

## Kapuskasing – Garden City and Model Town

On Wednesday, July 25, 2007 at 2 p.m., the Ontario Heritage Trust and the Town of Kapuskasing unveiled a provincial plaque to commemorate Kapuskasing – Garden City and Model Town in the Pavilion at the Welcome Centre in Kapuskasing, Ontario.

The bilingual plaque reads as follows:

### **KAPUSKASING – GARDEN CITY AND MODEL TOWN**

In 1921 the Kimberly-Clark and the Spruce Falls companies constructed a pulp mill in Kapuskasing that would employ many workers. To plan for Kapuskasing's anticipated growth, the provincial government commissioned the architectural landscape firm of Harries & Hall to create a town plan, which incorporated elements of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Garden City and City Beautiful town planning movements. The first provincially-planned single resource town in Ontario, Kapuskasing's design focused on a healthy living environment, architectural harmony, unified design and visual variety. The plan separated residential and industrial areas, included land dedicated to green space, parks and public buildings and a variety of innovative street patterns which remain today.

### **PLAN DE VILLE MODÈLE DE KAPUSKASING FONDÉ SUR LE MOUVEMENT D'URBANISME « GARDEN CITY »**

En 1921, les sociétés Kimberly-Clark et Spruce Falls construisirent une usine de pâte à papier à Kapuskasing qui employa de nombreux travailleurs. Le gouvernement provincial, prévoyant l'expansion de la ville, confia au cabinet d'architectes paysagers Harries & Hall la tâche d'élaborer un plan de ville intégrant des éléments des mouvements d'urbanisme connus sous le nom de « Garden City » et de « City Beautiful », mouvements nés à la fin du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le plan de ville de Kapuskasing, première ville ontarienne à industrie unique dont l'aménagement fut planifié par le gouvernement provincial, mettait l'accent sur un environnement sain, l'harmonie architecturale, un aménagement unifié et la variété visuelle. Le plan séparait les secteurs résidentiels des secteurs industriels, réservait des terrains pour la création d'espaces verts, de parcs et de bâtiments et proposait un agencement de rues novateur qui subsiste de nos jours.

## **Historical background**

### **Introduction**

The first provincially planned resource community in Ontario,<sup>1</sup> Kapuskasing warrants special mention in the history of Canadian town planning for its design, which incorporated elements of both the Garden City and City Beautiful movements. These features provided Kapuskasing residents with a quality of life that was previously absent in company towns. Along with the early history of the settlement, many local and international precedents and individuals contributed to the unique character of this model town.

### **Early settlement history**

In 1902, the construction of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway began, helping to stimulate northern Ontario's growth.<sup>2</sup> By 1907, the National Transcontinental Railway (now the Canadian National Railway – CNR) linked to the Northern Ontario Railway and new settlement appeared throughout the area surrounding this railroad junction. One of these, Macpherson Station (later to become Kapuskasing), was founded in 1910 when a CNR surveyor identified the point where the railroad crossed the Kapuskasing River as an ideal location for a town.<sup>3</sup>

The settlement began to grow during the First World War when the Department of Internment Operations established encampments to detain internees and prisoners-of-war.<sup>4</sup> During this same period, the Department of Agriculture established the Dominion Experimental Station at MacPherson,<sup>5</sup> an experimental farm where new extreme weather-resistant crop varieties could be tested and internees employed to clear the land for use. In 1917, Macpherson Station changed its name to Kapuskasing<sup>6</sup> – a Cree word meaning, “place where the river bends” – to avoid confusion in mail delivery with a railroad stop of the same name located in Manitoba.

