



Development History

# DON MILLS & EGLINTON

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**Cover Photo:** IBM Plant at Don Mills Road and Eglinton Avenue, looking north. Construction sign reads: “Eglinton Avenue Crosstown Highway, Built by the Province of Ontario and Metropolitan Toronto”, 1956 (Toronto Archives).

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# Summary

Built in the post-war era, the Don Mills and Eglinton area was developed as the employment sector of two early planned suburban communities of the 1950s: Don Mills to the north and Flemingdon Park to the south. Designed to be accessed primarily by private automobile, the development of the area coincided with major transportation infrastructure investments by Metropolitan Toronto, which led to the extension of Eglinton Avenue and the development of the Don Valley Parkway. The unique design of these new modernist communities combined with easy access to Toronto's downtown core by means of the expressway made this area highly desirable as a location for regional and international company headquarters. By the end of the 1960s, the majority of the development in the area was complete as scenic drives, such as Wynford Drive, connected showcase low-density modernist industrial buildings with the surrounding residential lands.

Just as the development of arterial roads and highway infrastructure for automobiles defined the first wave of development within the area, the recent investment in public transit along Eglinton Avenue in the form of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT will serve to transition the area to become more pedestrian-oriented in scale.

**Figure 1:** Photograph of automotive culture at Don Mills Road and Wynford Drive in 1960, facing south (Toronto Archives).

# Study Area and Methods



**Figure 2:** Map of the study area of influence discussed within this report.

The study area discussed in this report is bounded by the CPR corridor to the north, Concorde Place and the Don Valley Parkway to the east, the Flemingdon hydro corridor to the south, and the western branch of the Don River to the west (see Figure 2). This perimeter expands upon the focus area mentioned in the EglintonConnects study (2014) which looked specifically at the four corners of the Don Mills Road and Eglinton Avenue West intersection.

A content analysis of all policy documents from the former municipality of North York and Metropolitan Toronto pertaining to this study area were consulted (1947-2001), as well as Official Plan and Zoning By-Law amendments for properties in the area from 1998-2015.

# Historical Timeline

## Overview

- 1951** International Business Machines (IBM) builds the first manufacturing plant in the area at the intersection of Don Mills Road and the CPR corridor.
- 1952** Don Mills Developments hires Macklin Hancock to design a complete neighbourhood north of the CPR corridor, including residential, commercial, and industrial uses.
- 1956** Eglinton Avenue extension is completed, connecting Leaside with Scarborough.
- 1961** First phase of Flemingdon Park is complete consisting of residential buildings south of Eglinton Ave.
- 1965** Olympia and York take over the development of Flemingdon Park, including an industrial park north of Eglinton Ave. along Wynford Drive. Many office headquarters are constructed at this time.
- 1966** Don Valley Parkway is completed with a full clover-leaf interchange at Eglinton Ave.
- 1975** A few additional office towers are built along the Don Valley Parkway corridor at this time.
- 1986** The development of Concorde Place is complete, including an entrance and exit ramp onto the Don Valley Parkway from Wynford Drive.
- 2001** New commercial and residential uses begin to be permitted along Eglinton Ave. at this time through the demolition or repurposing of previous buildings. This includes a Loblaws Superstore, the Tribeca condominiums, and the Graywood townhouse development at Ferrand Dr.
- 2007** Bata Internation Headquarters is demolished in order to begin development on the Aga Khan Museum.
- 2015** Metrolinx is awarded contract to construct the Eglinton Crosstown LRT.

# Early Development

## 1950-1960

The Don Mills and Eglinton area began to transform from agricultural land into an industrial centre in the early 1950s. At that time, the area was largely cut off from the surrounding communities of Leaside and Scarborough by its geographical situation between the steep valleys of the eastern and western branches of the Don River. The site was only accessible from the north and south by Don Mills Road and by a Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) corridor running along the northern boundary of the area.

