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We're On A Mission From G-D: Thornhill As A Walkable Jewish Suburb

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WE'RE ON A MISSION FROM G-D: THORNHILL AS A WALKABLE JEWISH SUBURB

by

Daniel Abraham Rende, BA, York University, 2010

A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Planning
in
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ABSTRACT

Jewish Thornhill, located in Vaughan, York Region, was intentionally designed and planned as a walkable Jewish suburb. Though it is an auto-oriented suburb, Thornhill is also a walkable neighbourhood that caters to the distinct needs of its large Jewish community. Orthodox Jews require ready access to kosher food; they also require synagogues within walking distance as they do not drive cars or take transit on the Sabbath or Jewish holidays. The master planning of Thornhill was made possible by developers who recognized the Jewish community's predictable migration pattern along Bathurst Street and purchased land in Thornhill two decades before the Jewish community had reached Thornhill. Topics that were researched for this paper included walkability, Toronto's Jewish history, the intersection of religion and urban planning, and smart growth.

Key words: Planning, Thornhill, Walkability, Religious Enclave, Suburbs

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Methods	4
3. Context Review	
3.1 Suburban built form and suburban settlement	7
3.2 Smart growth	9
3.3 Religion dictating urban settlement	13
3.4 Toronto's suburban Jews	17
4. The Northern Pilgrimage up Bathurst	
4.1 Bathurst Street	19
4.2. The east side never takes off	26
5. Early Days of Thornhill and BAYT	30
6. Walkable Thornhill	
6.1 What is walkability?	47
6.2 Why is walkability important?	48
6.3 Walkable aspects of Thornhill	51
6.4 Thornhill settlement	55
7. Conclusion and Implications	59
Works Cited	61

List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Thornhill, Google Maps	1
Figure 2: Former Beth Jacob synagogue on Henry Street, Rende 2009	23
Figure 3: Former Ostrovzer synagogue on Cecil Street, Rende 2009	23
Figure 4: CJNI article, November 26, 1981	26
Figure 5: CJNI article November 26, 1981	27
Figure 6: CJNI photo, November 26, 1981	27
Figure 7: BAYT advertisement in CJNI, August 26, 1981	31
Figure 8: Groundbreaking ceremony for Lubavitch Centre, Chabad Gate, Thornhill, April 4, 1982. Ontario Jewish Archives, photo #3433	32
Figure 9: Sukkoth celebration at Beth Avraham Yaakov Congregation, Thornhill, 1981. Ontario Jewish Archives, photo #3435	33
Figure 10: Joseph Tanenbaum and Rabbi Baruch Taub at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Lubavitch Centre, Chabad Gate, Thornhill, April 4, 1982. Ontario Jewish Archives, photo #3449	35
Figure 11: Future site of the Clark Avenue BAYT, BAYT Archives	36
Figure 12: Rabbi Taub at 51 Beavshire during construction, BAYT Archives	36

Figure 13: Shiur class at Beth Avraham Yaakov Congregation, Thornhill, ca. 1982. Ontario Jewish Archives, photo #3448	37
Figure 14: CJNI advertisement, January 28, 1982	38
Figure 15: CJNI advertisement, June 4, 1981	39
Figure 16: 770 Chabad Gate, Rende 2012	42
Figure 17: CJNI article, March 18, 1982	44
Figure 18: BAYT at 613 Clark Avenue, Rende 2011	45
Figure 19: Average walking times from the <i>Toronto Walking Strategy</i>	50
Figure 20: Available amenities within 1km of Clark and Atkinson. Data collected from site visits and Frum Toronto.	51
Figure 21: York Hill Park, Google Maps	52
Figure 22: Land use map of part of Thornhill, Rende 2011	55
Figure 23: Settlement in Thornhill, Rende 2012	55
Figure 24: Settlement in Thornhill, Rende 2012	56

1. Introduction

This paper will demonstrate how “Jewish Thornhill”, located in the municipality of Vaughan in York Region, was intentionally developed by the visionary Joseph Tanenbaum (Tanenbaum) as a walkable Jewish suburb to address the specific needs of the Jewish community. As the founder and driving force of the company, Runnymede Development Corporation, he recognized the migration pattern of the Jewish community along Bathurst and capitalized on it.

For the remainder of this paper, whenever Thornhill is mentioned, this is actually referring to “Jewish Thornhill” – a term coined for the purposes of this paper. Jewish Thornhill is bounded by Steeles Avenue, Yonge Street, Dufferin Street, and Highway 7 (Figure 1). These boundaries are unofficial and do not align with the municipality of Vaughan or the Provincial and Federal Riding of Thornhill.

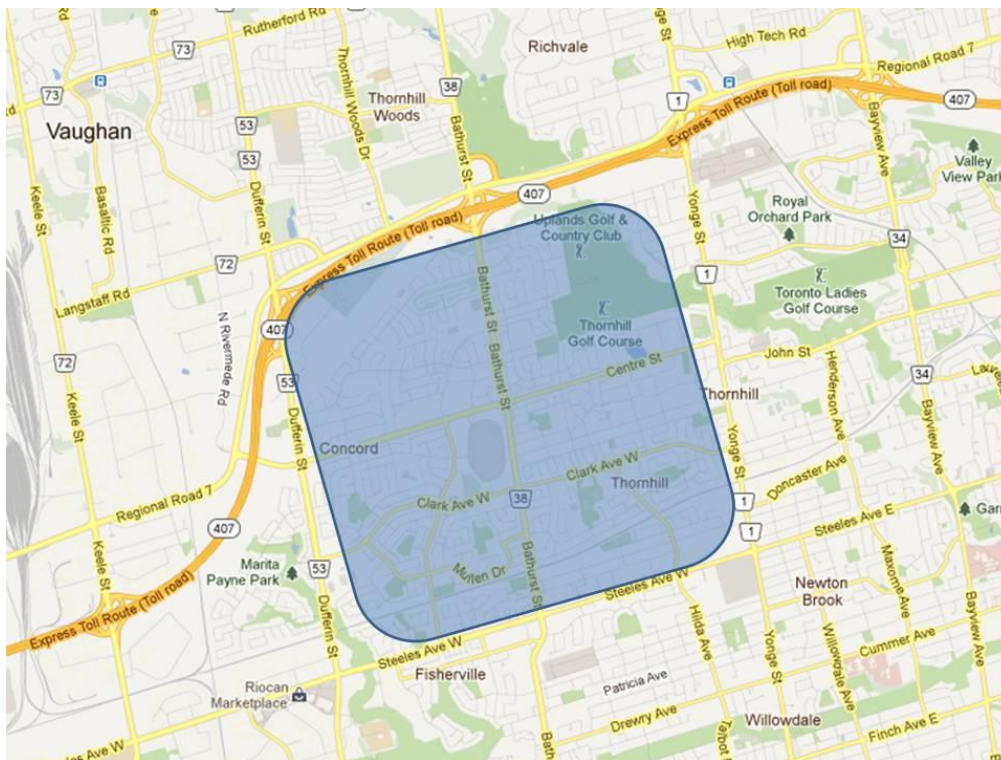


Figure 1: Map of Thornhill, Google Maps

A 2004 report by the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) on the 2001 Canadian Census indicated that Vaughan's 34,305 Jews accounted for 19.2% of the Jewish population in the Toronto CMA, compared with the City of Toronto which had had 113,795 Jews or 63.5% of the Jewish population in the Toronto CMA (Shahar & Rosenblum, 2004, p.5). Within Vaughan's population of 181,600, Jews comprised 18.2% of residents, ranked second after Catholics with 101,325 residents (Statistics Canada, 2001). The population of Thornhill is actually much denser in terms of a Jewish population as the Vaughan municipality extends west to Highway 427, a primarily Italian Catholic community. In fact, Jewish Thornhill has truly earned its name, with an overwhelming 50.7% of the residents identifying themselves as Jewish (Sahar & Rosenblum, p.13).

I once had a conversation with a policy planner who had researched churches in a specific municipality. He told me that certain churches thought they were exempt from good planning or Zoning By-laws because, they said, "We're on a mission from G-d". He said to me that this argument holds no weight and that the only mission of G-d he's concerned with is the one from *The Blues Brothers*, the 1980s movie starring Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi, who try to raise money to save the Catholic home where they grew up (IMDB, 2012).

While this project has nothing to do with *The Blues Brothers* I have titled it "We're on a Mission from G-d" because this paper deals with a similar convergence of urban planning policy and religion. The two may conflict but there is not necessarily always tension between religion and municipal planning policies.

I grew up in Thornhill and have lived there my entire life. On numerous occasions I have been told to "stick with what you know" and so over time this topic found me. The history and

development of Thornhill is an interesting one, but it cannot be explained without discussing the impact of the Jewish community. Thornhill and the Jewish community go hand in hand. Luckily, I am Jewish myself and a member of a Thornhill synagogue. As an urban planning student and a lifelong resident of Thornhill I can hopefully provide a unique viewpoint to the development of Thornhill as a walkable Jewish suburb.

2. Methods

For this project, I undertook a series of interviews, reviewed newspapers from the 1980s, examined secondary scholarly research, collected several archival photographs, calculated population densities in Thornhill, and compiled data to display settlement patterns in Thornhill. I conducted a series of interviews with long-term residents of Thornhill and prominent members of the Thornhill community. These participants, identified through mutual acquaintances and overlapping social networks, have all lived in Thornhill since the early 1980s and experienced the growth of Thornhill during critical periods. The first person interviewed is a long-term resident of Thornhill and he and his wife were one of the founding families of the Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto (BAYT) synagogue located in Thornhill. I interviewed him because it was useful to find out the reasoning for moving to Thornhill, while it was still farmland, and what Thornhill was like in those early days. This informant spoke about the migration trend of the Jewish community and expanded on his family history in Thornhill with interesting stories.

The second person I interviewed is a prominent member of the Chabad community of Toronto, an outreach organization with branches all over the world. I interviewed him because the Chabad synagogue at Chabad Gate and Bathurst Street was one of the first buildings in Jewish Thornhill and Chabad, as an organization, is constantly pushing frontiers and expanding. I spoke with him to understand Chabad's motivation and reasoning for moving up to Thornhill and how he views this dilemma of religion and suburbia.

Both interviews were conducted in the conversational style (Neuman, 2011) with several open-ended questions. I was primarily interested in the respondents' own oral histories and the

open-ended questions allowed them to elaborate as much as they desired. At times one question would lead to a long monologue. With one respondent, a question regarding the decision to move up to Thornhill became a twenty minute history of Jewish migration in Toronto. The reason for this very detailed answer was because the decision to move to Thornhill was informed by the Jewish community's migration history. Furthermore, the conversational interview style allowed the respondents to enhance their answers and this brought about anecdotes and interesting stories that were unexpected.