Kapuskasing continued to grow after the First World War when detainees from the farm were repatriated and soldiers returned home from overseas. It was at this time that the provincial government launched the Land Settlement Scheme, the purpose of which was to direct men returning from Europe to northern Ontario settlements such as Kapuskasing. In 1918, with this ready workforce in mind and the abundant forest resources in the area, the government also announced a concession for pulp operations in the area.<sup>7</sup> The lumber company, Kimberly-Clark, incorporated the newly formed Spruce Falls Company Ltd. By June 1920, construction of a mill began in Kapuskasing.<sup>8</sup>

### **The plan for Kapuskasing**

Ernest C. Drury, premier of Ontario from 1919 until 1923, played an instrumental role in the innovative planning of Kapuskasing. Drury had become dissatisfied with the relationship between resource-based companies and their workers after his first visits to northern Ontario

company towns, where entire populations were dependent upon a single resource-based industry that was owned and controlled by one company. By 1920 in the Kapuskasing area, the Spruce Falls Company owned over 4,600 square kilometres (2,858 square miles) of forested land, as designated by its Pulpwood Limit Agreement with the Province of Ontario.<sup>9</sup> In keeping with this agreement, the Spruce Falls Company was required to build a pulp mill and sawmill by 1922, and a paper mill by 1928. It was anticipated that approximately 2,500 people would move to Kapuskasing to work in the mills. The workers would need a town in which to live, and Drury – recognizing the opportunity to create a planned resource community – initiated the first attempt by the Ontario government to create a diversified resource community to be operated by its citizens as a municipality.<sup>10</sup>

In 1919, the Toronto architectural landscape and planning firm of Harries & Hall was appointed as Consultant Town Planners to the Provincial Bureau of Municipal Affairs.<sup>11</sup> Alfred Hall is credited with the General Plan of the Town of Kapuskasing, which he completed in 1921. The Plan of the Subdivision was registered on August 8, 1922.<sup>12</sup> Kapuskasing was planned to become the “model town of the north,”<sup>13</sup> one that would serve as a prototype for future, diversified single-resource communities located in the province. It was hoped that carefully laid-out towns would foster improved relationships between the resource companies and their workers. The completed plan also successfully utilizes and reflects the ideals promoted by the Garden City and City Beautiful movements.

### **The Garden City and City Beautiful design movements**

During the 1880s, Ebenezer Howard – a writer for the official parliamentary reporters in London, England – began to focus on land issues, such as the problems facing British agricultural land.<sup>14</sup> Howard began to create plans for garden cities, which included both socio-economic and physical parameters. He promoted features such as limited population size, geographic coverage of available area and a physical layout that was comprised of central public spaces, concentric circles of land and streets, radial avenues, peripherally located industrial facilities, greenbelts and remote settlements. Howard’s plan was designed to sustain a healthy, natural and economic combination of town and country life, complemented by a balance of work and leisure.<sup>15</sup> On October 9, 1903, the Garden City Limited Association unveiled Letchworth, England – the first Garden City in the world.<sup>16</sup> Howard was involved throughout the entire design and development process to ensure that the town plan incorporated his ideas.

Like the Garden City movement – but founded in the United States – the City Beautiful movement fostered ideals that were meant to improve the qualities of life in an urban environment. During the first decade of the 20th century, the City Beautiful movement became a major cultural, environmental, political and esthetic pursuit among prominent landscape architects and urban designers.<sup>17</sup> The focus of the City Beautiful movement was proportion, harmony, symmetry and scale.<sup>18</sup>

Members of the United States Senate Park Commission made significant contributions to the City Beautiful movement. In the early 1900s, the Commission revealed the McMillan Plan for Washington, D.C., which was the nation's first comprehensive plan,<sup>19</sup> and an exemplary sample of City Beautiful idealism. The National Mall, famous for its expansive lawns and remarkable vistas, typifies one of the main components of this plan, as does the core area bordered by monuments such as the Capitol, the Lincoln Memorial, the White House, Lafayette Park and the Tidal Basin.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Garden City and City Beautiful movements as reflected in Kapuskasing**

The Garden City movement's influence is most apparent in Kapuskasing's open space. Almost 750 hectares of land (1,853 acres) surrounding the initial subdivision remained unsubdivided but still included within the municipality. The Harries & Hall design deliberately included this area to create a continuous greenbelt in the Garden City tradition that contained natural areas or small farm properties which would surround the subdivision and accommodate future growth of the community.<sup>21</sup>

