

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HIGH-RISE APARTMENT  
COMPLEX IN THE ROSLYN ROAD AREA OF WINNIPEG

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ABSTRACT      The Development of the High-Rise Apartment  
Complex in the Roslyn Road Area of Winnipeg

This thesis examines the process by which a former first class residential area on the fringe of downtown Winnipeg was redeveloped as a high-rise, high-rent apartment complex during the decade 1961-1971. The primary redevelopment activity was that of the demolition and replacement of existing dwellings with high-rise apartment structures. Thirty-two properties were demolished and fifteen new apartment blocks were constructed, adding a total of 1646 apartment suites to the area. The population of the Roslyn Road Area increased almost six-fold from 450 in 1961 to 2660 in 1971.

In attempting to assess the reasons why the high-rise apartment complex developed in the Roslyn Road Area the thesis examined both the relationship of this neighbourhood to the critical periods of growth and decline in the urban development of the city as a whole, and the complex interaction of decisions by homeowners, development interests, planners and elected officials which resulted in development activity.

The theoretical framework for analyzing this land use change in the Roslyn Road Area was the process of land use succession and the location of high-density residential development as discussed in the researches of L. S. Bourne. The "building renewal cycle," as developed by Bourne and



others, provided a useful analytical tool for assessing the process by which the standing stock of buildings is continually adapted over time to the changing needs of the urban area. This case-study of the Roslyn Road Area also confirmed three of Bourne's major variables indicating location possibilities for high-density residential development.

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## INTRODUCTION

The context for this thesis is provided by the resurgence of apartment development in Canadian urban centers in the decade 1961-1971. In 1961, housing starts in single-detached dwellings outnumbered apartments by more than 2 to 1, with apartments representing only 28.4% of the total number of starts.<sup>1</sup> By 1965, however, the construction of apartments outnumbered single-detached dwellings for the first time, amounting to 47% of all new housing starts. The peak in apartment development was reached in 1969, with 52.7% of total housing starts, a proportion that declined to 45.4% by 1971. (Table 1.) The peak in apartment construction during the decade 1961-71 was reached in 1969, when slightly more than half of all dwelling starts were in apartments. Table 2, shows the proportions of single-detached dwellings, apartment and all multi-family dwellings for five metropolitan areas in that year.

The apartment "boom" of the 1960's, therefore, was important in the development of Canada's urban centres. The expansion of multi-family housing and in particular high-rise apartments, was reflected in the changing composition of the housing stock, the increasing proportion of urban households living in apartments and in the morphology of the city.

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<sup>1</sup>Data compiled from Canadian Housing Statistics, 1967, 1969, and 1971, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Ottawa.

Table 1: Percentage Housing Starts by Type In Canada, 1961-1971.

	<u>Single Detached</u>	<u>Semi-detached &amp; Duplex</u>	<u>Row Housing</u>	<u>Apartments</u>
1961	60.87	9.28	1.48	28.38
1962	57.22	8.44	2.88	31.47
1963	51.91	5.31	2.62	40.66
1964	46.53	5.26	2.87	45.35
1965*	45.29	4.76	3.19	46.76
1966	52.53	5.41	3.72	38.34
1967	44.19	6.06	4.50	45.25
1968	38.27	5.14	4.08	52.51
1969	37.26	4.93	5.10	52.71
1970	37.13	5.68	8.95	48.23
1971	41.97	5.89	6.70	45.45

Source:

Canadian Housing Statistics, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

\*1965 represents the first year when the total number of apartment "starts" exceeded that of single-detached dwellings.

Table 2: Dwelling Starts, Single-Detached, Apartments and all Multi-family dwellings, for five Metropolitan Areas, 1969.

	<u>Single-Detached</u>		<u>Apartments</u>		<u>All Multi-family*</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>% of Total</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>% of Total</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Montreal	3627	15.34	19098	80.75	20023	84.66
Toronto	5782	18.14	21719	68.14	26092	81.86
Winnipeg	2134	23.63	6180	68.44	6896	76.37
Edmonton	2368	24.15	6699	68.31	7439	75.85
Vancouver	4763	26.92	11945	67.52	12927	73.08

Source:

Canadian Housing Statistics. 1970, pp. 12-13.  
C. M. H. C.

