



ISLAND PARK TOWERS

The Story of Our Home

By Jill Morningstar

Photo: [Source \[1\]](#)

Preface

Each individual apartment says something about its residents: our tastes, our interests, our attachments, and our pasts.

Our collective address – Island Park Towers – has its own story.

This narrative is a combination of historical facts along with personal anecdotes and memories. We recognize that we may be limited in proving the veracity of each individual recollection. To the best of our abilities, the factual information has been verified using archival documents with assistance from local historians.

For those among us who might appreciate our shared history, we hope this will benefit and enlighten as we share the story of our home.



Figure 1

What was here in 1933? Nothing!



Figure 2

Scott Street is at the bottom of the photo, The bridge to Riopelle, Cunningham, and Bate Islands at the top.

[Source \[2\]](#): Kitchissippi.com Champlain Bridge History

The Apartment Boom:

In 1950, there were 282,000 people who called Ottawa home.

Following the second World War, there was a housing shortage in Ottawa that coincided with the start of the Baby Boom era. Not only did the city see record births, apartment developments were drastically on the rise. In the ten years after the war, there was a 74.9 percent increase in the number of apartment buildings in Ottawa. Most of these buildings consisted of six units within three storeys. By 1955, there were almost twelve hundred small apartment buildings in Ottawa. With federal employees and students living downtown, it comes as no surprise that twenty-five percent of those apartments were in Sandy Hill, just east of the downtown core.

Kenneth Greene was one of the developers involved in the apartment boom. Mr. Greene initially partnered with William H. Scrivens, an insurance broker. Scrivens & Green, as they were known, began to purchase properties throughout the city in the 1940s. With Mr. Scrivens acting as the real estate broker and Mr. Greene as the general contractor, the two built Shaffesbury Apartments on Friel Street, with the first tenants arriving in 1950.

The earliest public record of an apartment developed solely by Mr. Greene is a five-story building in New Edinburgh. Edgewater Apartments, located at 60 Stanley Avenue, was erected in 1951.

In 1951, Mr. Greene proposed a grander development. He intended to develop a group of six-unit apartments on Clearview Avenue. These plans would undergo many alterations before construction began. In the meantime, Mr. Greene set out to erect a high-rise building with both offices and residences at 235 Somerset Street West. Kenson Towers, with Mr. Greene at the forefront, would challenge the city's maximum height allowance.



Figure 3

An aerial view of Riverview Terrace Apartments

Source [3]: www.Historynerd.ca

Maximum Height for City Buildings:

A city by-law limited the height of all buildings in Ottawa. It stated that no edifice could be taller than 110 feet – the height of the clock's face on the Peace Tower. Mr. Greene's plans for Kenson Towers exceeded the limits of the by-law. Following negotiations with outgoing mayor, George Nelms, Mr. Greene agreed to keep Kenson Towers within the current maximums. Those negotiations, however, would prompt the city to review the current by-law. Consultants were brought to Ottawa from Philadelphia and Great Britain. Sir Robert Hogg Matthew, a renowned architect from Scotland, was instrumental in the reconstruction of London, England, after the second World War. Following his recommendation, Ottawa's new height maximum was increased to 150 feet. That by-law would eventually fall by the wayside.

Riverview Terrace Apartments:

In 1951, Mr. Greene proposed that he develop twenty-six cinder block apartments on Clearview Avenue. The Riverview Terrace Apartments, each with a brick veneer exterior, would host six apartments per building. Originally, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) agreed to loan Mr. Greene the money for this development. Shortly after this arrangement was made, the CMHC reversed its decision. A new policy at this crown corporation specified that their loans would apply to single-family homes and not rental apartments.