In terms of secondary research, numerous scholarly articles and books, some peer reviewed and some not, were included and are examined in the context review of this paper.

For primary research, in addition to interviews, I scanned almost two years worth of Canadian Jewish News (CJN), articles and selected significant articles and photographs between May 1981 and December 1982. This time period was identified as it coincided with significant early developments with the BAYT synagogue and therefore the greater Thornhill neighbourhood. This was viewed on microfiche at the Ontario Jewish Archives. As there are very few works that focus on or mention the development of Jewish Thornhill the bulk of information will emerge from these CJN past-issues and key informant interviews.

For further primary research I collected several archival photos from the Ontario Jewish archives and the BAYT synagogue. The historians at the Ontario Jewish Archives compiled a series of images from the early days of Thornhill, which I examined. I also visited the archival room at the BAYT to examine their collection of photographs. These photos were not catalogued or labeled so while it is difficult to determine the various people in the photos, they still proved to be helpful.

Finally, for quantitative research, I collected a random sample of addresses of BAYT members and mapped these out to display where BAYT members live in relation to the synagogue.

For this paper, I have primarily focused on the settlement and placement of synagogues and residential units and have not included schools, kosher stores, etc. These developments are important, but for the purposes of this paper, they are beyond the scope of this research.

3. Context Review

The topics that will be covered in this paper are: suburban built form, smart growth, and religious impacts on urban settlement. Essentially, I will be examining how religious practices affected and dictated the design of suburban Thornhill.

To inform my research I will overview the characteristics of suburban settlements, mostly in North America, the components of smart growth communities and, finally, instances where religion, specifically Judaism, has dictated urban settlement.

3.1 Suburban built form and suburban settlement

For this paper, it is not important to discuss the history of suburbs or their introduction to North America. However, it is important to recognize that they became the dominant form of urban settlement in Canada and America in the late 1900s.

John Lorinc (2006) writes about suburban sprawl in Canada and cites that in the 1990s it was evident that the 905 area – including Richmond Hill, Vaughan, and Newmarket- was representing the bulk of the growth in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) (p.99). The rapid expansion of the area continued as York Region in Ontario, between 2001 and 2005, grew from 759,000 to 900,000 (p.96). With most of Canada's population growth in suburban areas, he writes that, "If we aspire to build sustainable, healthy cities, York Region-style sprawl is evidently the wrong way to go" (p.97).

In this next section, I will describe the urban design and layout of a suburban style community. This will help better set up the context of the paper. Once established, I will then be able to discuss the intersection of religion and built form.

Lorinc writes that suburbs contain larger lots, have fewer and smaller blocks, and feature many winding roads and cul-de-sacs to purposely discourage walking and cycling and increase auto-dependence. Malls and retail centres are surrounded by expansive parking lots to accommodate the vehicular dependent design of the greater suburb (p.97). A feature of Canada's post-war suburbs was the separation of uses as "suburban planners across North America insisted on strictly segregating residential areas from commercial or light-industrial zones – a technical constraint that played a vital role in making suburbs dependent on cars" (p.101).

While Canada and the United States both experienced suburban growth throughout the latter half of the 1900s, suburban sprawl occurred in Canada because of affordable housing prices in the suburbs as oppose to white-flight from downtowns in the United States (p.98).

Robert Fishman (1987), writing about America's suburbs, explains how Frank Lloyd Wright predicted that this new suburban model would be based on universal car ownership and would feature a system of highways to connect the various settlements, thereby eliminating the need for a central hub or city centre. The new suburban settlement was now spread out over many square miles because destinations were now separated by high-speed drives (p.188).

Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson (2009), also speaking to American cities, describe suburbs as areas that are primarily comprised of singular-use, private buildings. Suburban form is very auto-dependent, with vast amounts of area dedicated to parking lots and other auto-oriented uses. The road system contains many cul-de-sacs, dead-ends, and crescents, while the built form is often uniform low density throughout each development (p.x).

3.2 Smart growth

In recent years, smart growth development has gained momentum along with other development styles like new urbanism, transit oriented development, pedestrian oriented development, and neo-traditional development. Gerrit Knaap and Emily Talen (2005) write that smart growth has no universally agreed upon definition but this section will provide an overview of different definitions and interventions of smart growth. The discussion of smart growth communities is necessary as they are often regarded as the anti-thesis of auto-oriented suburbs and encourage walking. This paper examines however how Thornhill is an auto-oriented suburb that is also a walkable suburb.

Smart growth became more pronounced in Ontario legislation with the introduction of the *Places to Grow Act* in 2005 (Province of Ontario). The purpose of the *Act* is to guide growth decisions in Ontario to create sustainable growth that will build strong economies and communities. The *Act*, which takes precedence over Official Plans and Zoning By-laws, describes what may be included in a growth plan, which includes goals relating to intensification, transportation, and employment uses, among other aspects of urban planning (Province of Ontario, 2005, 6).

The *Places to Grow Act* led to the creation of *Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater*

Golden Horseshoe (2006) which sets out policies, guidelines, goals, and growth targets for areas of the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) – an area that encompasses many municipalities and regions including York Region where Vaughan and “Jewish Thornhill” is located. The *Growth Plan for the GGH* is designed to guide and manage growth in order to allow for the GGH to experience growth without being subject to the negative impacts of growth, such as traffic congestion, depletion of natural and agricultural lands, and deteriorated air and water quality (Province of Ontario, 2006, 1.1). Through the *Growth Plan*, growth should be directed to certain areas designated for intensification which are to be equipped with proper transportation and a mix of uses (ibid).

One of the guiding principles in the *Growth Plan* is “Build compact, vibrant and complete communities” (1.2.2). The definition for complete communities is a community that fulfils its residents’ daily needs throughout their lifetimes, which includes “community infrastructure” along with other needs such as housing, employment, and institutions, and that “public transportation and options for safe, non-motorized travel is also provided” (6). In the case of Thornhill, community infrastructure would include synagogues as this is necessary to achieve a complete community for the Jewish residents of Thornhill. The *Growth Plan* also encourages walkability throughout the document, as will be discussed later in this paper.

Susannah Bunce (2004) writes about the effects of smart growth policies on the City of Toronto’s Official Plan approved in 2002. The introduction of the *Places to Grow Act* and the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, in 2005 and 2006 respectively, further enforced smart growth policies in Toronto. In order to curb the suburban sprawl experienced in many cities across North America, Toronto’s new Official Plan adopted a smart growth vision.

According to the Toronto OP, urban intensification and population density is the solution to suburban sprawl. Bunce writes that smart growth policies were first conceived in Portland, Oregon but have now become a “catch-all solution to urban sprawl” (p.178). Bunce writes that while urban intensification is not a new issue in Toronto, only in the late 1990s was it discussed as a response to environmental concerns and began to be referred to as smart growth (p.179). Smart growth then entered Canadian urban policy with a vision report *Toronto at the Crossroads: Shaping our Future* in 2000 that was meant to inform and guide the Official Plan. While this paper discusses Jewish Thornhill, policies relating to smart growth in Toronto will affect Vaughan.

Ajay M. Garde (2004) examines new urbanism and how it is also regarded as a method of curbing sprawl. This is in response to declining urban centres, sprawl, and an increased awareness of environmental needs. The goals of new urbanism are to improve land efficiency through urban design as well as quality of life and a sense of community (p.154). The author concludes that new urbanism is endorsed by designers, developers, and public officials as a way of “achieving sustainable growth”; however, a set of indicators and measures needs to be put in place to determine its effectiveness (p.167).

Myung-Jin Jun (2008) considers if Portland’s decline in auto-dependency is related to smart growth policies. Thornhill is an auto-oriented suburb, yet according to this article it appears that smart growth policies are inconsistent with auto-oriented developments. The author writes that smart growth “has been seen as an effective remedy to reduce or eliminate the costs of sprawl” (p.100) and that compact, mixed-use, and transit friendly environments will create a decline in vehicle dependence. The author chose Portland because it is a beacon for

smart growth policies, implementing smart growth policies dating back to the 1970s (p.101).

Knaap and Talen examine both smart growth and new urbanism. They recognize that smart growth has no universally agreed upon definition but they do list some common characteristics.

These are: “create a range of housing opportunities and choices; create walkable neighbourhoods; encourage community and stakeholder collaboration; foster distinctive, attractive places with a strong sense of place; make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective; mix land uses; preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental area; provide a variety of transportation choices; strengthen and direct development towards existing communities; and take advantage of compact building design” (p.108). Furthermore, they write that smart growth is designed to battle the negative environmental effects caused by urban sprawl. These negative effects include the replacement of natural ground with impermeable asphalt and concrete which damage the water quality, the interference of urban sprawl with wildlife, and lastly, the deterioration in air quality from high amounts of vehicular travel (p.113). Knaap and Talen write that while new urbanism and smart growth seem to be the same concepts, new urbanism focuses more on the built form and design of neighbourhoods and communities (p.109).

Dunham-Jones and Williamson provide a list of characteristics of smart growth communities. They are: low number of vehicle miles travelled and high transit use, low land consumption and high-density development, mixed use, efficient transit, a high amount of connectivity and interconnected streets, green space, public spaces, housing diversity in both built form and affordability, an urban node or city centre (p.5 & x).

This section has provided an overview of several viewpoints and definitions regarding smart

growth and they all mention compact development and curbing sprawl as key components. Thornhill is an auto-oriented suburb, yet analysis later in this paper will reveal its walkable features and somewhat compact design.

3.3 Religion dictating urban settlement

The following section examines how religious requirements are manifested in housing choices and urban settlement. Particular to Judaism, Orthodox Jews are bounded by the prohibition of driving or taking public transit on the Sabbath and major holidays, which prevents them from residing far away from a synagogue. This religious restriction dictates housing choices for Orthodox Jews and in turn the settlement of the greater community. This seems to imply that Orthodox Jews should always settle in concentrated urban areas, which would rule out suburbia; but this is not universally true.

Etan Diamond (2000) writes that the first priority for Orthodox Jews, when selecting a residence, is its proximity to a synagogue (p.9). As mentioned, according to Jewish law, Orthodox Jews do not drive or ride in a car on the Sabbath or on major holidays; this would include public transit as well (p.8). While other religions do have restrictions that affect daily life, the only other religious group besides Jews to “confront spatial constraints is the Amish” (p.9). This is because technology is prohibited in their religion and their main method of transport is horse and buggy¹. For Orthodox Jews, these regulations and limitations affect their choice of settlement and as a by-product, create a concentrated community whose members

¹ Other religions have developed walkable communities centred around a Places of Worship, such as the Mormons in Salt Lake City; however this was beyond the scope of research for this paper.

reside within walking distance of the synagogue. The idea of having a central synagogue, operating almost as a community centre, was a major driver in the development of Thornhill as will be explored later in this paper. The major difference between settlement of Orthodox Jews and the Amish, however, is that the Amish settle in separate isolated communities and do not integrate themselves with non-Amish, unlike Modern Orthodox Jews who generally operate within secular society suburban living (ibid).