\*All multi-family dwellings includes semi-detached, duplexes, row housing, and apartments.

Thus the concentration of tall buildings was not confined to the Central Business District alone, but included multi-storey apartment clusters on the fringes of the downtown areas, along major transportation routes, and in new suburban concentrations.

One such apartment cluster is the Roslyn Road Area of Winnipeg, just south of downtown Winnipeg. (Map 1 and Figure 1.) During the decade 1961-1971 this area has undergone a significant transformation of its housing stock, population composition, neighbourhood function and morphology, by the replacement of large old former single-family dwellings with high-rise apartment buildings. This thesis, therefore, examines the reasons for the development of the high-rise apartment complex in the Roslyn Road Area, and the process by which it occurred.

Bourne<sup>2</sup> has suggested that our understanding of urban land use change can be enhanced by the study of the processes of land use succession at appropriate spatial levels, in particular, "the individual unit of land ownership." Land use succession he defines as "the succession of uses of urban property which are the result of adjustments in the building stock."<sup>3</sup> One of the key themes of this thesis, therefore, is an analysis of the process by which the standing stock of

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<sup>2</sup>Bourne, L. S. "Physical Adjustment Processes and Land Use Succession: A Conceptual Review and Central City Example," Economic Geography, Volume 47, No. 1, January 1971, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

buildings in the Roslyn Road Area is adapted to the changing demands for space in the larger urban area.

This study of apartment development in the decade 1961-1971 also responds to Bogue's call for increasing our understanding of present city structure by unravelling "layers" of building activity (each perhaps a decade long) and analyzing the activity in terms of the forces that accompanied it.<sup>4</sup>