In November 1951, the city agreed to a revised plan for twenty-three apartment buildings, not the original twenty-six. A group of Island Park homeowners objected. They appealed to the city, asking that only single-family homes be built in their neighbourhood. In December, the city was swayed by an editorial in the *Ottawa Journal*. The Editorial Board advocated for the development, suggesting it would offer much needed housing for federal employees at the new Dominion Bureau of Statistics – now Stats Canada - in Tunney's Pasture. The board also argued that the apartments would be set back far enough that the aesthetic appeal of the Island Park residences would not be inhibited. With the city's approval, Mr. Green was able to finance the construction through a new rental insurance program with the CMHC. Construction would be completed by June 1953 with rents ranging from \$74 to \$104.50.

Island Park Towers:

The owners of Island Park homes were unhappy with low-level apartments in their neighbourhood. Imagine their offense, a decade later, when Ken Greene presented a proposal to the City of Ottawa for four high-rise apartment buildings to be built at the corner of Ellendale and Clearview. The plan included the demolition of the twenty-three six-unit buildings, known as Riverview Terrace Apartments, even though they were barely ten years old. Two phases of construction were proposed. Phase One would see the construction of Tower I (185 Clearview) and Tower II (195 Clearview). Towers III (200 Clearview) and IV would be included in Phase Two. The initial designs included a water fountain in front of Tower II.

Construction would begin in 1966 with an estimated completion time of eighteen to twenty-four months. The cost of Towers I and II was approximately fourteen million dollars. If everything went according to plan, the first tenants would move in during the last half of 1968.

Mr. Greene wanted his towers to attract those who would pay a little more for a luxurious home. In 1968, monthly rent for one-bedroom apartments ranged from \$55 to \$65. Advertisements for the new Island Park Towers boasted "gracious landscaping", décor in the "latest style and luxury". As such, rent for a one-bedroom unit would start at \$75, in keeping with the "gracious living" that these luxurious apartments would offer.

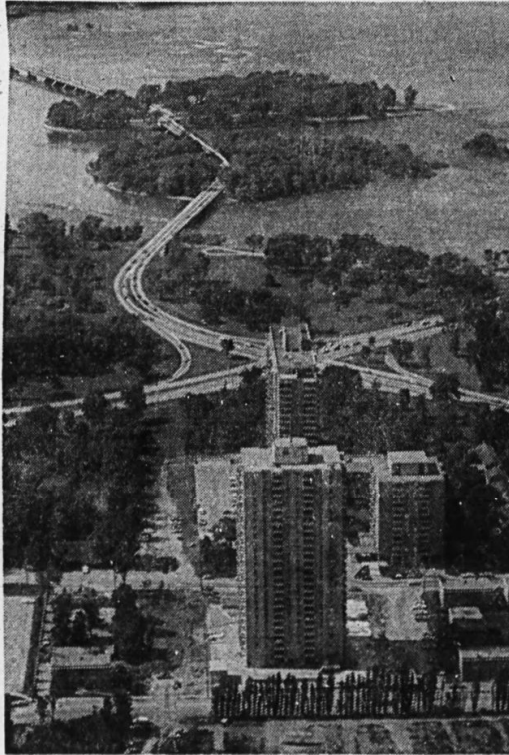


Figure 4

Source [4]: The font and crest are used throughout the buildings.

ANNOUNCING...

Island Park Towers



200 CLEARVIEW AVENUE
West Off-Island Park Drive

An Invitation to gracious living ...

now open with model suites for your inspection, daily until 9 p.m.

ISLAND PARK TOWERS, with 26 storeys of ultra modern building, providing a beautiful view of the Ottawa River Valley and the Gatineau Hills beyond. Located adjacent to miles of NCC Parklands and beaches leading to Downtown and the Parliament Buildings only 10 minutes away. Large suites combine the best of design and convenience, including such features as luxuriously equipped kitchens with eating areas, separate dining rooms, extra bathrooms, vanities and ample storage space. Truly finely appointed for your continued pride and enjoyment. With on-site management. And fully air-conditioned throughout.