Stephen A. Speisman (1979) writes that even the first Toronto settlers created tight-knit communities because “the prohibition of travelling on the Sabbath made residence within walking distance of the synagogue imperative” (p.82). Beyond that, there were other religious practices that required proximity such as ritual baths and kosher food, namely meat slaughtered according to guidelines set out in Jewish law. In addition, there was an element of community and those who could afford to choose where they lived wanted to live with those who spoke their *mamaloshen* (Yiddish for mother tongue). The earliest Jewish community of Eastern Europeans lived on Richmond Street between Yonge and York and along York Street. By the 1900s, the self created Jewish ghetto moved north to the area bounded by Queen Street, Yonge Street, Gerrard Street, and University Avenue (p.82). This area was delineated as St. John’s Ward and became known colloquially as “the Ward” (p.83). Numerous synagogues were built or established in the Ward or nearby, some westward towards McCaul Street, and these synagogues acted not only as places of worship but as social and cultural centres and schools (p.88).

Religion and urban settlement is a fairly large topic, but more specifically and more relevant to my research is Diamond’s analysis of the intersection of suburban living and Orthodox Judaism.

His book seeks to answer the question of why Orthodox Judaism has embraced the suburban lifestyle. He explains that the characteristics of suburbia – auto-oriented, isolated, separate land uses – and the characteristics of Orthodox Judaism – synagogue, moon-based calendar, community – seemingly conflict with each other (p.6); yet Orthodox Jews have settled in suburbia and embraced the lifestyle while maintaining their Orthodox religious practices. The resolution of this conflict lies in what Diamond describes as creating communities in suburban areas that have the effect of “reducing contemporary metropolitan placelessness” (p. 159). Orthodox Jews create their own communities and social networks through local synagogues, schools, kosher grocery stores, and other amenities.

Michael E. Lewyn (2004) assumes an interesting approach to why urban sprawl and Jewish law and values are in conflict with each other. He addresses the familiar point that suburbs are auto-dependent and that it is prohibited to drive a car on the Sabbath and holidays according to Jewish law. He supports his arguments by citing several biblical and Talmudic sources to explain how urban sprawl is also environmentally problematic and negatively affects the poor and the provision of charity. He writes that auto-dependency increases both air pollution and water pollution while suburban sprawl consumes greenfield land, both of which are in violation of Jewish law. His most interesting arguments are with respect to charity concerns and the poor. Bearing in mind that this article was written in the American context, he writes that suburban flight out of downtown cores creates a polarization of incomes between the wealthy suburbs and poor inner cores which translates into a higher tax base for the suburbs. This results in higher taxes for inner cities or worse municipal services, which Lewyn writes is also problematic in Jewish law. Finally, concerning giving charity, Lewyn writes that charity must come in the

form of making someone self sufficient, the idea of ‘give a man a fish versus teach a man to fish’, but this cannot occur in the suburbs as the poor are often without a car, and maintaining steady employment is contingent upon owning a vehicle. Ergo, even providing a lower income person with an employment opportunity in the suburbs will not be helpful as they will likely require a car and will still not be self sufficient. This paper also examines solutions and actions that can be taken to curb these problems.

Another practice that Orthodox Jews partake in is the establishment of an *eruv*. The *eruv* is a designated boundary that delineates a certain area so that Orthodox Jews can carry or push items in this area on the Sabbath and various holidays (Ganzfried & Goldin, 1961, ch.83). The prohibition includes carrying items in one’s hand or pushing items, such as carrying keys in ones pocket, holding a water bottle, or pushing a stroller. According to Jewish law, it is forbidden to carry items like these on the Sabbath and various holidays outside one’s own “private domain” (*reshut ha’yachid*) and into the “public domain” (*reshut ha’rabim*) (Ganzfried & Goldin, ch.82; Diamond, p.51). This is a major simplification of this topic of Jewish law, but for the purposes of this paper it will suffice. What the *eruv* does is transform a larger urban area into a “private domain” for purposes of Jewish law (Diamond, p.51). The *eruv* can be constructed by tying a small string between several posts, often utilizing existing hydro poles or telephone poles. This is a practice that affects that the daily activities of Jews on the Sabbath and can even affect housing decisions (p.52). Diamond writes that “Orthodox Jews...recognize that its [the *eruv*] very existence is an essential part of Orthodox Jewish community life” (ibid). Furthermore, the location of the *eruv* often overlaps with the boundaries of the Jewish community (ibid). As we will see later in the paper, the *eruv* in Toronto was extended several times north along with the

northern-moving Jewish population (p.52 & 53).

With the exception of Diamond's writings regarding North York suburbia, the topic of Jews and suburbia has largely been explored in the American context examining American cities. These authors include Albert Gordon (1959), who examines American Jews living in suburbia; Irving Cutler (1996), who wrote about the suburban migration of Chicago Jews; Egon Mayer (1979), who reviewed the Jewish transformation of Boro Park, Brooklyn; Bruce Phillips (1991), who wrote about the Jewish suburb of Brookline near Boston; and Marshall Sklare (1971; 1972; 1974; 1974b; 1979), who has written and edited several books on Jews in America in the latter half on the 20th century.

3.4 Toronto's suburban Jews

This paper attempts to explain the migration of the Jewish community in Toronto along Bathurst Street and an overview of Toronto's synagogue movement is illustrative of the larger community's transition.

The majority of Shmuel Mayer Shapiro's book (2010) focuses on the early days of the Toronto Jewish community and the various labour and political organizations that were created and Jewish publications such as Yiddish newspapers. However, one chapter deals with synagogues and congregations (p. 67).

Speisman (1979) writes about the history of Toronto Jews as well and writes that as early as the 1850s the new arrivals of Jews were observant of Jewish law and required kosher food and a local synagogue (p.21). This idea is echoed by Diamond that the initial and primary need of Orthodox Jews to have a synagogue is essential to urban settlement. Speisman's book deals

primarily with Jewish organizations, whether political or labour, however as Speisman is considered the leading expert on the Jewish history of Toronto, this book will provide necessary background information and history with respect to the northern migration of synagogues and congregations in Toronto.

4. The Northern Pilgrimage up Bathurst

4.1 Bathurst Street

The early years of Toronto's Jewish community and northern migration up Bathurst is relevant to this paper because this was the basis for Tanenbaum's selection of a site north of Steeles.

Tanenbaum was aware of Toronto's Jewish history and development as he purchased a swath of land near Bathurst and Clark in the 1960s (Speisman, 1999) based on Toronto's Bathurst migration pattern. Chabad Lubavitch, a synagogue at Bathurst and Chabad Gate north of Steeles, also decided to make the move up north based on Toronto's historical Bathurst migration and with the advice of a land developer (personal communication). A prominent member explained their reasoning, "to move up to Thornhill, was certainly, I wouldn't say met with trepidation, but certainly off our screen... In a sense we felt comfortable about it...for a few reasons; one Mr. Herb Green was very much behind the idea anyway and he was a land developer...two, we were close to Steeles Avenue so we felt a bit secure because...we could always hold on to that security blanket...three, I was really convinced when I looked at the demographics of the Jewish community how they snaked along Bathurst Street straight up, you know nothing on the east or west or nothing in the pockets, but just straight up Bathurst Street...it was quite obvious that Jews were staying on Bathurst Street. So I guess you could say that it was a no-brainer that they continue along Bathurst Street" (personal communication).

Toronto's earliest major concentration of Jews did not begin near Bathurst, but rather in a downtown area known as St. John's Ward, often referred to as simply "the Ward". Earlier waves of immigrants, beginning as early as the 1830s (Speisman, 1979, p.12), were mostly German and English Jews, and were able to integrate into society more easily, living among

non-Jews, roughly between Parliament and Yonge south of Bloor (p.81). Later waves of immigrants, mostly Eastern Europeans, were not as financially stable and chose residences within walking distance of the garment factories (sometimes referred to as *shmatta* factories, literally meaning “rag” in Yiddish) (ibid). The community later moved along the Spadina corridor with a large number of synagogues within close proximity of the Avenue. These included the McCaul Street synagogue, the Ostrovzer synagogue, Beis Harness Anshei England, Beth Jacob, Anshei Kiev built in 1926 (the Kiever synagogue), Agudath Israel Anshei Sfard built in 1925, and Anshei Minsk built in 1930 (p.304).

Shapiro writes that in the late 1920s, Toronto’s Jews first starting moving north of the downtown to areas like St. Clair West and Holy Blossom’s congregation is representative of this. In the late 1930s, the congregants of Toronto’s well-established Holy Blossom, then occupying a synagogue on Bond Street, were moving farther north away from the synagogue itself and in 1937 the congregation purchased a new synagogue on Bathurst Street south of Eglinton and sold the existing building on Bond Street to the Hellenic Orthodox Church (p.74).

Soon after in the 1940s and 1950s, Toronto experienced the emergence of a Bathurst focus to the Jewish community, where synagogues, kosher stores, and other amenities were placed within walking distance of Jewish residences. In 2004, the UJA published a report that examined the 2001 Canadian Census, in which they wrote, “The history of Jewish residency in Toronto can generally be described as a northerly migration mostly concentrated in close proximity to Bathurst Street” (Shahar & Rosenblum, p.6). In 1941, the Jewish population’s westward movement transformed into a northern movement with a population of roughly 53,000 (p.1). In 1947, the building boom in Toronto produced suburban expansion along Bathurst Street in

North York which was a break from the usual development along Yonge Street. In 1950, several land developers, including CMHC, began to build a 1700-unit housing development on the northwest corner of Bathurst and Lawrence and would create a large suburban-style shopping centre at that corner (Diamond, p.35). This neighbourhood would become known as Lawrence Manor (ibid). By 1951, approximately 21,000 Jews lived in York Township, Forest Hill, and North York Township (Shahar & Rosenblum, p.6).

Diamond writes, "Since the early 1950s, Toronto's Jews have settled Bathurst Street in successive waves, continually pushing the Jewish frontier northward" (p.26). This trend actually began earlier than the 1950s; however, by the 1950s it was even more pronounced. In 1951, a number of Orthodox Jews who had moved into Lawrence Manor created a congregation which eventually acquired a synagogue and later in that decade became known as Shaarei Tefillah.

