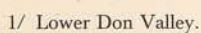


MARC BARANESS

The Don River flows through the valley toward Lake Ontario. Prior to arriving at the lake, the river is channelized and negotiates a 90° bend and enters the Keating Channel. This artificial redirection of the river produces certain





2/ Aerial view of the Don Valley.

difficulties as silt tends to be deposited here creating a flood hazard. As a result, the channel is almost constantly being dredged.

The present view of the valley is that, like the other ravines which cut through the city, it should be considered parkland. There is some difficulty with this concept as access to the valley by pedestrians is limited by development at the upper edges and by the presence of the highway at its centre. Furthermore, the presence of heavy industry and the potentially toxic nature of the abandoned industrial lands makes conventional inhabitation of the lower reaches of the Don difficult.

Each of the six sites is a cross section of the river valley itself, containing areas on the flat table lands of the city proper and an area adjacent to the river. Specifically the sites are as follows:

1. Riverdale Park North / Rosedale Valley Road / Castle Frank;
2. Riverdale Park South / Don Vale / Riverdale Farm;
3. Gerrard Street / Dundas Street / Regent Park;
4. Dundas Street / Queen Street / Regent Park;
5. Queen Street / Eastern Avenue Overpass / Ataratiri;
6. Lakeshore Blvd. / Gardiner Expressway / Keating Channel / Ataratiri.

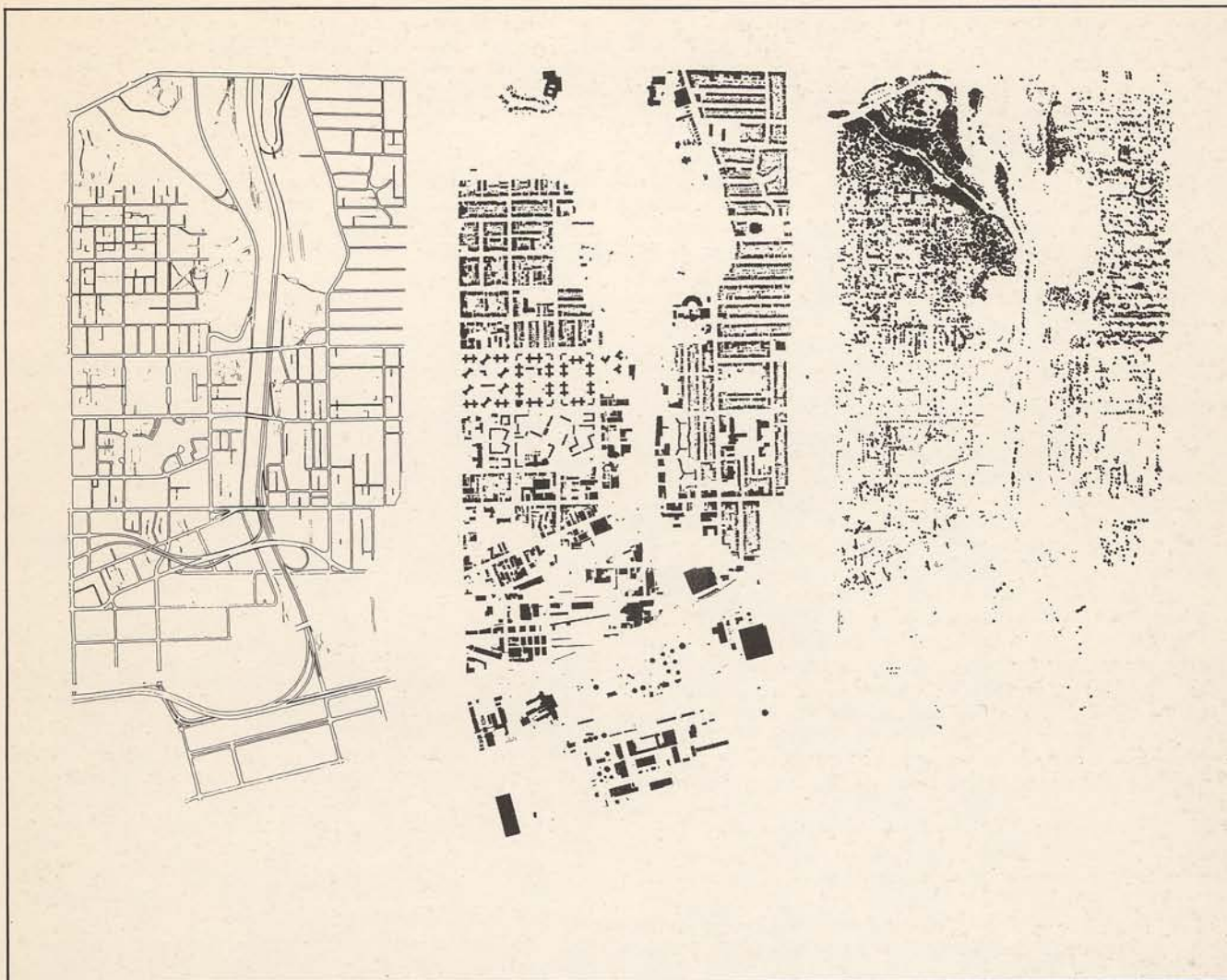
General design considerations with regard to these sites include:

- Access to the various sections of the valley by pedestrians;
- Potential points of crossing over the river and the roadways;
- Appropriate new uses for the abandoned industrial structures;
- Location of appropriate recreational uses within the valley;
- Enhancement of the particular characteristics of the existing situation;
- Inhabitation of areas adjacent to the expressway itself;
- Anticipation of major developments planned in areas adjacent to the sites;
- Potential for mixed use development that could contain cultural activities both at a regional and local scale, sport and recreational activities in appropriate areas of the valley;
- Consideration of the generally held belief that the valley should be returned to its "natural" state and that no building should occur.

Descriptions of the sites

1. Riverdale Park North / Rosedale Valley Road / Castle Frank

This area is bounded on the north by the Bloor Viaduct, a steel bridge with concrete pylons which carries vehicular and pedestrian traffic on its deck and subway cars on tracks located below. On the upper levels of both sides of the valley there are residential neighbourhoods consisting mainly of



3/ Lower Don Valley: Streets, Buildings and Trees configuration.

single family houses. Institutional uses which are located here include two high schools, Castle Frank H.S. on the west and Parkside Collegiate on the East and a municipal swimming pool in the park itself. Riverdale Park occupies the slope down to the valley floor and affords a panoramic view of the structures of the centre of the city.

Major issues with site 1 are centred around access to the valley. The more open land in the northern reaches of the valley contains a more systematic arrangement of parkland ending just below the viaduct. It seems possible that this system could be more clearly linked with Riverdale Park and the surrounding residential neighbourhoods through changes to the structure of this area. As it is presently very heavily used, this site could potentially accommodate additional recreational facilities or include changes to the existing facilities.

2. Riverdale Park South / Don Vale / Riverdale Farm

This area includes the southern portions of Riverdale Park, The Don Vale Cemetery and Riverdale Farm, the site of the former Riverdale Zoo. Adjacent to Riverdale Park, to the south, are located the semi circular structure of Riverdale Hospital (a cancer treatment centre) and the various elements of the Don Jail. The site also includes small residential areas on the upper east and west edges. The valley floor widens in this area to the west. Within this open area are located a number

of playing fields, ancillary service structures, remnants of the former Zoo and a pedestrian bridge which crosses the river and the roadways.

Site 2 offers an opportunity to resolve certain difficulties in the boundary of Riverdale Park, to develop a clearer connection between the pedestrian crossing and the upper west side of the site. It is possible that certain new structures could be constructed in the valley or at its edges in this area.

3. Gerrard Street / Dundas Street / Regent Park

This area overlaps with Sites 2 and 4 and is generally centred on the zone between the two bridges which cross the valley carrying Gerrard Street to the North and Dundas Street to the South. The upper western side of the site contains a series of public housing projects which have been built in the area since the mid 1950's. The westernmost buildings are part of the original Regent Park precinct and range in height from 2-6 storeys. Taller buildings are located nearer to the edge of the valley. The upper eastern side of the site consists mainly of small houses bounded by a series of municipal buildings along the edge. These municipal buildings include a service garage, an abandoned incinerator (characterised by its stack and the access bridges which link it to the street) and a newly constructed electrical transformer station.

The valley is very narrow at this point and the edges are steep. As a result, there is very little space on the floor except

a narrow strip of land to the west of the river. A public pedestrian path is located along the river and continues both north and south.