The Toronto Industrial Commission was a semi-public organization that played a role in establishing industry along the CPR corridor at Don Mills Road. Overseen by the Mayor of Toronto alongside representatives from the Board of Trade, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Harbor Commission, Toronto Hydro, and the Toronto Transit Commission, the Commission

urged the rezoning of large areas of land with access to railway and municipal services, for industrial use in early 1950s (Globe and Mail, 1952). With the assistance of the Commission, International Business Machines (IBM) was the first company to establish a plant on a 24-acre site at the intersection of the CPR line and Don Mills Road in 1951 (Globe and Mail, 1949; Globe and Mail, 1952; see cover photo). The commission was a semi-public board that was made up of the Mayor, representatives from the Toronto Board of Trade, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, Harbor Commission, Toronto Hydro, the Toronto Transportation Commission, and the Canadian National Exhibition (Globe and Mail, 1952). Following the development of the new plant, two planned communities were developed along Don Mills that both sought to bring residential and employment land uses together in order to create new complete communities for the second half of the twentieth century.



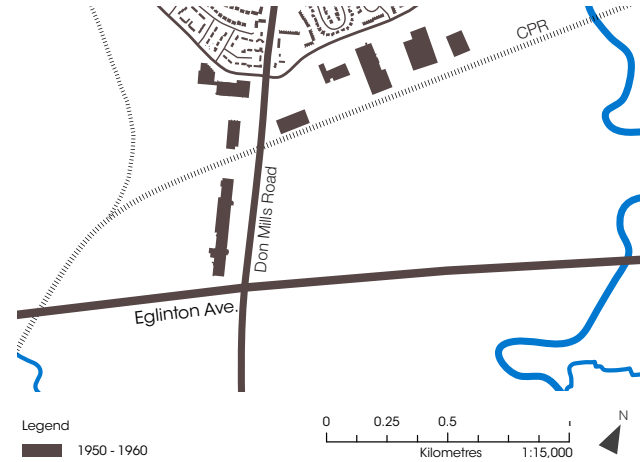
**Figure 3:** Photograph of the Ortho-Pharmaceutical building in 1956, designed by John B. Parkin and Associates (Toronto Archives).

North of the CPR corridor, E.P. Taylor was in the midst of planning a new “integrated” neighbourhood centred around Lawrence Avenue and Don Mills Road (Don Mills Developments Ltd., 1954). Taylor’s company expanded the industrial development of the lands adjacent to the CPR rail line and came to an agreement with the former Township of North York to finance and construct all required water and sewage infrastructure with the understanding that the municipality would repay the loan over the course of fifteen years (Don Mills Development Ltd, 1954; Rynnimeri, 1997). An advertisement intended to attract employers noted that the Don Mills community was a unique industrial



site, located within a 100-mile radius of one-third of the the total buying power of Canada that featured “harmonious architectural design” in the form of low-rise buildings, surrounded by surface-level parking and ample green space (Don Mills Developments, 1954). Among these early modernist buildings located along the railroad corridor was the Ortho Pharmaceutical building, which was completed in 1955 and designed by John B. Parkin and Associates (19 Green Belt Dr.; see Figure 3).

South of the CPR corridor on the Estate of Lydia Fleming, Metropolitan Toronto’s expropriation of land for the construction of both the Eglinton extension and the Don Valley Parkway in the mid 1950s served as a catalyst for the redevelopment of the area into Flemingdon Park (Metropolitan Toronto, 1958, 696 and 795; Metropolitan Toronto, 1959, 1604-1605). Influenced by the design of the Don Mills community to the north, Webb and Knapp undertook the development of the site in 1958 which was considered at the time to be “the largest undeveloped tract in Metropolitan Toronto” (Globe and Mail, 1965). Designed by Irving Grossman, this planned community was also intended to be complete in the sense that it would mix dense residential land with industrial and commercial lands within the same neighbourhood (Stewart, 2008). By the end of the 1950s, however, the company was facing financial constraints due to having overextended itself and overestimated profits from residential sales (Business Week, 1997, 64). As a result, the industrial portion of the community that was intended to flank either side of Eglinton Avenue was left vacant until the mid 1960s, when Olympia and York bought the remaining holdings of Webb and Knapp in the Don Mills area (Globe and Mail, 1965; Globe and Mail, 1966).