For detailed information, application form, etc., please write or telephone to:

ISLAND PARK TOWERS,
200 CLEARVIEW AVE.,
OTTAWA, ONTARIO
K1Z 6S4

Telephone 729-4347
729-4348



ISLAND PARK TOWERS,
SUITE 100, KENSON BUILDING,
225 METCALFE ST., OTTAWA, ONT.
K2P 1P9

Telephone 232-4404

Figure 5

Source [5]: An early advertisement for Island Park Towers

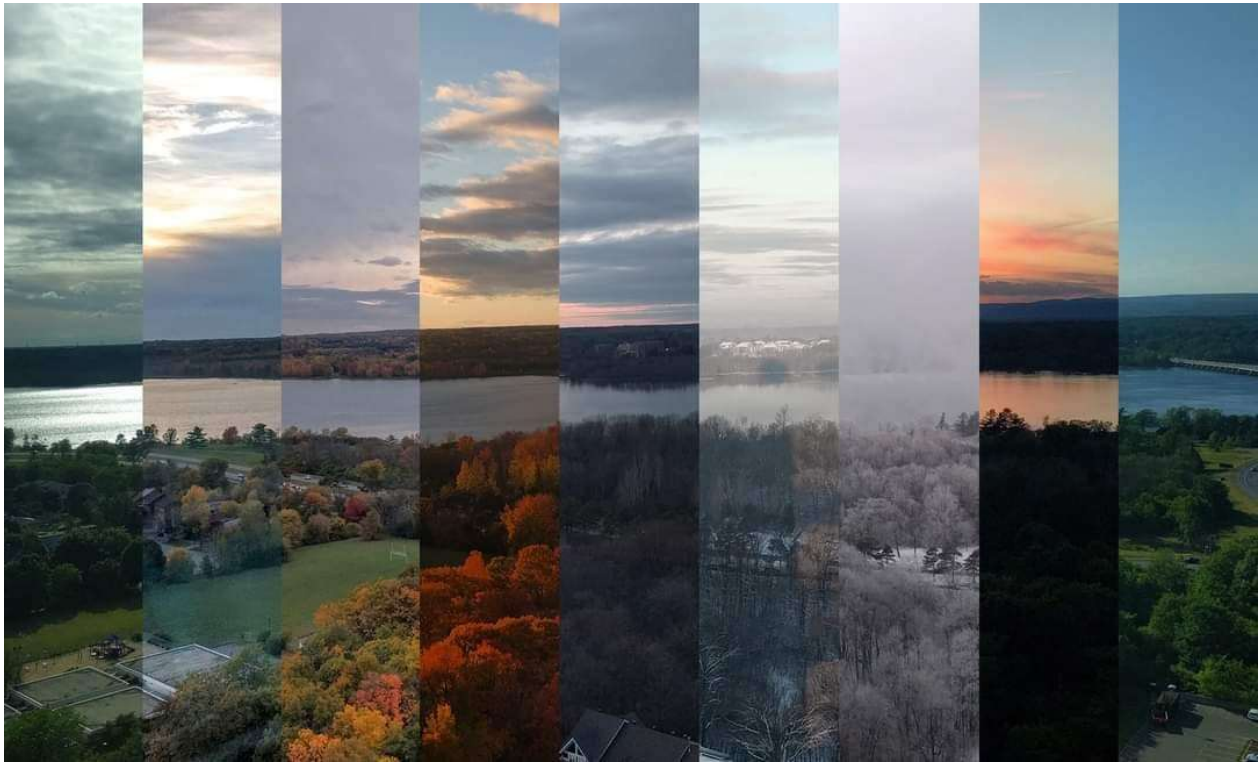


Figure 6

While the apartments represent good value in an excellent location, it is the views, in every season, that Island Park Towers is best known for.

Crang and Boake International were hired as architects. The esteemed architectural firm had previously designed the Air Canada Pavilion at Expo '67 in Montreal. V.K. Mason was employed as general contractor. V.K. Mason built the main section of the new National Arts Centre. While construction was taking place, the offices for Island Park Towers were housed within Kenson Towers at 235 Somerset Street West.

