backs to the houses." (Nelson and Crockett, 69–70.)
 35. Although lots within the interior of the bays do not adjoin the park as directly as exterior bay lots, this seems to have caused no diminution of the sense of "interior" residents' attachment to the commons (based on survey and interviews). Even though separated from the "central" park by the lanes, the park segments contained within bay interiors are widely viewed as contiguous with the central area.
 36. As one interviewee noted (one of the few remaining "antediluvian" Wildwood Park residents), the "protection of the view has always been a primary consideration."
 37. According to one interviewee who has lived in Wildwood Park since 1954, in the early days it was commonplace for two or three neighbors to jointly purchase and share a lawnmower.
 38. As one bay-interior-residing interviewee asked when queried about routine winter season maintenance of the park's walkways, "Why bother?". This

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- does not imply, however, that Wildwood Park residents avoid the out-of-doors during the winter. Wintertime use of the park includes cross-country skiing and occasional snowshoeing. Residents ski both within the park and range beyond it to ski on the Wildwood golf course or even the solidly frozen surface of the Red River, which typically does not break up until April. Skiers and snowshoers do have to cross a road to access these outlying landscapes; Bird and GBR did not provide any grade-separated pedestrian road crossings (as exists at Radburn).
39. The Nelson and Crockett study tracked census data and included projections for the population of the community, which indicated that, as might be expected, population peaked as the children of original occupants reached adulthood. The estimated population in the late 1940s was 1028; a 1966 survey indicated that the population had grown to 1125, and had declined since that year to 1072 by 1971, 982 by 1976, 915 by 1981, 714 by 1986, 671 by 1991, 662 by 1996, leveling off at 661 by 1999. Throughout this rise and decline in population, the proportion of residents who are married couples has held fairly constant, at a figure around fifty percent; in the early years, however, the great bulk of the nonmarried half of the population were children living with their married parents; as the population has aged, the nonmarried contingent has included a decreasing proportion of dependent children and a corresponding increasing proportion of widowed, divorced, and never-married adults.
 40. As at Radburn, kitchens and back doors faced the lanes, and the kitchen tended to be the locus of daily family life.
 41. Even for outsiders attempting to respect convention and approach a Wildwood Park home at the formal front entry, the design of the landscape worked against their good intentions—wayfinding within Wildwood park's organic commons has always been notoriously difficult for newcomers.
 42. Owing to its uniqueness, Wildwood Park has attracted a great deal of local attention on the part of faculty and students of the various disciplines of environmental design, particularly those from the nearby University of Manitoba. The Nelson and Crockett study focused on "examining the resident perceptions and intentions regarding the establishment of territorial definitions, the nature and construction of private outdoor space, the addressing of the public domain, the satisfaction with the Wildwood Park environment, and the extent and nature of architectural change." (Nelson and Crockett, 88)
 43. Nelson and Crockett, 62.
 44. A telling incident which has become part of neighbourhood folklore is the case of a lawyer who purchased a home in the neighbourhood in the 1970s and hired a contractor to begin construction of a covered deck in his front yard even before he moved in. Concerned neighbors, having no owner to confront, succeeded in having construction temporarily halted while permits were reviewed; when the lawyer moved in, they took up a collection to send him flowers, as a sign of goodwill; the lawyer, who simply had not been informed as to the local front-yard culture, readily accepted the terms and became "a good neighbor". (Story told to author by one interviewee and confirmed, with slight variations in the re-tellings, by other interviewees as well.)
 45. Nelson and Crockett, 62.
 46. Amendment to Wildwood Park's "Zoning Bylaw 1800". The original bylaw was established in 1971, later amended in 1984.
 47. Nelson and Crockett, 63.
 48. The author discovered quickly that the term "alley" is an unwelcome Americanism in Wildwood Park, and took pains to correct this oversight when discussing the landscape of the Wildwood Park *lane* with residents. The official definition: "'Lane' means public lane: includes all lands established by dedication or used as public highways having a width of not more than twenty feet and is synonymous with 'alley' or other terms commonly applied to public lanes" (Bayne, 3).
 49. Nelson and Crockett reported in 1984 that "...nearly all houses have transformed the public face of the house to the lane or vehicular side of the residence..." (Nelson and Crockett, 95). And yet, a large majority still referred to the park-facing entry as their "front" door. Nelson and Crockett also observed: "What has evolved over the past three and one-half decades is a de facto reversal of 'front' and 'back'. What was intended to be a public park and the 'presentational front' has transformed into a semi-private 'back', a sort of a common or shared green space..." (Nelson and Crockett, 70).