**Figure 4:** Map showing the development of the Don Mills and Eglinton intersection at the end of the 1950s.



**Figure 5:** Aerial photograph of the Don Mills and Eglinton area in 1953 before the completion of the Eglinton Avenue extension. The International Business Machines (IBM) plant is present, however, the southern addition has not yet been built (Toronto Archives).

# Road Infrastructure

Beyond access to the rail corridor, the industrial lands in the Don Mills and Eglinton area were increasingly attractive properties to manufacturing companies due to transportation initiatives undertaken in the 1950s. The redevelopment of the Don Mills and Eglinton area into an industrial centre coincided with the formation of Metropolitan Toronto and that municipality's initial desire to improve arterial roads and the freeway network throughout the region (Canadian Urban Institute, 2011, 20). Within the study area, these investments led to the extension of Eglinton Avenue and the construction of the Don Valley Parkway.

In 1955, the Eglinton Avenue extension was built to connect Laird Drive in Leaside with Victoria Park Avenue in Scarborough in order to relieve traffic on Kingston Road and O'Connor Road (see Figure 6). This extension was intended to eventually become a six-lane highway and consequently the former municipality secured a 30-meter road width (100 feet) with a 15-meter setback (50 feet) on either side of the highway (see Figure 2; Metropolitan Toronto, 1954, 886). Upon the completion of the expansion, a new bus service from Brimley Road to the subway terminus at Eglinton Avenue and Yonge Street made the area first accessible by public transit in 1957 (Globe and Mail, Aug. 10, 1957).

By the end of the decade, Metropolitan Toronto built the Don Valley Parkway to facilitate vehicular movement along a north-south corridor from Highway 401 to downtown Toronto (see Figure 7; Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, 1955, 69). A full clover-leaf interchange

was built at Eglinton Avenue within the study area. The fact that the area was adjacent to both a CPR rail corridor and an interchange of the Don Valley Parkway led the Planning Board to target the area as a location for a "large industrial concentration" in anticipation of developments which were expected to occur in the 1960s (see Figure 3; Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, 1959, 90). With access to transportation infrastructure and public transit, Metropolitan Toronto intended these industrial zones to become an economic base for the former township of North York.



**Figure 6:** Eglinton Extension under construction in 1956, facing east possibly at Wynford Drive (Toronto Archives).



**Figure 7:** Don Valley Parkway at Eglinton Avenue facing south in 1961 with Flemington Park residential buildings in the distance (Toronto Archives).

# Don Mills Industrial District

1960-1970

These initial investments in road infrastructure made the Don Mills and Eglinton area attractive for businesses in the 1960s. Proximity to the new freeways meant that employees could easily commute to work by automobile and new buildings generally were surrounded by expansive surface-level parking. Metropolitan Toronto anticipated that the Don Mills industrial centre (including the Don Mills and York Mills area as well as Don Mills and Eglinton) would facilitate 18,000 jobs by 1980 (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, 1959, plate 29).

During the 1960s, the majority of the existing road network and industrial buildings were constructed (see Figures 9 & 10). When Olympia and York took over the development of Flemingdon Park in 1965, they designed a ring road that would link the new Olympia Square plaza south of Eglinton Avenue with the “prestige industrial area” on the north side of the arterial road (Globe and Mail, 1965). The Wynford Drive and St. Dennis Drive loop that emerged epitomized the automobile culture of the area, simultaneously linking industrial lands on either side of the Don Valley Parkway and Eglinton Avenue through a scenic winding drive interspersed with short, cul-de-sacs and looped roads.