While the development was named Island Park Towers, the business that owned them under Mr. Greene continued to be Riverside Terraces Inc.

1968:

Canadians had celebrated our centennial as a nation the year before. We did not have our own constitution and would not have one until 1982. Lester B. Pearson was our Prime Minister, John Robarts was our Premier and Donald Bartlett Reid was our city's mayor. Westboro was part of Queensboro Ward, as of 1956 and our ward's councillor was Harold Waddell. Kitchissippi Ward would not be formed until 1994.

The median income for a single person was \$15,776. In 2022 dollars, that translates to \$128,992. The median income for a working couple was \$36,823 or \$301,082 in current dollars. As the year ended and the first residents of Island Park Towers were settling in, the population of Ottawa-Gatineau had soared to 537,000.

Our Neck of the Woods:

CBC Television established its Ottawa television studios at 250 Lanark Drive. The Graham Spry building was named after an early television pioneer in Canada. CBC moved to its current location on Sparks Street in 2004, making way for its current occupant: Health Canada.

Westboro and its surrounding environs was served by Loeb grocery store (now Metro) at the corner of Wellington Street West and Carleton Avenue. A printing factory existed where the Real Canadian Superstore now resides.

Early residents - Lena:

Lena* moved from her home country to Switzerland in her youth. Lena had a friend who had moved to Canada and who had procured employment with the federal government. Lena's friend advised her of a government job opportunity. She applied and was offered the job. Her friend told her about new apartment buildings close to downtown. Lena's friend facilitated rental of a one-bedroom home in the newly built Island Park Towers. She left her home and moved to Ottawa to start a new life in Canada.

Lena arrived in Ottawa on December 1, 1968 and moved into her one-bedroom, where she still resides today. She entered Canada with few possessions and no furniture. Her apartment came with a red telephone.

When she moved into her new home, contractors were still installing carpets in the hallways and putting finishing touches in common areas. There were ornate chandeliers in the lobby and entryway. Her initial monthly rent was \$78. That translates to \$638 in 2022 dollars.

The original tenants in Tower I and Tower II were asked if they would be willing to pay an additional five dollars each month for an outdoor pool. The majority of the residents voted 'no', citing their already expensive rents. No dogs were allowed, but cats were.

Lena fondly recalls the frequency and timely service of bus 2A, when the bus came every two minutes. That level of service disappeared with the introduction of the Transitway. Lena remembers a mama bear and her cubs who lived in the woods where Westboro Station now exists. As construction of the Transitway progressed, the bear family was sedated and air-lifted to a new home.

**Lena is not her real name. She generously provided these recollections on the condition that her privacy be respected, and her name changed.*

Early residents – Britt:

Britt moved from Sweden to Atlanta, Georgia, where she worked as a technologist in a medical laboratory. While there, she met a Carleton University professor who was working in Atlanta. When they decided to get married, he called a graduate student at Carleton and asked him to find Britt a place to live in Ottawa. She moved into an apartment in the 195 building. She believes that tenants were already living in the 185 building before people began to move into the 195 building.

While Britt was unable to work in Canada, she had coffee every day with Ken Greene, in his new office in the 195 building. Her offer to tend to the flower beds around the building was gladly accepted. Britt eventually worked in a biochemistry lab at the University of Ottawa.

Britt asked Mr. Greene to install a sauna and showers in the 195 building. He agreed to the idea and they were installed. These facilities were scheduled to be closed, on a temporary basis, during repairs to the underground parking garage in 2003. When the repairs were completed, the sauna did not reopen.

Britt's first husband died in 1991. She wed again, in 1997. Gunnar, her second husband, was her high school sweetheart back in Sweden.

Early Residents - Sue:

Sue and her husband, Bruce, lived in the 185 building from 1970 to 1973. When they moved into the 185 building, there was a waiting list of one to two years as these were advertised as the finest apartments in Ottawa. They have lived at 195 Clearview since 1999. Sue recalls that there were door men/security guards in each building until the early 2000s.