This congregation could be regarded as the pioneer congregation for North York (p.38). By 1953, some development had already begun as far north as Sheppard Avenue along Bathurst and by 1956, Bathurst Manor, a development north of Sheppard, was taking shape (p.35).

Another synagogue to move north was the Hillcrest congregation, the pre-cursor of the Shaarei Shomayim Congregation on St. Clair Avenue (Shapiro, p.105). Towards the late 1950s, questions about whether to move Shaaeri Shomayim north of St. Clair began to arise and by 1962 the congregation had purchased a plot of land on the east side of Bathurst at Glencairn and opened in 1966 with the St. Clair branch closing less than a year later (Diamond, p.47 & 48).

A prominent member in Chabad explained the pattern of the Jewish community as follows, "If you follow the migration of the Jewish community in Toronto, which is very unique, that the Jews snaked along Bathurst Street. So you can follow that migration from College Street where

there's shuls [synagogues] down there, up to Bloor Street with the Palmerston shul and Brunswick Avenue shul way back at 50 years ago and then the big establishment shuls were of course the Beth Tzedek on Bathurst Street and the Holy Blossom on Bathurst Street, both were built in the 1950s...and so starting at that point in the 1950s and then you just follow it north up Bathurst Street, you see that the Jews always clung, or stayed at Bathurst Street" (personal communication).

By 1961, the Jewish community had a serious foothold along the Bathurst corridor. In that year, four census tracts along the west side of Bathurst had Jewish populations greater than 50% (Diamond, p.40).

In the summer of 1961 a small group of families in the Bathurst/Finch/Steeles neighbourhood came together to organize services for the High Holidays. The High Holiday services were a success and weekly services began. By the mid-1960s, the congregation had attracted tremendous numbers of Orthodox residents who had recently moved to the area, establishing itself as Bnei Torah, and eventually purchasing a plot of land at Bathurst and Patricia, south of Steeles (p.78).

As the communities in North York began to grow, the synagogues and communities south of Bloor continued to close down or migrate north with their congregants. In 1966, Beth Jacob on Henry Street (Figure 2) moved north to a location south of Finch between Bathurst and Dufferin while the Ostrovzer synagogue at Cecil and Spadina ceased operating as a synagogue in 1967 (Figure 3) (Perin & Scardellato).



Figure 2: Former Beth Jacob synagogue on Henry Street, Rende 2009



Figure 3: Former Ostrovzer synagogue on Cecil Street, Rende 2009

By 1971, 71,000 Jews lived in North York alone. This trend continued into Vaughan and Richmond Hill (Shahar & Rosenblum, p.6). However, as the Jewish community grew and stretched along Bathurst, a presence still remained in more established neighbourhoods. In 2001, the Bathurst corridor between Steeles and Finch contained 19,405 Jews, or 10.8% of the Jewish population, but the area between Eglinton and Lawrence still comprised 10.1% of the Jewish population, or 18,040 Jews (p.5).

The expansion of the *eruv* (refer to context review for greater explanation of the *eruv*) is quite representative of the migration of the Jewish community. The original *eruv* set up in Toronto only went as far north as Bloor Street before World War II. In 1951, the *eruv* was extended north to Wilson Avenue. Again, in 1966, the *eruv* was extended north to Steeles Avenue and it was expanded again to Thornhill when the Jewish community migrated there (Diamond, p.52 & 53).

A CJA article from October 8, 1981 discusses the extension of the *eruv* to Steeles Avenue between Bayview and Leslie. The *eruv* integrates phone and hydro lines in Toronto. The last major extension of the *eruv* before this was in 1965 when it was extended to include North York (CJA staff).

Congregations, developers, and residents eventually recognized this northern trend. One long time resident recalls, “we came up here [Bathurst and Clark area] and there were line ups like crazy at construction trailers and sales offices to buy homes from plans and we said ‘okay we’re gonna buy a house’. It was affordable; our thinking was that it wouldn’t be ready for a few months and we could save a few more dollars and I think it also was that traditionally the Jewish community moved north along Bathurst and, we didn’t know about Spring Farm, we also

knew that eventually synagogues would be coming as well, we predicted that, not predicated that, kinda that was the trend that where Jews go synagogues go. And we said in the interim Bnei Torah [a synagogue located at Bathurst and Patricia, south of Steeles] would not be more than a 15 or 20 minute walk” (personal communication). This quote not only demonstrates a resident’s motivation for moving to Thornhill, but the most important consideration - a synagogue within walking distance.

The Jewish community did not simply move along Bathurst though - they hugged Bathurst. The cluster around Bathurst Street remained as the Jewish community moved north along it. The cluster pattern emerged out of Toronto’s earliest Jewish communities which saw densely inhabited Jewish neighbourhoods in Toronto’s downtown.

The significant presence along Bathurst Street developed in only a few decades and by 1971, Jews had become the single largest ethnic or religious group along the Bathurst corridor (Diamond, p.41). By the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was apparent to many that Toronto’s Jewish community would be moving to Bathurst and Steeles and even further north.

Tanenbaum, however, likely realized this in the 1960s as that is when he purchased a large piece of land in Thornhill that would later be developed into the Spring Farm area.

Likewise, we see several additional articles in the CJN recognizing this northern trend. An article, from late 1981, is titled “New Vaughan Jewish community is Developing Around Bathurst Street” (CJN staff, 1981, November 26c) (Figure 4).



Figure 4: CJN article, November 26, 1981

4.2 The east side never takes off

Development of Jewish communities did occur outside the Bathurst corridor to the east, but these communities proved not to be as successful as their western counterparts. The Bathurst corridor proved to be too attractive with its heavy concentration of synagogues and kosher establishments. The Jewish community would continue to move along Bathurst up to Steeles and even north of the border into the City of Vaughan.

In a CJN issue in late 1981, the editors were under the impression that Markham-Thornhill and Unionville would be future centres of Jewish communities. One article was titled, "Jews Moving to Markham, Canada's Fastest Growing Town" (CJN staff, 1981, November 26b) (Figure 5) while a picture of the Bayview-Steeles intersection contains a caption that reads "Markham-Thornhill

begins here, at the intersection of Bayview and Steeles. The burgeoning north-east Jewish community already numbers more than 30,000" (Figure 6).



Figure 5: CJN article November 26, 1981

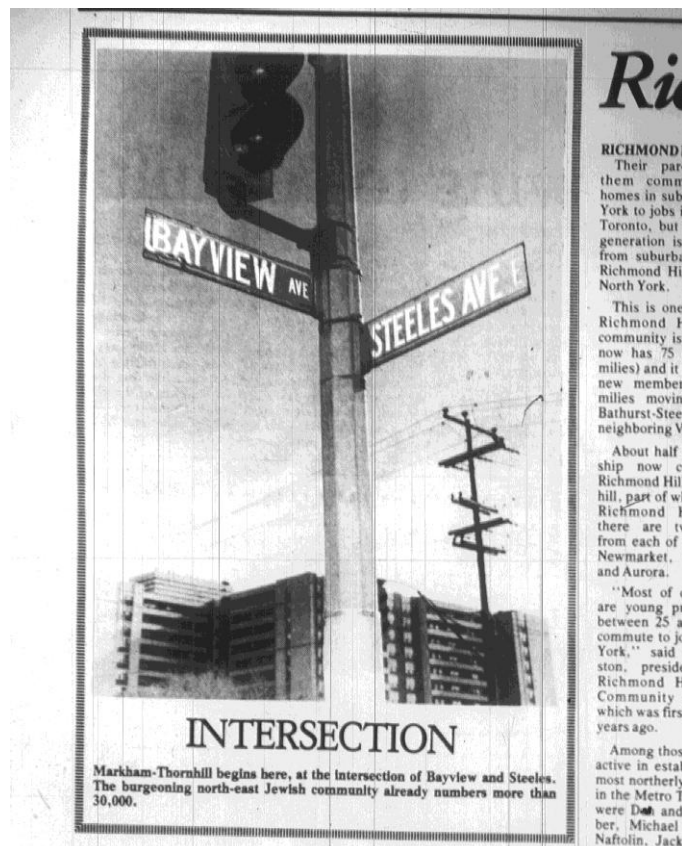


Figure 6: CJN photo, November 26, 1981

In 1971, a congregation was formed by several families who had moved into the Leslie/Finch/Steeles neighbourhood. As with almost every other congregation, the early days consisted of services in the home of one of the congregants. In 1973, they were called Shaare Zion and had moved into a portable. Anticipating increased growth, the congregation received permission in 1975 to build a new synagogue, but they continued to hold services in the portables the membership did not grow as expected. The membership had only grown to 44 members in 1981 (Diamond, p.49; personal communication).

In the mid-1970s, a largely South African congregation was formed by families in the Bayview-Sheppard neighbourhood – closer to Bathurst than Shaare Zion. By 1979, High Holiday services were held in the apartment building of one of the members (Diamond, p.49). A new synagogue was erected in 1986 for the congregation known as Kehillat Shaarei Torah (p.50). Similar to Shaare Zion, Kehillat Shaaeri Torah never became as large as the founders desired. It likely failed because of location. There were not sufficient kosher amenities nearby, and most importantly, they were not in the Bathurst corridor (ibid). According to Diamond, the north-south streets between the Bathurst corridor and northeast neighbourhoods like Leslie/Finch/Steeles and Bayview and Sheppard were viewed as Lynchian “edges” that divided neighbourhoods rather than “paths” that joined them (ibid).

Why did these communities venture outside the Bathurst corridor? A prominent member in Chabad explains why they had moved outside the corridor: “The only time that you see that there was a move away is that when the community reached Steeles Avenue, because Vaughan was not yet ready to turn their farming community into housing, the Jews went and they moved over to Leslie. This would be about the...1970s. The Jews moved over to Steeles and

Bayview...and Leslie...only because that community bottlenecked at Steeles Avenue. Now this is very interesting...when Vaughan opened up or started processing permits for development...the Jews who had moved over to Steeles and Leslie, Steeles and Bayview, got up and left those communities and moved predominantly to Thornhill” (personal communication). It is almost as if Bathurst had a magnetic pull that drew the Jews back towards the corridor. The reality was that the concentration along the Bathurst corridor provided synagogues within walking distance and while this tried to be re-created eastwards, the Bathurst corridor in Vaughan proved to be too appealing for the Jewish community.

5. Early days of Thornhill and BAYT

Unlike historic Thornhill, near Yonge and Centre Street, Jewish Thornhill has a history that only dates back to the early 1980s. The site for Tanenbaum's Spring Farm development was purchased in the 1960s, likely on the assumption that the Jewish community would continue migrating north along the Bathurst corridor (Speisman, 1999; Diamond, p.84). The strong Bathurst focus of the Jewish community in Toronto, discussed earlier in this paper, continued through the latter half of the 1900s and reached Steeles Avenue, the southern border of Thornhill, in the early 1980s. Thornhill is, to a certain extent, a continuation of the Bathurst concentration in Toronto, a trend that offered security to the earliest settlers of Jewish Thornhill.