 50. As researcher Siegfried Toews noted in 1974: "...the [Wildwood Park] lane...lures the children to play, because it in itself is the hub of activity...cars tend to slow down on the lanes because the children playing on them are either their own or their neighbors"—Toews, Siegfried, *A Tribute to Wildwood Park*. (research report, no pagination). It is worth mentioning that Clarence Stein, in his revisiting of Radburn a quarter-century after its construction, noted this same phenomenon of children often "choosing" the hard-surfaced landscape of their home lane over the chance to play in the grassy, pastoral front-side park—a fact which perplexed Stein somewhat (Stein, 52).
 51. Lanes were also not paved for several years. They are now paved in concrete and asphalt; they are 30 feet in width overall, with 6-foot parking strips included on both sides—leaving less than the remaining 18 feet unobstructed for two-way traffic, since most cars exceed 6 feet in width.
 52. Although, it must be noted, inherent individuality is likely to be expressed architecturally as well, which can be recognized from front or back. The great majority of Wildwood homes have been enlarged and stylistically modified from their original humble condition—some quite extensively. Of course, the average new house in Canada was growing every year in square footage, and Wildwood residents were following that trend; Doucet and Weaver note that "In a CMHC booklet of 79 plans, published in 1971, only 20 (25%) described houses of less than 1200 square feet. The mean had climbed [from 995 in 1949] to 1376 square feet." (Doucet and Weaver, p. 238.)
 53. Residents seem to use the official designation "section" and the vernacular "bay" almost interchangeably.
 54. This claim is borne out in every study recorded of resident preferences and observed resident behavior. Mubanga (1970s), Toews (1970s), Nelson/Crockett (1980s), and this author (1990s) consistently report the residents' preponderant use of the lane-side yard for routine, everyday household and social activities.
 55. Radburn cul-de-sacs vary slightly in length and alignment, but typically there are 16–18 homes on each.
 56. The whole of Section J, for example, contained only two resident cars in 1951 (according to an interviewee who moved there that year).
 57. Winnipeg, of course, has sufficient annual snowfall to make garaging one's cars an imperative.
 58. "Woonerf" ("woonerven" is the plural form) has come to be accepted as the term for a modern "traffic-calmed" residential street, after prototypes which were developed in the Netherlands. Woonerven are designed to make automobile circulation possible but difficult by a variety of strategies including roadway narrowing, roadway alignment contortion, coarse-textured "rumble strips", humped speedbreakers, placement of fixed obstacles such as concrete bollards and planters, and other obstructive measures—all of which not only slows traffic but has the ancillary effect of keeping out drivers who are not residents. The Dutch pronounce the word "vone *airf*" (emphasis on the second syllable); originally, it referred to a small enclosed courtyard beside the farmhouse within the traditional Dutch farmstead, where children, chickens and other small vulnerable beings could roam free from the hazards of the movements of the larger farm animals and machinery. Although *woonerven* have been advocated by urban designers for years, the concept has yet to catch on in North America; it seems to have achieved the greatest acceptance in urban cultures where automobiles are both fewer in number and smaller in size, such as in Northern Europe and Japan.
 59. The author's research revealed that many residents stroll for recreation in the lanes precisely because they enjoy peering into the interesting and diverse back-yards and because they are more likely to encounter neighbors there than in the front park.
 60. Erskine, p. 7.

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61. Calthorpe, Peter. 1993. *The Next American Metropolis*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, p. 33. Calthorpe refers to New Towns as suburban "failures". See also Krieger, Alex. 1991. "Since and Before Seaside", in *Towns and Town-Making Principles* (Alex Krieger and William Lennertz, eds.). New York: Rizzoli, 13. Krieger will not even dignify garden city-based communities by referring to them as "towns".
62. Kay, 190.
63. Although, it must be noted, this sense of seclusion was very nearly lost, and would certainly have been lost if not for the political cohesiveness of the residents. The community successfully banded together to thwart a planned widening of Oakenwald Avenue and Oakenwald's extension as a bridge across the Red River—a change that would have profoundly and irretrievably affected the neighbourhood's relationship to the outside world, with many presumably disruptive consequences.
64. Nelson and Crockett, p. 94.
65. Reimer, p. 33.
66. Bird was very hands-on as a developer, and continued to live adjacent to the project for fifteen years following its completion. Reimer notes that he often strolled with his wife Violet through the park, stopping to converse with residents (Reimer, p. 34).
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