Early Residents - Barbara:

Barbara has lived in all three buildings. In 1972, she moved into 195 Clearview. In 1978, she moved into the 200 building. Her 1978 lease was signed by Charles Hastings on behalf of Riverside Terrace Apartments. When she moved into 185 Clearview Avenue in 1997, Sun Life was the owner of Island Park Towers. Unfortunately, our research has not been able to establish the exact date when ownership of Island Park Towers was transferred from Riverside Terrace Apartments (Ken Greene) to Sun Life.

Early Residents – John and Elaine:

Elaine and John married in 1981 and moved to 195 Clearview shortly after. They heard about Island Park Towers from a friend, Ed, who boasted about the cleanliness and maintenance of the complex. Like other residents we interviewed for this story, John recalled the dedication of Charles Hastings and his ability to recognize every face and recall every name. John referred to Mr. Hastings as "the glue that bound the community together." They were delighted with the upkeep of the buildings, inside and out. John also recalled the convenience store in the 195 building.

200 Clearview – Tower III:

Tower III was completed in 1971. The land on which it was built was purchased from Mr. Mahoney, owner and operator of Independent Coal & Lumber. When the first residents moved in, Pierre Trudeau was our Prime Minister. Kenneth H. Fogarty was mayor of Ottawa.

Ken Greene and his wife lived at 200 Clearview Avenue until their deaths in 2012.



Ken Greene's love of high buildings was ahead of its time.

In 2021, IPT III, at 91m was still the 14th highest building in Ottawa, But after 50 years as one of the top 20 skyscrapers in Ottawa, new constructions will likely end that record in 2022.

Figure 7

Sun Life:

When news was shared that Mr. Greene was selling Island Park Towers, residents expressed concern about a new owner, as they were accustomed to the luxurious living and meticulous upkeep that Island Park Towers offered. They were assured that Mr. Greene would only sell the properties to a company that would maintain the same dedication to luxury and fine living that Mr. Greene had promised from the outset. Everyone was relieved to discover that Sun Life kept their promises to Mr. Greene. Each common area, including laundry rooms, was cleaned on a daily basis. Lobbies, windows, laundry rooms and hallways were always spotless. When repairs were necessary, Sun Life invested in quality products. With pride of ownership, Sun Life replaced all of the exterior door handles with a stylized letter S (for Sun Life).

Records could not be obtained to confirm the date on which Riverside Terraces Inc. was purchased by Sun Life.

Tower IV:

In December 2001, city council debated the proposed ten-storey building that would be built between 200 Clearview and the Jules Leger Centre. Construction would require rezoning of the hydro corridor between 200 Clearview and the Jules Leger Centre. Agreements between the three involved parties (the city, Island Park Towers, and Ottawa Hydro), could not be made.



After Homestead purchased IPT, they drew up new plans for the property, which will become 210 Clearview. In 2022 they started the rezoning process to build a taller building with amenities open to all residents of the four IPT buildings.

Ottawa planning application, meeting notes and zoning: [Source \[6\]](#), [Source \[7\]](#)

Figure 8

Rent Control:

Rent control restricts a building owner or manager from exceeding the maximum increase in a tenant's rent. Rent control became a major issue in the 1975 provincial election. Before that time, landlords often took advantage of tenants, offering them a reasonable rent when they moved in and then raising it exorbitantly within a few months. Mr. Greene and, subsequently, Sun Life, were fair with their residents. What did change, with the onset of rent control in 1975, was the complex's attitude towards pets. From 1975 on, dogs were allowed.

Until April 2017, rent control only applied to buildings that were constructed before November 1, 1991. After that, it applied to all apartment buildings. Under the Ontario government of Premier Ford, the law was amended so that rent control does not apply to new buildings or new additions to existing buildings.

Charles Hastings:

Every person who resided at Island Park Towers, between 1970 and 1992, has fond memories of Mr. Charles Hastings. He was born in Guyana. Before he worked as a security guard with Barnes Security, he sold encyclopedias.