An article titled "New Vaughan Jewish Community is Developing Around Bathurst Street" in a 1981 issue of the CJN discusses three possible worship sites, one on the west side of Bathurst south of the train tracks, one east of Bathurst at Chabad Gate and one north and east of the Chabad Gate one. These worship sites were required with the developments, along with parks and schools, and all these three eventually became synagogues, indicative of the demographics. One became Kehillah Centre and the other two became Chabad Lubavitch and the BAYT. The site for the BAYT was the only site in Runnymede's Spring Farm development (personal communication).

The land that Tanenbaum purchased in the 1960s, which would become Spring Farm and include the BAYT, was bounded by Arnold Avenue, York Hill Boulevard, Bathurst Street, and Yonge Street (Speisman, 1999; Diamond, p.84). This plot of land remained untouched for almost two decades while Tanenbaum waited until the Jewish community had reached

Thornhill and in the early 1980s, this became a reality. The development of Thornhill in the 1980s occurred rapidly in an area that had just recently been farmland. From 1981 to 1991, Vaughan's Jewish population grew from 2,115 to 21,275, an increase of 905.9% (Shahar & Rosenblum, p.16). In contrast, the City of Toronto's Jewish population declined 0.7% during these ten years (p.22).

In these early days, Chabad Lubavitch, an outreach organization with branches and synagogues all over the world, also decided that Thornhill was the future of the Jewish community and moved from their current Bathurst and Edinburgh location, near Wilson Avenue, to north of Steeles. A Chabad member explained that "our move up here is credited to a developer...Mr. Herb Green. Herb Green was in fact a land developer and he put the bug in my head when in fact there was nothing north of Steeles Avenue – nothing at all, nothing at all; even there were

no traffic lights" he adds that the only thing north of Steeles between Bathurst and Dufferin was a catering establishment called Murray House (personal communication). Furthermore, as mentioned before, along with professional advice, the congregation was influenced by Toronto's historical gravitational pull northwards along Bathurst that the community would eventually move north of Steeles. The land purchased for the Chabad Lubavitch synagogue was purchased from a different developer than Tanenbaum, one of three

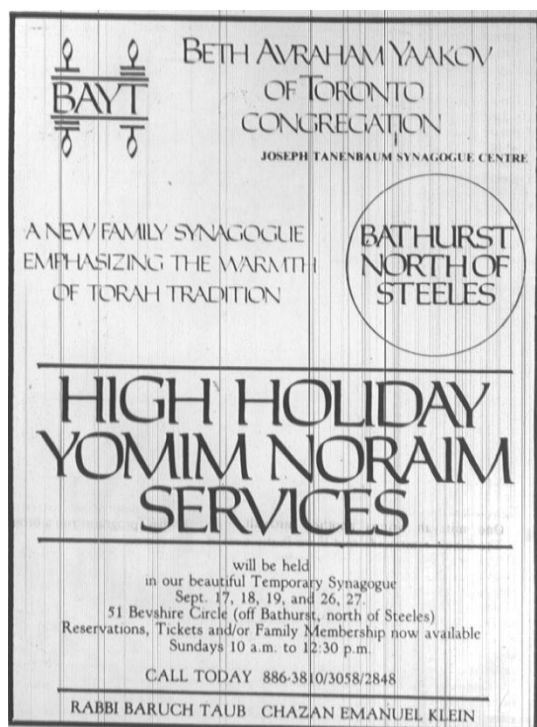


Figure 7: BAYT advertisement in CJN, August 26, 1981

developers in the Thornhill area, but a similar logic and reasoning was applied to Chabad's move northward.

True to the trend of the Jewish community, the temporary 51 Bevshire location for the BAYT was ready for High Holiday services on September 17, 1981 (Figure 7) and Chabad held a sod turning ceremony on April 4, 1982 for their new synagogue (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Groundbreaking ceremony for Lubavitch Centre, Chabad Gate, Thornhill, April 4, 1982. Ontario Jewish Archives, photo #3433

Other community buildings followed shortly afterwards, with the Garnet A. Williams Community Centre opening its doors in 1984 (personal communication). The synagogues were among the first buildings to be constructed in Spring Farm as synagogues are community

anchors for Jews even in suburbia. This picture shows the 51 Bevshire location in the middle of open undeveloped fields, ready for use before the foundations of nearby houses had been set down (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Sukkoth celebration at Beth Avraham Yaakov Congregation, Thornhill, 1981. Ontario Jewish Archives, photo #3435

In a late 1981 CJN issue, there were several articles that wrote about the community shift north. One article titled, “Amenities Evolve North of Metro” states, “Within the past 25 years, the centre of the Toronto Jewish community moved north from the Dundas-College-Harbord area to the Bathurst-Lawrence-Wilson area. It is quite likely that the centre will now shift further north to Steeles, right from Dufferin to Scarborough, to serve to burgeoning communities north of Metro; and Mississauga could become the focal point for the new Jewish areas west of Metro” (CJN staff, 1981, November 26a). It is interesting to see the predictions in

the early 1980s of where the community would go. While the community has moved north and as far west as Dufferin, Scarborough or Mississauga never emerged as Jewish centres for the GTA.

Another article from that same issue was titled, “New Vaughan Jewish community is developing around Bathurst Street”. The CJA staff write about how the community had shifted from Bathurst and Lawrence to Thornhill and how the new Thornhill will contain synagogues, shopping, and schools. A deputy Vaughan planner, John Stevens, provides an overview of the demographics in the area saying, “We have established WASPS on Yonge St., Italian community at Woodbridge, the growing Jewish community at Bathurst-Steeles, and rural pockets here and there”.

Stephen Speisman writes in the *Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation 18th Anniversary Gala Dinner* program that, “Joe Tanenbaum set out to create a community where young Jewish families could settle at reasonable cost, with most amenities close by (schools, library, community centre, parks, kosher stores) and with a synagogue at its spiritual centre”. While construction of the synagogue and larger development was underway in 1981, 51 Beavishire Circle would function as the temporary site of the congregation and Rabbi Baruch Taub was recruited as the spiritual leader (Figure 10).



Figure 10: Joseph Tanenbaum and Rabbi Baruch Taub at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Lubavitch Centre, Chabad Gate, Thornhill, April 4, 1982. Ontario Jewish Archives, photo #3449

However, before the 51 Bevshire synagogue was ready, services were held in Rabbi Taub's basement in his house on the same street. Construction of the main BAYT synagogue at 613 Clark Avenue was to begin in 1981; however, the recession at the time delayed the start time (Speisman, 1999) and resulted in the scaling back of the elaborateness of the synagogue (personal communication). The main synagogue at 613 Clark would eventually be ready to use in mid- 1988, and so 51 Bevshire functioned as the main location of the synagogue until then (Figure 11) (Figure 12) (Figure 13).



Figure 11: Future site of the Clark Avenue BAYT, BAYT Archives



Figure 12: Rabbi Taub at 51 Bevshire during construction, BAYT Archives



Figure 13: Shiur class at Beth Avraham Yaakov Congregation, Thornhill, ca. 1982. Ontario Jewish Archives, photo #3448

Tanenbaum was proud of the fact that the Spring Farm development was probably the only one of its kind in North America, and maybe the world, where a synagogue was built along with the rest of the housing development (Diamond, p.84).

The Spring Farm development in Thornhill was always intended to be a Jewish walkable community. Advertisements for the new Spring Farm development appeared in the CJN, and directly targeted its Jewish subscribers and readers. One advertisement read “Gracing this community is the newly established Beth Avraham Yaakov Congregation with supporting educational facilities for family and meeting of friends” (Figure 14).

A TOTALLY INTEGRATED COMMUNITY WITH EVERY AMENITY CLOSE AT HAND

Village of Thornhill

Spring Farm. A community of 2,000 traditional homes in a parklike setting, just north of Steeles Avenue in historic Thornhill.

Here every conceivable amenity is right on your doorstep. Adventures abound for the little ones in the neighbourhood and community parks and playgrounds right within the Spring Farm community. Convenience is the word for an internally located shopping centre to be anchored by a major supermarket. Gracing this community is the newly established Beth Avraham Yaakov Congregation with supporting educational facilities for family and meeting of friends. Relaxing hours of reading pleasure are waiting to be tapped in the Gallanough Library.

York Farmers Market

York Farmers Market is close by with antique, nostalgia and craft shows, and a produce market every Saturday morning. The market boasts a wide range of wares to tempt the most discriminating purchaser.

Just around the corner, take an active part in the Thornhill Community Centre at John Street and Bayview Avenue which hosts an arena, library and public meeting rooms.

There's a public library at Yonge and John Streets and neighbourhood shopping right along side. North on Yonge Street, you'll find the Hillcrest Mall, and south,

Golf & Country Club

the Towne and Country Square at Yonge and Steeles. The Oakbank Wildlife Sanctuary, with its sparkling lake and abundant wildlife, is only minutes away. And for golf enthusiasts, get up a foursome at the Thornhill Golf and Country Club, the Toronto Ladies Golf Club or the Uplands Golf and Country Club — all, only minutes away.

Parks abound throughout the area, with miles of native trails, picnic areas and places to roam and explore. The Ross Lord Park, just north of Finch between Dufferin and Bathurst, has sailing, skiing, playing fields, and hiking trails.

Movie theatres, convenience stores, public transportation — all these are close by. And yet somehow, the dictates of modern living never interfere with the dictates of nature.



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SALES PAVILION: CLARK AVE. AT YONGE ST. HALF MILE NORTH OF STEELES AVE.

ALL HOMES ARE SUBJECT TO PREVIEW SALE. PRICES AND SPECIFICATIONS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

Figure 14: CJN advertisement, January 28, 1982

The BAYT, Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto, congregation was originally known as the Beth Avraham Yaakov congregation. These advertisements write that “Everything is close at hand” (Figure 15) and promote walkability, but not for sustainable or smart growth reasons; rather for the reason of catering to Toronto’s Jewish community, also potential home buyers.

Contemporary Living In The Classic Thornhill Tradition.

On 250 unspoiled acres of gently rolling meadows and dales in historic Thornhill, Runnymede has planned a prestigious 2,000 unit residential community down to the finest detail.

SPRING FARM.
A community of elegant detached residences in a traditional setting. A community of parks and playgrounds, recreational amenities and a major new synagogue with supporting educational facilities. You will also find schools, shopping centres and public transportation. Everything is close at hand.