The abundance and maintenance of parks and recreation areas within the town also reflected Garden City standards, as did the physical form and street system. Buildings such as the Kapuskasing Inn and Civic Buildings, located at Riverside Drive and Drury Avenue – with their neo-Gothic Tudor styling – appeared to have a similar form to those in Letchworth, England, the original Garden City model.<sup>22</sup> Tracts of land located at the bend in the Kapuskasing River, the northwest section of town and the area bordered by Mundy, Bowman and Empire avenues were designated as green spaces and set aside for the recreation and enjoyment of residents. In addition, significant portions of property were allocated for public use – such as schools, churches and a hospital. The latter was fronted by a large wedge-shaped lawn called “The Gore,” that can clearly be seen in aerial photographs.

The subdivision was designed to contain two centralized business areas: the main business area to be located along Bowman Avenue, and the secondary business area to be located around a traffic circle.<sup>23</sup> In keeping with Garden City ideals, Hall kept industrial processes at the fringe by planning the town north of the existing Spruce Falls Company location, which was located outside the municipal border. Additional lands were not designated for industrial use within the town, which meant that future industrial operations were to be located south of the subdivision along the railroad.

The creation of Kapuskasing as a municipality, as opposed to a company-controlled town, was a further reflection of Ebenezer Howard's socio-economic goals and Garden City ideals. These encompassed smoke-free cities with tree-lined streets, open squares and beautiful landscapes, peripheral industries and community ownership of all agricultural and urban land.

The influence of the City Beautiful movement on Kapuskasing is most apparent in the street layout.<sup>24</sup> The subdivision plan and general plan apply rectangular, radial and curvilinear street patterns. Many of the major streets are oriented toward public buildings such as the hospital, school and the main business area, which is located at Kapuskasing's central traffic circle. The best examples of Kapuskasing's formal street patterns and vistas are located at the hospital lawn, or "The Gore," and the market area known as "The Circle" where streets radiate outward like spokes from the hub of a wheel. In addition, diagonal streets extended from the town site to provide clear direction for coherent, future growth.

Street widths ranged from 20.12 metres to 30.48 metres<sup>25</sup> (66 feet to 100 feet) for residential and commercial use respectively. These widths would have been considered generous for this time period, prior to the increased demands of vehicular traffic that would become prevalent with the popularity of the automobile during the early 1950s.

### **Evolution of the Kapuskasing plan**

The existing form of Kapuskasing is a result not only of Hall's plan, but also of the subsequent phases of development which did not correspond with his intentions. Hall's street layout was based on the Spruce Falls Company's 1924 plan to build a bridge from the main railroad station to what would become Empire Avenue. This was intended to become the entrance to the town's primary business and market area. Unfortunately, the bridge was never built, which resulted in reduced accessibility to the market area.<sup>26</sup> This meant that "The Circle" would remain as the Town's primary market area.

The Spruce Falls Company successfully undertook a beautification project of Riverside Park in 1927. The firm of Wilson, Bunnell & Borgstrom of Toronto was contracted to produce new park plans and a landscape gardener, Harry Straiton, was subsequently hired to maintain the property.

In 1928 and 1932, large areas of undeveloped land were annexed from the Town by the province of Ontario, reducing the area of the municipality to less than half its original size, largely to reduce the municipality's financial load.<sup>27</sup> In 1947 and 1964, orders from the Ontario Municipal Board stated that some of the land severed from the town in 1928 and 1932 would be reintegrated with the Town of Kapuskasing.<sup>28</sup> By the time these lots were brought back into the town, they had already been developed in a fashion that did not correspond with the street pattern of Hall's 1921 General Plan.