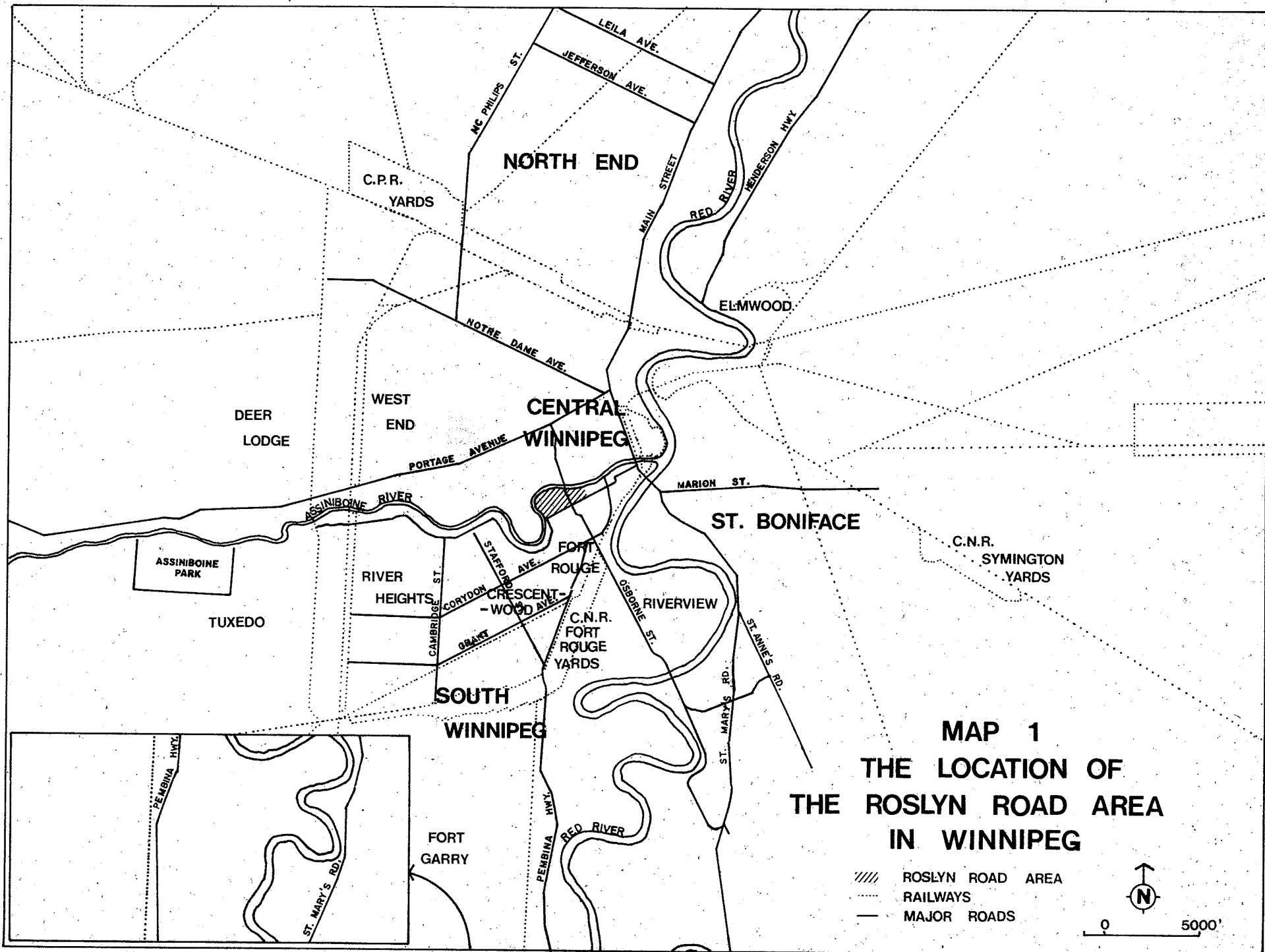
The basic research question in this study thus becomes: "Why did the high-rise apartment complex develop in the Roslyn Road Area of Winnipeg in the decade 1961-1971?" The hypothesis to be tested in this case-study can be stated as follows:

High-rise apartment development in centrally located areas of cities is likely to occur when economic, social and institutional factors articulate to the advantage of development interests.

Chapter I of the thesis explores the concepts of land use succession as they apply to this study, while Chapter III discusses the 'place' of Roslyn Road in the context of Winnipeg's urban development and the stage and location of apartment development in the urban area. The development of the high-rise apartment complex and the nature of structural change are examined in Chapter IV, while Chapter V analyzes the process of land use succession in the Roslyn Road Area, and the reasons for the apartment development in that neighbourhood.

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<sup>4</sup>Bogue, D. J. Needed Urban and Metropolitan Research. Oxford, Ohio. Scripps Foundation for Research in Population Problems, Miami University, and Population Research and Training Centre. University of Chicago, 1953, p. 23.



NORTH END

CENTRAL  
WINNIPEG

SOUTH  
WINNIPEG

ST. BONIFACE

FORT  
ROUGE  
C.N.R.  
FORT  
ROUGE  
YARDS

WEST  
END

DEER  
LODGE

ASSINIBOINE  
PARK

TUXEDO

RIVER  
HEIGHTS

RIVERVIEW

C.N.R.  
SYMINGTON  
YARDS

FORT  
GARRY

C.P.R.  
YARDS

ELMWOOD

LEILA AVE.  
JEFFERSON AVE.

MC PHILIPS ST.

MAIN STREET

RED RIVER  
HENDERSON HWY

NOTRE DAME AVE.

PORTAGE AVENUE

MARION ST.

ASSINIBOINE RIVER

STAFFORD AVE.

CORYDON  
CRESCENT -  
WOOD AVE.

FORT ROUGE

OSBORNE ST.

CAMBRIDGE ST.

GRANT

ST. ANNE'S RD.

ST. MARY'S RD.

RED RIVER

PEMBINA HWY.

ST. MARY'S RD.