The homes of **SPRING FARM** reflect the sweeping designs, luxurious appointments and meticulous craftsmanship as standard features in every home, which are unsurpassed in the industry.

Built into every **SPRING FARM** home is **RUNNYMEDE'S Energy Efficient Programme, (R.E.E.P.)**, believed to be the most efficient home insulation/cooling package today.

There are many different traditional floor plans to choose from, in different edition series, priced from \$140,000. So you're practically assured

of finding the home that best suits your needs.

There has never been an Ontario community with such unparalleled value that so artfully combines the traditional values and refinements of yesterday, with the comfort and convenience we have come to expect today.

SPRING FARM by Runnymede.
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SALES CENTRE, BATHURST ST. NORTH OF STEELES. CALL (416) 881-9881.

Figure 15: CJN advertisement, June 4, 1981

A long-time resident of Thornhill explained Tanenbaum's plan for the synagogue, "initially, Spring Farm was Bathurst to Yonge, north of Clark...that was the Runnymede Spring Farm development. This part south of Clark and towards Bathurst and all along there, was a later stage, and the [main] synagogue was planned as well as part of the community on the south side as a later stage" (personal communication).

The master plan of the Spring Farm community also included schools. This long-time resident

recalls, “schools came up eventually and stuff like that. Schools had a hard time getting land here at first. Eitz Chaim [a Jewish private elementary school] had no problem because Joe had set aside a certain amount of land for them. Joe’s initial plan was to have a real big campus, he was planning to have a kollel [a full time Jewish learning centre] up here, and all kinds of stuff. He was planning to have guest suites in the shul [synagogue], he was planning a waterfall at the front of the shul entrance, all kinds of things, but it was all scaled back though, because of the high interest rates at the time.” A Chabad member also echoed these plans, “ever since Joe Tanenbaum, may he rest in peace, bought Spring Farm, he had this plan, and he had actually incorporated in already, a shul complex” (personal communication).

While Tanenbaum modeled Spring Farm to cater to the needs of the Jewish community, the City of Vaughan also accommodated the religious needs and desires of the Jewish community. The Chabad Lubavitch synagogue is located on Chabad Gate - an entire street name dedicated to the movement and congregation. A prominent Chabad member explained to me that outside of Israel this was probably one of the few streets to have a Jewish name. The congregation was very grateful to have an entire street with their moniker (personal communication). In Judaism, certain numbers have special religious significance and there are several examples where synagogues or schools were able to obtain specific municipal addresses to match these religious numbers. In some cases the municipal address is obtained easily, but in other cases one is required to seek special permission from the Vaughan Planning Department. BAYT is registered with the municipal address of 613 Clark Avenue. This number is significant because it matches the number of *mitzvot* (commandments) in the Torah, the Old Testament. Netivot Hatorah Day School is located 18 Atkinson Avenue. 18 is the numerical equivalent to the Hebrew word for

“chai” which means life. The most peculiar of these addresses, however, is 770 Chabad Gate.

The number 770 is significant to the Chabad movement for two reasons. Firstly, it is the address of the Chabad headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, and secondly, 770 is the numerical value of the Hebrew word “u’faratztah” which means “and you will spread out”². Since the 1960s, under the guidance of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (now deceased), spreading awareness of Judaism to Jews in all corners of the world has been a central pillar of the Chabad movement.

After obtaining the Chabad Gate street name it was suggested that Chabad attempt to obtain the 770 address. However, the synagogue was on the odd side of the street and as it was a short street, the numbers only reached about 70 so it seemed a stretch to obtain the 770 address. A Rabbi in Chabad spoke to the Chief Planner in Vaughan and explained to him how Chabad was an outreach organization and the significance behind 770. Two days later, they received a letter from Vaughan that explained their concern regarding emergency services being able to locate the building. Eventually, they allowed the address under the one condition that the numbers be very bold and large - Chabad complied (Figure 16) (personal communication).

² This comes from the biblical verse “Your offspring shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall burst forth westward, eastward, northward, and southward; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and by your offspring” (Genesis 28:14).



Figure 16: 770 Chabad Gate, Rende 2012

The planned community did not just pertain to schools and synagogues. When I asked a long-term resident if the Spring Farm plaza was always meant to be a kosher and Jewish plaza he responded, “Yes. It was meant to be that way. It was planned that way. That’s the kind of tenants they wanted” (personal communication). The Spring Farm plaza today boasts several kosher restaurants and food establishments, including a kosher Second Cup, a Judaica store, a Jewish gift shop, and a supermarket with kosher products, a kosher bakery, and a kosher butcher shop. At the beginning, Food City (now a Sobeys) was the anchor grocery store tenant in the Spring Farm plaza. Food City would have a kosher bakery and this was something that at the time was, and still is, very novel. A Chabad member explained that carrying kosher products

was not something new, but having an in-house kosher bakery in a secular grocery store chain was unique (personal communication).

An article by Marsha Eines in the CJN discusses the plans of the future Spring Farm development (1982, March 18). It reads, Spring Farm will “include a shopping centre, schools, parks, and a large synagogue”. She also writes, “Unique in North America, Spring Farm will also house a large-scale religious complex with a yeshiva and youth centre on a 5-acre tract of land. Runnymede Development is operated by Joseph Tanenbaum, internationally recognized for his Torah-oriented philanthropics”. She also quotes Lou Greenbaum, vice president of Runnymede who said, “People will be attracted to the development for different reasons, but the synagogue will certainly draw the Orthodox, since it is built as part of the housing project”. Greenbaum was speaking to the need of Orthodox Jews to have a synagogue within walking distance. At the time of the article, the BAYT was using their temporary 51 Bevshire location while plans were being drawn up for the main building at 613 Clark Avenue (Figure 17).



Figure 17: CJN article, March 18, 1982

Not every venture in Thornhill was successful though. Runnymede also owned the plaza on the northeast corner of Dufferin and Clark and planned to make that a kosher plaza as well.

However, that plaza was at the boundary of the Jewish Thornhill, so the plaza never achieved the same success as the more strategically located Spring Farm plaza (personal communication). Synagogues like the BAYT and later Aish Hatorah on Clark are located closer to Bathurst and not towards the Dufferin corridor.

The early days of the synagogue had a morning prayer service and eventually an afternoon prayer service, which was impressive for a synagogue located in cross country skiing territory.

After the recession in the early 1980s, plans were drawn up for the Clark Avenue synagogue by

architect Richie Idels, also a member of the synagogue. The Clark Avenue building was then opened in 1988 (Figure 18) as the old building on Bevshire was bursting at the seams with over 200 families as members of the synagogue (Speisman, 1999).



Figure 18: BAYT at 613 Clark Avenue, Rende 2011

BAYT and Chabad Lubavitch at Chabad Gate were the trailblazers for other synagogues. Due to their success, other synagogues, such as Ohr Sameach and Aish Hatorah, followed (personal communication).

As BAYT is home to a membership of more than 700 families (BAYT, 2012) it not only represents the larger Thornhill community, it practically is the Thornhill Jewish community. An Orthodox synagogue of this size is atypical of Orthodox communities as other communities will have

several synagogues that cater to different sects and cultures in Judaism. A prominent Chabad member commented, “I grew up in Jersey - Newark, New Jersey - and there were, you know, shuls all over” (personal communication). Larger communities will often contain separate Reform, Conservative, Modern Orthodox, Ultra-Orthodox, and Chasidic synagogues, while the Orthodox and Chasidic synagogues cater to those Jews living in their immediate area.

The BAYT is unique in the sense that it is rare to find Modern Orthodox, Ultra-Orthodox, Chasidic, traditional, and non-observant members all under the same roof. To clarify, there are many members who associate with the Orthodox philosophy yet are not observant in terms of the Sabbath, kosher, and other Jewish laws, but when they attend synagogue, they attend an Orthodox synagogue. On a typical Saturday morning at the BAYT there are eight separate services to cater to the various *hashkafot* (religious outlooks) and desires of the congregation (BAYT, 2012, February 24 & 25). These services include the main service, a longer service, a shorter service, a university student service, youth services, and an early service. In addition, the BAYT is currently home to a *Kollel* (a full-time learning seminary consisting of 14-hour days) which runs its own services between learning sessions.

6. Walkable Thornhill

6.1 What is walkability?

According to Jane's Walk, "Walkability is a quantitative and qualitative measurement of how inviting or un-inviting an area is to pedestrians" (Jane's Walk, 2010). A similar definition is seen in the *Toronto Waking Strategy*, "Walkability is a measure of how easy and enjoyable it is to walk in your neighbourhood" (City of Toronto, 2009, p.4). Reid Ewing, Susan Handy, Ross C. Brownson, Otto Clemente, and Emily Winston (2006) attempt to quantify the seemingly qualitative measure of walkability and developed a set of nine measures. These include: imageability, legibility, visual enclosure, human scale, transparency, linkage, complexity, coherence, and tidiness. Walkability goes beyond the simple measure of how close amenities and places of interest are located and examines the safety of the route and the desirability of the route. The *Walking Strategy* contains three guiding principles: Universal Accessibility, Safety, and Design Excellence. Universal accessibility advocates for barrier-free spaces that range from small scale items like smooth surfaces and wheelchair ramps to larger scale barriers such as rail corridors and ravines which can be crossed with added pedestrian bridges. Safety refers to the safety of pedestrians as the number one priority among modes of transit. Design excellence speaks to creating attractive spaces for walking that promotes an overall pleasurable walking experience.

As mentioned in the context review, Knaap and Talen recognize walkability as a key component to smart growth and new urbanism development. Another example of a walkable community is the pedestrian oriented development community. This community has "an average one-fourth mile walking distance of a transit stop and core commercial area" (Southworth, 1997,

p.29). A quarter of a mile is similar to the 500 metre measure seen in *Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*. The *Growth Plan* defines a Major Transit Station Area as “The area including and around any existing or planned *higher order transit* station within a *settlement area*; or the area including and around a major bus depot in an urban core. Station areas generally are defined as the area within an approximate 500m radius of a transit station, representing about a 10-minute walk” (Province of Ontario, 2006, 6). This definition cannot be directly applied to Thornhill as there is no higher order transit station, meaning subway, light rail, or dedicated-lane buses, but using the *Grow Plan* measure, 500metres or a 10minute walk can be used a walkable measurement tool. However, the idea of Major Transit Station Area is to have a hub, a central location. For the purposes of this paper, the intersection of Clark and Atkinson is identified as the central hub as it is midway between the Spring Farm plaza and the BAYT, the location of the Garnet Williams Community Centre, and is equipped with a transit stop. Next, a 12minute walk, or 1kilometre, radius will be attached to this central point to determine the walkability of Thornhill. This radius will demonstrate the numerous number Jewish and non-Jewish amenities within walking distance of the central hub of Thornhill. These include synagogues, schools, shopping centres, a post office, and movie theatre.