In 1970, through his employment with Barnes Security, he worked as the night-time security guard for Towers I and II. Mr. Greene saw Mr. Hastings' dedication to the tenants. He knew each person's name and apartment number. He greeted every person with a smile. Seeing these attributes, Mr. Greene hired Mr. Hastings to do building maintenance. His office was in the 195 building, until Tower III was erected.

When approval was granted to build Tower III at 200 Clearview Avenue, Mr. Hastings was promoted to the position of construction manager. When Tower III was completed, Mr. and Mrs. Hastings moved into apartment 832 at 200 Clearview and lived there until 2012. With construction completed on Tower III, Mr. Hastings was promoted, once again, to Residence Manager.

Tenants adored him. With three large buildings and over six hundred apartments, Mr. Hastings knew every resident by name. No matter what the question posed to him, or issue raised, he attended to each person's needs promptly and with a joyful attitude of service.

When he retired in 1992, a retirement party was thrown in his honour at Champlain High School. Many people attended. In 2012, Ken Greene and his wife died within months of each other. Mr. Hastings and his wife moved into the Greene's apartment.

Transitway:

The Transitway opened in 1983 with five stations. It initially ran from Lincoln Fields to Baseline and from Hurdman to Lees. Shortly after, the Transitway continued to Westboro and through Mechanicsville. With the opening of Westboro Station, bus 2A ran less frequently. As Westboro's population rapidly grew, service into Westboro neighbourhoods (including Island Park Towers) decreased with more offerings eliminated as years passed.

IPT Investments Inc.:

Island Park Towers was purchased from Sun Life in 1991. When Mr. Hastings retired and IPT Investments Inc. assumed ownership, the management offices were moved to 185 Clearview Avenue.



Figure 9

Sale to Homestead Land Holdings:



Figure 10

Acmon Inc, a Montreal real estate group and the most recent parent company of IPT Investments Inc, announced its intention to sell Island Park Towers in May 2021. This announcement generated considerable interest. Homestead Land Holdings acquired the property for 267 million dollars. This transaction is believed to be the largest real estate purchase in Ottawa history.

Homestead was founded in 1956. Its head office is located in Kingston, Ontario. Homestead manages apartments in twenty-one cities throughout Ontario.

Ownership and management of Island Park Towers went into effect on August 25th. Immediate changes were noted by residents that included:

- Friendly and professional office staff
- New signage and landscaping
- Clear communication on improvements

The Homestead team announced plans to renovate vacant units, updating them with new wall and floor tiles in bathrooms and kitchens and stainless-steel appliances. There were also plans to modernize common areas, including lobbies in all three buildings. Additional plans include creating a Fitness Room, Social Room, BBQ area, and Library.

Notable Tenants through the Years:

The early prestige of the Island Park Towers brought some notable tenants in the 1970s and '80s. Among them:

- Don Morrow: MPP for Ottawa West and Speaker of the House for the Ontario Parliament
- John Crosbie, former MP from Newfoundland and Labrador, and Finance Minister under Prime Minister Joe Clark
- James J. Macdonnell, former Auditor General for Canada from 1973 to 1980
- Frederick (Fred) Jordan, second in command for the Department of Justice. After retiring, Fred spent his afternoons in the lobby of 195 Clearview, greeting tenants and petting dogs. Fred died in December 2018 and is still missed today.

More than a place to hang our hats:

In the late 1960s, and well into the 70s and 80s, Island Park Towers attracted people who were willing to pay more than the average rent to experience a higher standard of living with security guards, luxurious amenities including crystal chandeliers, high quality appliances and fixtures, and spotless common areas. The reason many people have stayed is because of the sense of community that Island Park Towers offers.



Figure 11

This sense of community came across in Lynn's interview. Lynn has lived in the same apartment for more than twenty-five years. All of Lynn's recollections were about people, specifically different neighbours on her floor.