As it does not have any open area at its bottom, Site 3 suggests that the valley edges would be the primary focus. Of particular interest here are existing buildings which, through their rehabilitation, could provide access to the valley and provide accommodation of certain public recreational functions. In particular the former incinerator to the east and the parking situated on the west are available for reuse. As there is a substantial amount of public housing in the area it seems appropriate that sports and recreation facilities which could serve a large population could be located here. Systematisation of the pedestrian pathway on the valley floor and of the edges of the river could also begin with this site.

4. Dundas Street / Queen Street / Regent Park

This area overlaps with Sites 3 and 5 and is generally centred on the zone between the two bridges which cross the valley carrying Dundas Street to the North and Queen Street to the South. The upper western side of the site contains a series of public housing projects which have been built in the area since the mid 1950's. The westernmost buildings are part of the more recent Regent Park development of the late 1960's and early 1970's and consist of relatively tall slab blocks with lower, 2-3 storey blocks interspersed. The upper eastern portions of the site contain roughly contemporary blocks of apartments also built by the public housing authorities. Between these groups of buildings, at the edges of the valley are located a series of industrial and warehouse structures some of which are abandoned and others which continue to be used for their original purposes or as inexpensive office space.

The river valley begins to widen at this point into a flood plain. On both sides there is approximately 50m of flat land. The difference in elevation between the city and the river has decreased as a result of a general sloping to the lake. While this is attractive as a potential site for building in some respects, any structures located here must take into account the potential for flooding.

As with Site 3, the area contains a large amount of public housing and would be an appropriate location for badly needed sports and recreation facilities. It is also possible that certain commercial or office uses could be proposed in this area. A number of the brick warehouses are characteristic of the area and should likely be maintained and utilised in some fashion. The industrial buildings located just to the south of Dundas Street on the east side of the river could, however, be demolished.

5. Queen Street / Eastern Avenue Overpass / Ataratiri

This area overlaps with Sites 4 and is generally centred on the zone around the curving ramp which connects Eastern Avenue to the Don Valley Parkway and the Cement Plant located to the north of the overpass and just below the bridge at Queen Street. The spaces associated with these two elements

constitute the majority of open space in the site area. Other structures in the area are generally large scale industrial uses or mixed use commercial along the main city streets. In the southwest quadrant there are a number of unused buildings associated with the former railroad switching yards. It is in this area that the City of Toronto is developing a new residential zone named Ataratiri.

The river valley has widened considerably into its flood plain and the area is generally flat. Flooding, as with other sites, will be a consideration with any structures proposed for this area. The river itself is very severely constrained within its channel through the entire site. Along with the three buildings mentioned above, other notable elements within the site boundaries include two abandoned bridge structures over the Don and the overpass itself.

The cement plant is a rather difficult presence in the area and should be removed. This will allow a rather significant parcel of land to be developed. The land contained within the curve of the off ramp to the east is accessible from a small street running south from Queen Street and likewise contains significant buildable area. Residential buildings could be proposed in these areas as part of a consideration of the river edge of the new Ataratiri zone. It seems likely that these areas could also be used to provide public and recreational program for the zone. The two existing bridges offer a suggestion regarding the crossing of the valley.

6. Lakeshore Blvd. / Gardiner Expressway / Keating Channel / Ataratiri

Except for the large industrial structures to the east and several warehouses to the south, this site contains very few actual buildings. Like Site 5, the area is generally flat and is located entirely within the flood plain of the Don River. What it does contain, however, are the massive pylons which support the Gardiner Expressway which passes some 20m high over head at this point and the right angle bend which the river makes as it enters the Keating Channel. It is very clear that this site offers a very different landscape than do the sites 1 and 2. The entire landscape is manmade and somewhat brutal consisting mainly of concrete and a sort of scorched earth. At present, the means by which it is understood is generally from behind the wheel of a speeding automobile. The highway structures themselves have a certain power as result of their scale and repetition. Along the Keating Channel, the Expressway forms a sort of portico looking south and because of its height at this point seems light and, in a way, elegant.

As mentioned above the river is prone to silt deposit and is almost constantly being dredged. Some accommodation of this activity should be made in any proposals for the area. The City of Toronto owns much of the land in this area and has planned a park to be located on the northern edge of the channel, just before it enters Lake Ontario. It is possible to imagine a larger park in this area which would provide amenity to both pedestrians and motorists. As it is directly south of the proposed Ataratiri Lands, some residential and/or mixed use development could be anticipated in the northern reaches of the site.