6.2 Why is walkability important?

Walking is important for health, sustainability, safety, and economic reasons. Walking is considered an excellent form of physical activity for both young and elderly people (City of Toronto, 2002; City of Toronto, 2009, p.6). Current research has indicated a decrease in walking to school among youth over the last thirty years and an increase in obesity, heart disease,

diabetes, and other health problems (City of Toronto, 2009, p.7). In Canada, the proportion of obese youth tripled from 1971 to 2004 (Lorinc, p.110).

Walking is a zero-emission form of transportation which is important in the GTA today.

The introduction of suburbs to many parts of Toronto has created a situation where amenities, work, and school are located far from the home which translates into an increase in auto-dependence and in turn a rise in pollution (City of Toronto, 2009, p.7). Furthermore, walking is a cost free form of transportation (City of Toronto, 2002). The *Toronto Pedestrian Charter*, adopted by City Council on May 21, 2002, adds another reason for walkability, that “a pedestrian-friendly environment encourages and facilitates social interaction and local economic vitality”.

Similarly, and most importantly, more people walking means more “eyes on the street”, something which Jane Jacobs advocated for in creating safer neighbourhoods (City of Toronto, 2009, p.7).

The *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* recognizes the importance of walking and encourages it in several sections. One example is section 3.2.2 1b), where it states “The transportation system with the GGH will be planned and managed to offer a balance of transportation choices that reduces reliance upon any single mode and promotes transit, cycling, and walking”. The *Growth Plan* also legislates for municipalities to encourage intensification in their Official Plans which will, among other effects, “support transit, walking and cycling for everyday activities” (2.2.3 7.d).

The *Places to Grow Act* and *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* were not adopted until long after Runnymede’s Spring Farm development in Thornhill was built, nevertheless,

Spring Farm was built with some walkability features needs to address the specific needs of the Jewish community.

The *Toronto Walking Strategy* includes a table showing average walking times for the different boroughs of Toronto. In some cases Thornhill has shorter walking times than the average Toronto times and even compares to walking times for Downtown Toronto and East York (Figure 19). Figure 20, displays a 1kilometre, or 12minute walk, radius from Clark and Atkinson in Thornhill and demonstrates the close proximity of synagogues, schools, shopping, and other amenities to a multitude of residences.

2008 TORONTO WALKING SURVEY Average walking time (min.) to local services, by district

DESTINATION	CITY AVG.	TORONTO-EAST YORK	ETOBICOKE-YORK	SCARBOROUGH	NORTH YORK
Convenience store	6 min	3.8 min	6.2 min	7.4 min	7.1 min
Restaurant	10.5 min	6.1 min	14 min	13.8 min	10.4 min
Toronto park or trail	11.8 min	8 min	13.2 min	16.4 min	11.3 min
Supermarket or grocer	12.4 min	9.5 min	14 min	15 min	12.5 min
Library	15 min	10 min	16.3 min	18.2 min	17.4 min
Community centre	16.6 min	12 min	18.9 min	20.1 min	17 min

20 CITY OF TORONTO WALKING STRATEGY

Figure 19: Average walking times from the *Toronto Walking Strategy*



Figure 20: Available amenities within 1km of Clark and Atkinson. Data collected from site visits and Frum Toronto.

6.3 Walkable aspects of Thornhill

While some may be quick to deem Thornhill a car-dominated suburb, Thornhill differs from other suburbs in several ways. Tanenbaum and Runnymede intentionally designed Thornhill to be walkable although generally not for the reasons listed in the above section. The motivation behind a walkable suburb was to construct a neighbourhood that would cater to the Jewish population, to attract the Jewish population, in order to sell homes. The following two sections will demonstrate how Thornhill is in fact walkable and how the large majority of BAYT members live within walking distance of the synagogue, a practice Toronto has seen since the early settlement areas in downtown Toronto.

In addition to having a host of amenities within walking distance (Figure 20), Thornhill also

boasts York Hill Park immediately behind the centre of the community. This park was constructed to increase green space in Thornhill, as documented in a CJA article by Marsha Eines, and was constructed before the residents had moved in. What the park also provides is a vehicle-free multi-use path that connects the central hub of Thornhill to York Hill Boulevard and other streets that surround the park. The park provides a safe, enjoyable route that fosters community relationships, and often provides a quicker path to get from point A to point B in a mostly auto-oriented suburb (Figure 21).

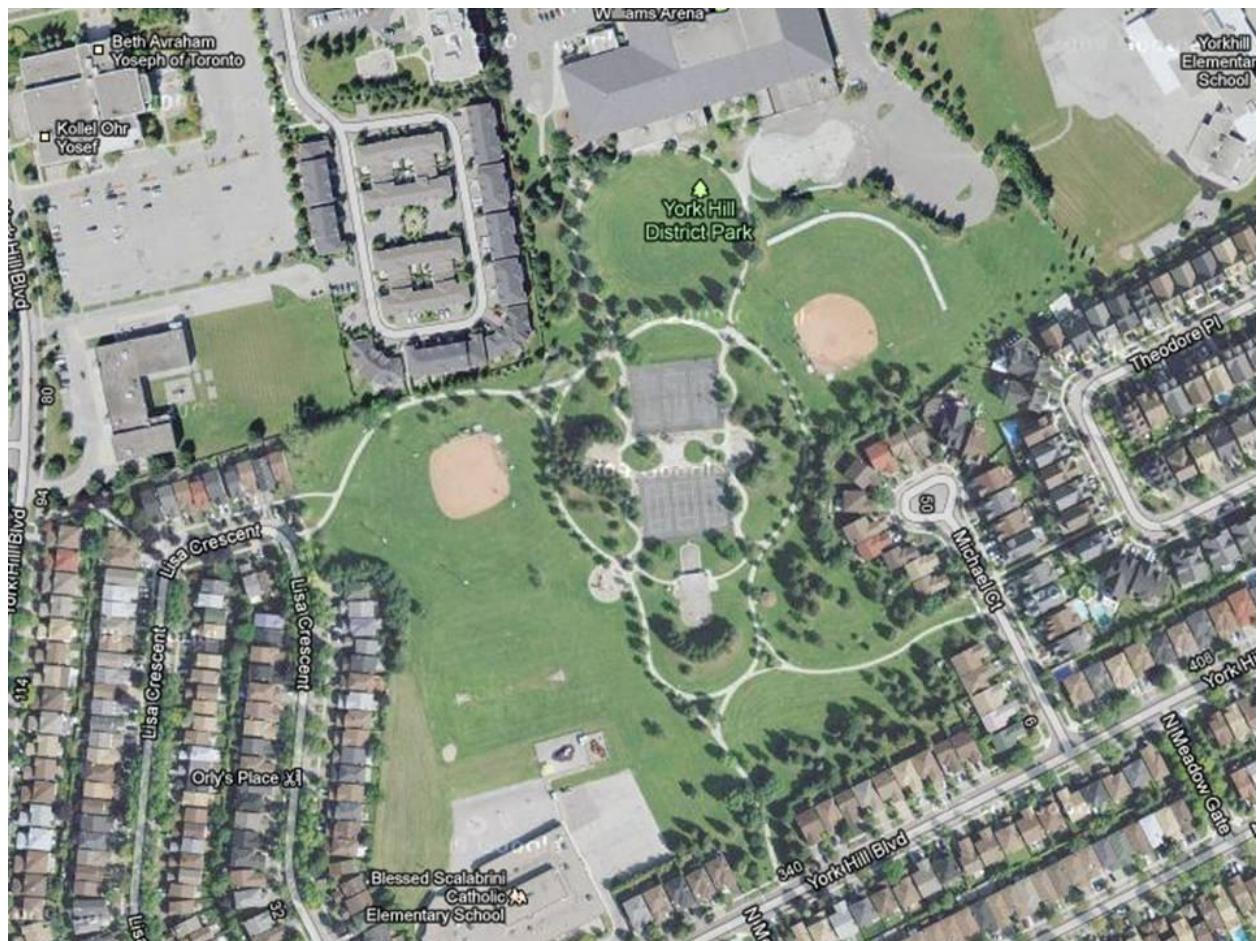


Figure 21: York Hill Park, Google Maps

A prominent Chabad member explained that from the beginning, Thornhill had sidewalks, and he was of the opinion that this was generally not true of traditional suburban communities (personal communication).

Lewyn writes that suburbia is complicated for Orthodox Jews as suburban developments are almost exclusively auto-dependent. According to Jewish law, use of a car on the Sabbath and Holidays is prohibited because it is considered labour and creates a spark during ignition, both of which are prohibited on the Sabbath. Likewise, driving a car on the Sabbath is prohibited because it may cause other prohibited activities like handling money (p.16). He maintains that “many American neighborhoods and suburbs are so thinly populated that hardly anyone lives within walking distance of a synagogue” (ibid) and that an average post 1960 American suburb will have a density of 1469 persons per square mile compared with a 1950s urban centre with a density of 5391 per square mile. Lorinc writes, with 2003 data from the NEPTIS Foundation, that in the GTA, the Toronto core has a density of 7340 persons per square kilometre while outer suburbs of Toronto have a density of 1830 persons per square kilometre (p.107).

According to the NEPTIS definition, Vaughan is located in the GTA’s outer suburbs though Thornhill is certainly an anomaly to these statistics. In Thornhill, the four census tracts that surround the BAYT synagogue (5350410.04, 5350410.03, 5350410.11, and 5350410.10) have densities of 1994, 3851, 5311, 8109 persons per square kilometres based on 2006 Census data. Combined, these four census tracts have a density of 4947 persons per square kilometre. It should be noted that the census with the lowest density, 5350410.04, is west of Bathurst and was not part of Tanenbaum’s Spring Farm development. In this sense, Thornhill is denser than

the typical GTA outer suburb which could be attributed to the presence of the Orthodox Jewish community.

The same Chabad member mentioned before was also under the impression that one unique feature of Thornhill in comparison to other suburbs is the closeness of houses to each other. He explained to me that, “when people come up here from any community...people are taken aback - are you ready for this? - how close the houses are one to the other...which of course is a result of dollars, so, it’s strict economics”. He explained that other suburban Orthodox communities struggle because they are not as concentrated. “I have a brother in Stony Brook, Long Island and you know the spread is far, far greater and it’s very challenging for Orthodoxy to establish a community in Stony Brook because of just the walking area from house to house” (personal communication). While this Chabad member is not an urban design expert, his comment can be grounded in the fact that the Chabad synagogue and BAYT synagogue are located in a census tract with a density of 5311 persons per square kilometre and surrounded by census tracts with similar high densities. Whether the reasoning was to foster a Jewish community or to maximize developable space, the result is that more people are located in a specific area increasing the number of people within walking distance of synagogues and amenities.