Her favourite neighbour was a retired tailor whom she referred to as Bird Man. No matter the weather, Bird Man brought food for birds and squirrels to an area behind the Graham Spry building. He never missed a day. After he died, his wife moved to Italy. Before she did, she scattered his ashes in the sanctuary he created for his beloved wildlife. When she returns

each year, she lays a dozen roses in the spot that meant so much to her husband.

Lynn represents all of us who long for connection and community and who have found those treasures here. There are those among us who have stayed a short while and others who have lived her for decades. For those that remain, it's that sense of community – knowing your neighbours by name, creating friendships, the chance to catch up in the laundry room and elevator – that make this place a home to cherish.

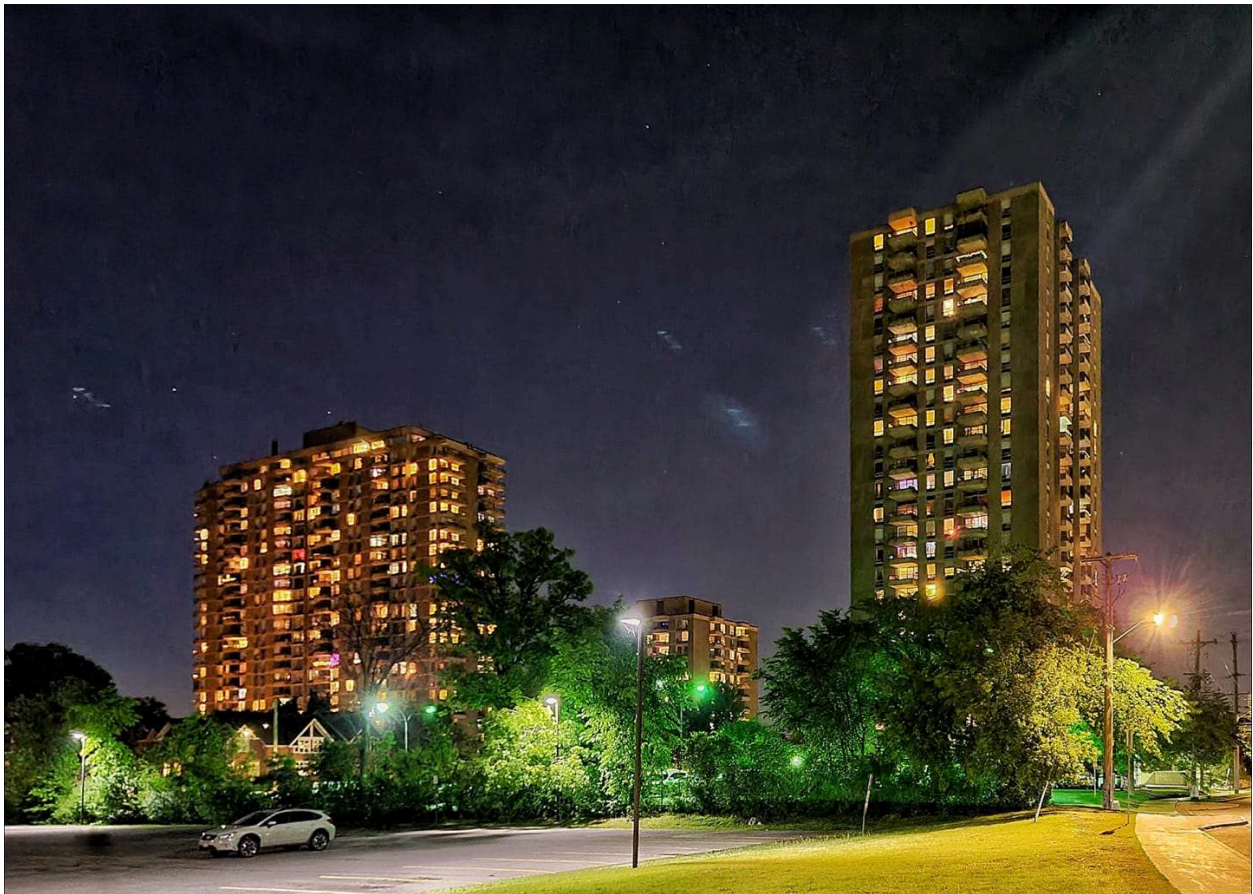


Figure 12

Acknowledgements

Our stories were woven together with the dedicated work of the following people and resources.