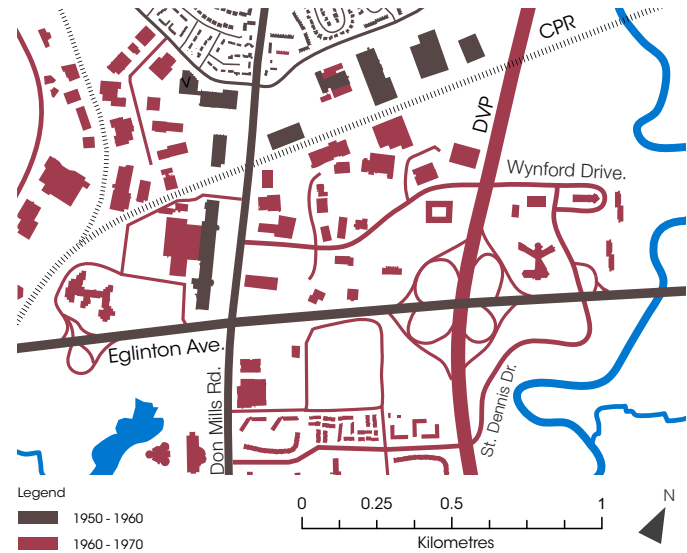
Many of the properties lining Wynford Drive still reflect the significant modernist architecture of this early development period, including the Texaco Canada



**Figure 8:** Ontario Regional Headquarters of Imperial Oil building located on the northeastern corner of Don Mills and Eglinton (now demolished) in 1964 (Moffatt, 2013).

building (90 Wynford Drive), the Bell Canada building (100 Wynford Drive), the Brookfield Building (39 Wynford Drive) and the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (123 Wynford Drive; see Moffatt, 2013). Three prominent modernist office headquarters were also constructed at this time along the north side of Eglinton Avenue. At the western end of the study area, John b. Parkin and Associates designed the fortress-like IBM Canada Headquarters which was completed in 1967 (1150 Eglinton Avenue; Moffat, 2010). The two other prominent buildings of this era of development were the Ontario regional headquarters of Imperial Oil (see Figure 8; 825 Don Mills Road) and the Bata International Headquarters (59 Wynford Drive; Moffatt, 2013). Though the majority of these buildings were developed in conjunction with Olympia and York, the properties themselves were privately owned by the organizations and manufacturing companies who used them.

The south side of the Don Mills and Eglinton intersection was slower to develop. Whereas the first phase of the residential portion of Flemingdon Park was opened in 1961, the industrial lands south of Eglinton Avenue remained vacant until the Olympia Square complex was built in the latter half of the decade (789 and 797 Don Mills Road, now called Foresters and Tribeca). Located at the southeastern corner of the intersection, this two-tower square initially housed the head office of North American Life and Casualty Company (later called the Mony Life building) as well as the head office of the Independent Order of Foresters. With the completion of the development of the Ontario Science Centre in 1969 on the southwestern corner of the Don Mills and Eglinton intersection as well as the development of the office towers on Ferrand Drive in the early 1970s, the development footprint of the area was substantially complete.



**Figure 9:** Map showing the development of the Don Mills and Eglinton intersection at the end of the 1960s.



**Figure 10:** Aerial photograph of the Don Mills and Eglinton intersection at the end of the 1960s. Wynford Dr and St. Dennis Dr. are complete (Toronto Archives).