## Conclusion

The original subdivision within the Town of Kapuskasing was significant in the development of town planning in the province of Ontario and Canada. It was the first autonomous and provincially planned resource community in the country.<sup>29</sup> Kapuskasing provided a quality of life for workers that had not previously been available in single-industry Ontario towns. Residents in the planned community had access to housing in neighbourhoods that were located apart from industrial developments. The residential areas included parks and wide, tree-lined streets and generous portions of land were allocated for public and semi-public use. Street layouts were comprised of a variety of rectangular, radial and curvilinear patterns with diagonal streets located at the perimeters of the municipality in order to accommodate, and to provide focal points for, future growth.<sup>30</sup> Premier E.C. Drury's vision and Alfred Hall's plan for the Town of Kapuskasing successfully incorporated the principles and ideals of the Garden City and City Beautiful design movements within the context of a resource-based rural economy, the results of which continue to be appreciated and enjoyed today.

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<sup>1</sup> Saarinen, O.W., "Provincial Land Use Planning Initiatives in the Town of Kapuskasing", *Urban History Review*, Vol. X, No. 1, June 1981, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Paterson, M. (1967), *Carved From a Forest: A History of Kapuskasing*, The Northern Times Ltd., Kapuskasing, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Kapuskasing Golden Jubilee Souvenir Book Committee (1971), *The First Fifty Years, 1921-1971: A Golden Jubilee History of Kapuskasing*, King's Printing & Stationary, Kapuskasing, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> The Ontario Heritage Trust erected a provincial plaque to commemorate the Kapuskasing Internment Camp 1914-1920 on July 2, 1996 at the Ron Morel Memorial Museum in Kapuskasing.

<sup>5</sup> Kapuskasing Golden Jubilee Souvenir Book Committee (1971), *The First Fifty Years, 1921-1971: A Golden Jubilee History of Kapuskasing*, King's Printing & Stationary, Kapuskasing, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Town of Kapuskasing (2002), "Our Town: history", Retrieved from the World Wide Web, March 7, 2007. [www.town.kapusksing.on.ca/history.html]

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> Saarinen, O.W., "Provincial Land Use Planning Initiatives in the Town of Kapuskasing", *Urban History Review*, Vol. X, No. 1, June 1981, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Saarinen, O.W., "Provincial Land Use Planning Initiatives in the Town of Kapuskasing", *Urban History Review*, Vol. X, No. 1, June 1981, pp. 1 and 3.

<sup>11</sup> Crawford, P., "The Forgotten Landscape Architectural Firm of Harries, Hall and Kruse of Toronto and Buffalo", *Environments*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 1999, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Kapuskasing Golden Jubilee Souvenir Book Committee (1971), *The First Fifty Years, 1921-1971: A Golden Jubilee History of Kapuskasing*, King's Printing & Stationary, Kapuskasing, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Howard, E. (2003), *To-morrow: a peaceful path to real reform*, Routledge, London; New York, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Wood, A., “Comm 149 – Ebenezer Howard’s Garden Cities”, Retrieved from the World Wide Web, March 7, 2007. [www.sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/149/149syllabus9howard.html]

<sup>16</sup> Miller, M. (1989), *Letchworth: the first garden city*, Phillimore, Chichester, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> Wilson, W.H. (1989), *The City Beautiful Movement*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 79.

<sup>19</sup> Peterson, J.A. (2003), *The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840-1917*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, p. 77.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 94.

<sup>21</sup> Saarinen, O.W., “Provincial Land Use Planning Initiatives in the Town of Kapuskasing”, *Urban History Review*, Vol. X, No. 1, June 1981, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> Sewell, J. (1993), *The Shape of the City*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Saarinen, O.W., “Provincial Land Use Planning Initiatives in the Town of Kapuskasing”, *Urban History Review*, Vol. X, No. 1, June 1981, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Saarinen, O.W., “Provincial Land Use Planning Initiatives in the Town of Kapuskasing”, *Urban History Review*, Vol. X, No. 1, June 1981, p. 9: Lots 18 to 19 of Concessions 12-15, including the settlements of Brunetville and Val Albert.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Saarinen, O.W., “Provincial Land Use Planning Initiatives in the Town of Kapuskasing”, *Urban History Review*, Vol. X, No. 1, June 1981, p. 7.