Current and past residents whom we interviewed:

- Barbara
- Britt & Gunnar
- Charles Hastings
- John & Elaine
- Julia
- Lena* (a pseudonym given, at her request, to one of the first residents of Island Park Towers)
- Lynn
- Sue

Our interviewers:

- Ed
- Jill
- Joan
- Julia
- Lisa

Our researchers:

- Ed
- Jill
- Kathryn

Local historians:

- Bruce Chapman
- Christopher Ryan
- Dave Allston
- Jeff Leiper

Our lead writer:

- Jill, with editorial assistance from Ed

Our source material:

- *Bytown* (2020 December 9). In Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bytown>
- *Champlain Bridge, Ottawa* (2020 November 4). In Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Champlain_Bridge,_Ottawa
- Davidson, Michael. *A History of Westboro*. Published by Michael Davidson. Ottawa, Ontario: 1998.
- *The Edgewater Apartments* (2018 August 12). In historynerd.ca: <https://www.historynerd.ca/?s=Ken+Greene>
- *Greber Plan* (2020 October 22). In Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greber_Plan
- *Island Park Drive* (2020 July 21). In Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Island_Park_Drive
- *James Skead* (2020 May 13). In Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Skead
- *Kenson Towers Tests the Height Limit* (2014 April 2014). In Urbansite: <http://urbsite.blogspot.com/2014/04/how-kenson-towers-almost-broke-limit.html>
- *Maplelawn* (2019 April 17). In Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maplelawn>
- *The Ottawa Journal* (1968 December 20). In newspapers.com: <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/44423361/>
- *Ottawa's Apartments, 1955* (2016 June 21). In historynerd.ca
- Sali, David. *Is this quarter-billion deal the priciest residential real estate deal in Ottawa history?* in the Ottawa Business Journal. Great River Media Inc. <http://obj.ca/article/real-estate/residential/quarter-billion-deal-priciest-residential-real-estate-deal-ottawa>
- *Westboro, Ottawa* (2020 December 15). In Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westboro,_Ottawa

Photo Acknowledgements and Illustration Sources:

Cover Page		IPT Investments Website (Archived): [1] http://www.cogeim.ca/en/apartment-for-rent-island-park-towers/6-island-park-towers.html
Page 2	Figure 1	Photo Credit: Harley Davis Instagram: @d.harleydavis
Page 3	Figure 2	[2] https://kitchissippi.com/2014/07/11/champlain-bridge-history/
Page 4	Figure 3	[3] https://www.historynerd.ca/2016/06/21/ottawas-apartments-1955/
Page 6	Figure 4	[4] https://www.rentcanada.com/companies/ipt-investment-inc
Page 7	Figure 5	[5] https://www.historynerd.ca/2016/06/21/ottawas-apartments-1955/
Page 8	Figure 6	Photo Credit: Laila Goubran, resident from 2016 - 2022
Page 12	Figure 7	Photo Credit: Kathryn Holman
Page 13	Figure 8	City of Ottawa planning documents [6] https://app06.ottawa.ca/calendar/ottawa/citycouncil/occ/2001/12-12/pdc/ACS2001-DEV-APR-0271.htm [7] https://devapps.ottawa.ca/en/applications/D01-01-22-0012/details
Page 15	Figure 9	Photo Credit: Steve Caswell
	Figure 10	Photo Credit: Kathryn Holman
Page 16	Figure 11	Photo Credit: Kathryn Holman
Page 17	Figure 12	Photo Credit: Ehsan Alirezaee