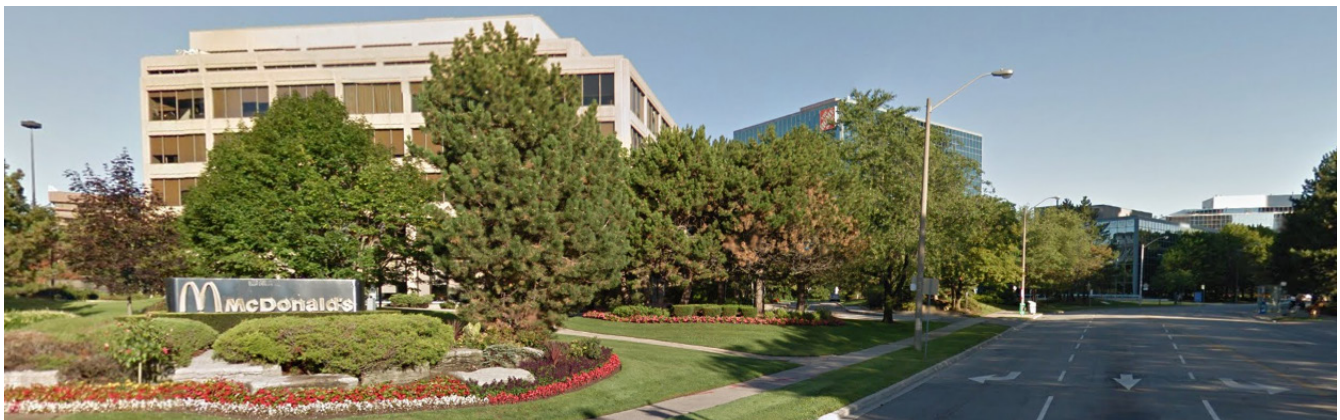
# Flemingdon Business Park

1970-2000

In the later parts of the 1970s and early 1980s, development interest in the area slowed with the exception of the construction of Concord Place east of the Don Valley Parkway, north of Wynford Drive. This significant project introduced one million square feet of office space and 1,050 new residential units in the area immediately adjacent to the Flemingdon Business Park (see Figure 11; Globe and Mail, 1984). Furthermore, the former municipality of Metropolitan Toronto reinforced the automotive nature of the area by securing financing from Concorde Square to build an additional on-ramp to the Don Valley Parkway, directly servicing additional traffic from both the Flemingdon Business Park and Concord Place. The three office towers of the Concord Corporate Centre

are owned by Crown Realty Partners and currently leased to several prominent tenants including Home Depot, ESRI, and Deloitte LLP (1-12 Concorde Gate; Artis Reit, 2016). This pattern of ownership marks a significant change from the early pattern of company-owned low-rise buildings to the leasing of space within office towers.

Until the amalgamation of the City of Toronto, the study area continued to be identified as Flemingdon Business Park. The former municipality of North York further underscored urban design criteria through policies that encouraged extensive landscaping along street fronts in order to reduce nuisance impacts and ensure that views were “visually attractive” (North York, 2000, C8-23). This was most notably to be achieved through the planting of

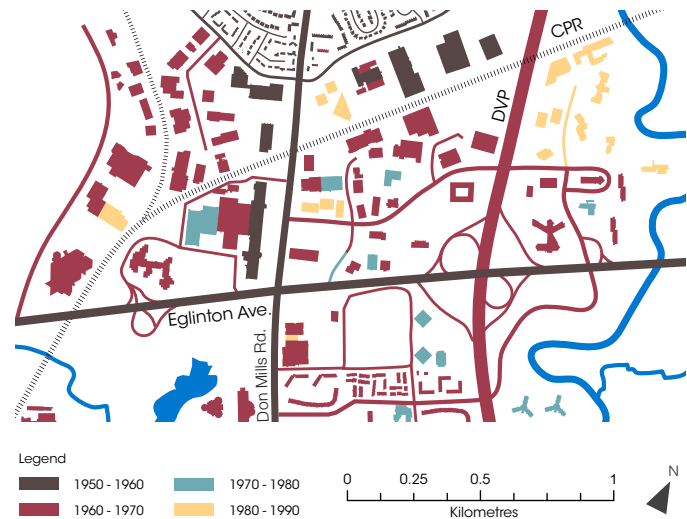


**Figure 11:** Photograph of the entrance to Concorde Place, facing north at the intersection of Wynford Dr. and Concord Pl. (Google Maps).

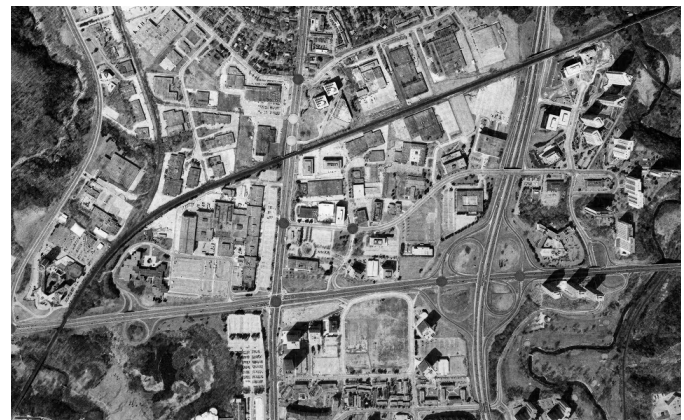
street trees and the encouragement of shared parking facilities.