6.4 Thornhill Settlement

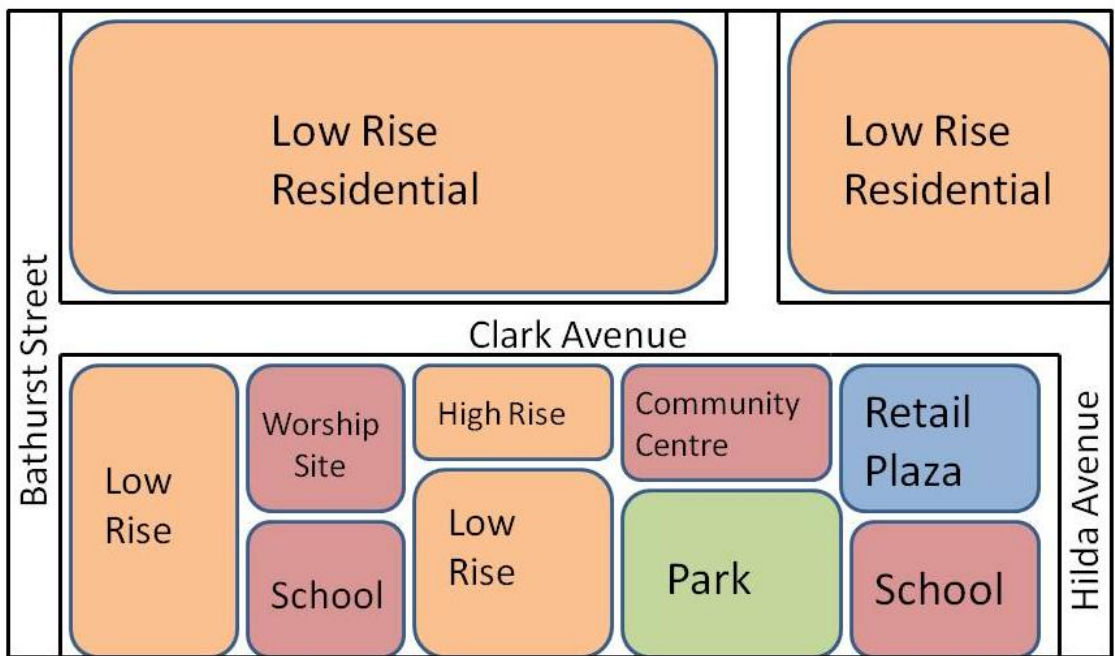


Figure 22: Land use map of part of Thornhill, Rende 2011



Figure 23: Settlement in Thornhill, Rende 2012

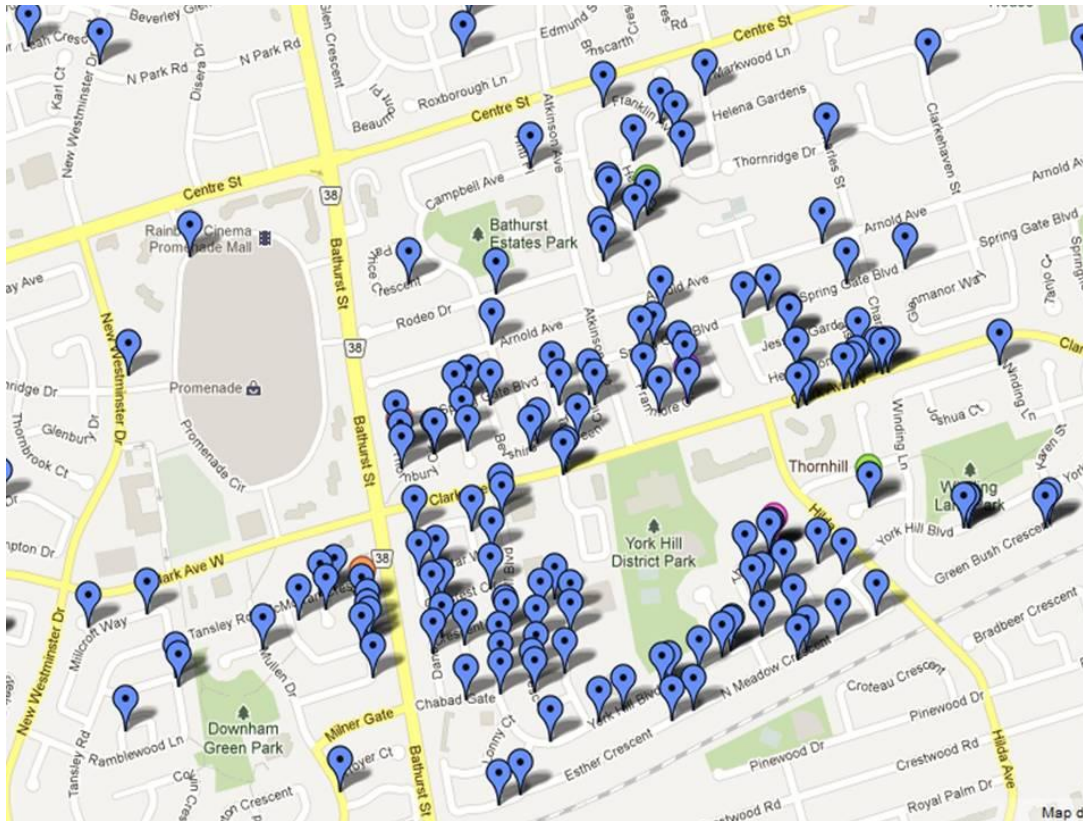


Figure 24: Settlement in Thornhill, Rende 2012

These maps (Figures 22, 23, 24) will demonstrate whether BAYT members in fact live within walking distance of the synagogue; a key marketing point for Tanenbaum for the Spring Farm development. The first map, figure 22, is a land use map while the following two maps, figures 23 and 24, are a 25% sample of the BAYT membership and visually display where members live in relation to the synagogue. The data was systematically selected from an alphabetically organized membership contact booklet. Every fourth member was selected starting from the first listed member. There was no systematic bias associated with the selection of members. Each dot on the map represents a membership – it can represent a family, a couple, or a single person. It is important to note that according to the BAYT membership, a single person over 25 living in the same house as another member will have their information listed separately. However, because every fourth person was selected, this never became an issue as the

membership booklet is organized alphabetically.

The major clusters are along York Hill Boulevard, and its off-shoot streets, and along Spring Gate and its off-shoot streets. York Hill Boulevard begins to the west of the synagogue, runs south, and then curves east and continues east until it curves north to meet up with Clark Avenue near Yonge Street. Spring Gate lies north of Clark Avenue and runs parallel to it.

There are still several members who live west of Bathurst and further north towards Centre Street, but the concentration does fade out. On these maps, it is interesting to see how only one sampled member lives immediately south of the train tracks along streets like Pinewood and Crestwood. Furthermore, there are several members who live near Bathurst and Lawrence and other neighbourhoods far away and either drive to the synagogue or the BAYT is not their primary synagogue.

While BAYT was used as a case study for this mapping exercise, the same can be said for Chabad at Chabad Gate and Bathurst. A member there explained to me that the large majority of their members are not walking more than a mile to get to their synagogue (personal communication).

Earlier in this paper it was mentioned that some American suburbs are thinly populated and that hardly any congregants can live within walking distance of a synagogue (Lewyn); however, the preceding maps of Thornhill settlement and Thornhill's land use demonstrate that this is not true of Thornhill. Figure 22 demonstrates that the Spring Farm development was designed with a central hub – containing a synagogue, retail plaza, community centre, and park – surrounded by low to medium density residential areas (refer to section 6.3 of this paper) which placed numerous residents within walking distance of this central hub. Figures 23 and 24

visually display that reality and support Tanenbaum's vision as congregants of BAYT live largely within walking distance of the synagogue and central hub.

While Thornhill does not fulfil the criteria of smart growth or new urbanist communities, these maps and figures display that it does contain several of the key aspects of these communities mentioned earlier in this paper. The central hub of Jewish Thornhill at Clark and Atkinson creates a sense of community which Garde states is part of new urbanism communities. The mixed use of land along Clark Avenue (Figure 22) and compact density in relation to other outer suburbs in the GTA fulfil Garde's, Jun's, Dunham-Jones and Williamson's, and Knaap and Talen's need for compact development in new urbanism and smart growth communities. Similarly, York Hill Park (Figure 21) fulfils Knaap and Talen's and Dunham-Jones and Williamson's need for green space.

7. Conclusion and Implications

All of the literature and information gathered on Toronto's Jewish history has demonstrated that the Jews closely followed Bathurst Street for their northern migration. However, both a prominent Chabad member and Diamond maintain that Toronto is unique in this way. Diamond writes, "But unlike Jewish relocation from urban to suburban areas that occurred in other North American cities during this period, the Jewish settlement of Bathurst Street in suburban North York did not follow the settlement-expansion-relocation-abandonment cycle so prevalent in other cities. That is, development of newer Jewish areas of Bathurst Street did not come at the expense of older areas, but rather extended the existing areas of settlement northward" (p.26). The prominent Chabad member echoed this, saying, "so historically you see that this idea that Toronto Jews really hugged Bathurst Street is something that is quite unique, I don't think other communities you'd find that. You won't find that in Montreal and you certainly won't find it in U.S. cities where there's patches of Jewish communities...throughout the city" (personal communication).

This predictable settlement pattern of the Jewish community in Toronto is what made Thornhill possible. Tanenbaum recognized this development pattern, and as a land developer, capitalized on this opportunity. Tanenbaum and Runnymede created a master-planned walkable Jewish community in Thornhill that addressed the specific needs of its Jewish inhabitants. Thornhill, and specifically Tanenbaum's Spring Farm development, was intended to be a walkable community but not for smart growth or sustainable reasons; these terms had not been introduced into the planning lexicon yet and are not seen in any Spring Farm advertisements. Nevertheless, Thornhill today is a walkable community with several qualities of a sustainable

smart growth community.

The conclusions and findings from this paper highlight the importance and significant role of the developer in creating religious enclaves. Cities are zoned for all people but it is ultimately in the hands of the developer to decide the design and specification of the final product. Through historical trends and contemporary analysis, this paper will hopefully aid in guiding future development of Jewish communities in the GTA and farther north and can educate planning policy makers on the intricacies of planning for religious enclaves. Finally, this paper contributes to the small research field of religion and planning and even smaller field of Jews and suburbs in Canada by beginning a body of research on Jewish Thornhill.

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