In 1972, the former municipality of North York released a District Plan that reflected the changes that had occurred to the area throughout the 1960s. A land use map from the Plan indicates that the areas surrounding the Eglinton Avenue corridor would continue to have a major industrial use and these industries were encouraged to locate on parcels situated adjacent to arterial roads and expressways (North York Planning Board, 1972, 24).

Although a number of major corporate headquarter office buildings had been constructed in the 1960s, policy continued to speak of the area as an industrial center until the 1980s when the Don Mills and Eglinton area was rebranded first as an Office Park and then subsequently as Flemingdon Business Park (Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, 1980, 29; Municipality of North York, 1988, map C.8.2). These new areas were identified in policy documents by the former municipality as areas containing mixed office and industrial uses, and were intended to be “highly automobile oriented; have a plentiful supply of parking; relatively immediate access to expressways, and be developed at low density” (see Figures 12 & 13; Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, 1980, 28). Some commercial uses began to be provided for at this time.



**Figure 12:** Map showing the development of the Don Mills and Eglinton intersection at the end of the 1980s.



**Figure 13:** Aerial photograph of the Don Mills and Eglinton intersection from 1992 (Toronto Archives).

# Don Mills and Eglinton in Transition

## 2000-2016

A recent study by the Canadian Urban Institute identifies that the Don Mills and Eglinton employment area experienced significant growth in response to the construction of the Don Valley Parkway, but since that time has largely stalled (Canadian Urban Institute, 2011, 4). A staff report from the early 2000s notes that Flemingdon Park “was one of the areas hardest hit by the recession of the early 1990s”, during which time many companies left the area (City of Toronto, Midtown Community Council, Report 7, No. 28). Certainly since the completion of Concorde Place in the 1980s, few office or manufacturing developments were undertaken in the Don Mills and Eglinton area.

While employment uses continue to be significant and the number of jobs in the area even grew 28.3% in 2015, other residential and commercial uses have

begun to receive approval from City Council on a case-by-case basis, particularly along the Eglinton Avenue corridor (Toronto Employment Survey, 2015). The first redevelopment that took place within the area occurred on the southeast side of the Don Mills and Eglinton area. In 1998, T.W.S. Developments Ltd. and Graywood Developments Ltd. both obtained Official Plan and Zoning By-Law amendments that allowed for the conversion of the Mony Life office building (797 Don Mills Rd.) into a residential condominium (Tribeca) as well as approval for the construction of 195 low-rise residential dwelling units on the vacant lands bounded by Ferrand Drive and Rochefort Drive (see Figure 14; City of Toronto, 1998, UDOZ-94-34; City of Toronto, 1998, UDZ-97-52).

The first commercial redevelopment that took place within the area occurred on the northeast corner of Don Mills



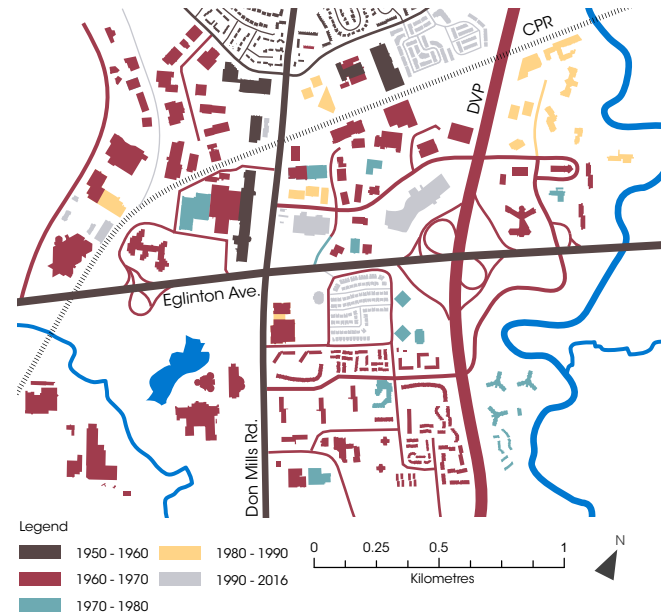
**Figure 14:** Photograph of streetview facing east at Don Mills Rd. and Eglinton Avenue. Graywood townhouse development is visible to the right (Google Maps).



and Eglinton, where the former site of the Ontario Regional Headquarters of Imperial Oil had stood vacant since the mid-1990s. In 2001, Loblaws was successful in obtaining an Official Plan and Zoning By-Law amendments to demolish the modernist structure and build a large format retail building in its place (City of Toronto, 2001). The final staff report on the development recommended this decision citing former City of North York Official Plan policies that provided for certain retail uses on arterial roads in industrial areas and concluded that future office use of the site was unlikely.

Finally, in 2007, Toronto City Council approved the demolition of the Bata International Headquarters building (59 Wynford Drive) in order to make way for the Aga Khan Museum (see Figure 16).

The introduction of residential, commercial, and further institutional uses along the Eglinton Avenue corridor have played a significant role in diversifying the character of the area and suggest that new policies are needed in order to guide future development.



**Figure 15:** Map showing the development of the Don Mills and Eglinton intersection up to 2016.



**Figure 16:** Photograph of the Aga Khan Museum (2015).



# Conclusion

The Don Mills and Eglinton area is a unique part of the industrial fabric of the the City of Toronto. Designed to showcase the latest innovations in architectural design, the low-rise, concrete, modernist structures that line the CPR corridor and Wynford Drive speak to an era in which developers were experimenting with new types of complete neighbourhoods for a rapidly expanding city.

Built as an integrated part of the planned communities at Don Mills and Flemington Park, it was transportation infrastructure that drove the development of the area throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The construction of automobile-oriented infrastructure through the extension of Eglinton Avenue as well as the Don Valley Parkway made Don Mills and Eglinton a highly accessible area in close proximity to the downtown core. Despite the fact that the area was easy to access, however, its car-centric design and poor connections to the surrounding neighbourhoods mean that it has only ever really been populated throughout the working day.

With the approval of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT in 2009, a new wave of transportation infrastructure centred on the transit line will once again transform the area for the next generation of use. Increased pedestrian traffic means that there is an opportunity in future planning policy to address a broad range of considerations related to public realm, built form, improved connectivity, and pedestrian amenities. It is likewise important to draw out the unique modernist aspect of the area and once again make it a focal point within the City of Toronto. By leveraging the existing architectural features present in the Don Mills and Eglinton area and integrating them with future investments, the vision of modernist progression and prosperity that existed in the 1960s can resonate within the next generation of development.

**Figure 17:** Photograph of the southern extension of the Internation Business Machines (IBM) building located at 844 Don Mills Road (Panda and Associates, 1954).

# Key Map



■ Buildings within Study Area

■ Buildings outside Study Area

- 1 Original IBM/Celestica Manufacturing Plant (844 Don Mills Rd.)
- 2 Don Mills, Planned Community
- 3 Janssen-Ortho Pharmaceutical Building (19 Green Belt Dr.)
- 4 Flemingdon Park, Planned Community
- 5 Olympia Square (789 Don Mills Rd. and 797 Don Mills Rd.)
- 6 Former IBM Office Headquarters Building (1150 Eglinton Ave. E.)
- 7 Former C.C.H. Canadian Building, now Japanese Cultural Centre (6 Garamond Ct.)
- 8 Former Japanese Cultural Centre, now Noor Centre (123 Wynford Dr.)
- 9 Ontario Science Centre (770 Don Mills Rd.)
- 10 Concorde Place
- 11 Greywood Townhouse Developments (Ferrand Dr.)
- 12 Aga Khan Museum (77 Wynford Dr.)

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