

**MA MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER**

Leslieville: A Neighbourhood in Transition, A Community Divided  
*Understanding the Changing Politics of Space in a Toronto Neighbourhood*

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**Abstract:**

This paper aims to tell the story of Leslieville, a small neighbourhood in Toronto's east end, from its early settlement in the 1850s to the present. Looking back at the area's progression from farming village, to working-class industrial centre, to gentrifying creative hub, provides the historical context for a further consideration of the current challenges and conflicts that are impacting the community today. In 2008 a land dispute over a proposed big-box style retail development divided the community and instigated a yearlong battle at the Ontario Municipal Board between Toronto city council and private developers. In tracing the historical growth of Leslieville and analyzing the current development issues, this study examines how urban development and cultural policy have influenced the transformation of this unique Toronto neighbourhood. An application of the theoretical literature on gentrification and photographs are provided in order to supplement the analysis. By identifying Leslieville as a neighbourhood in transition and examining it as a case study in the process and impact of gentrification and neighbourhood change this research contributes to a further understanding of the nature of urban space and how it should be developed to serve the interests of Toronto's diverse population.

## **Introduction**

Since its early nineteenth century beginnings Leslieville has gone through a series of dramatic transformations. This urban space has been continuously redefined by development policies and changing economic and social characteristics. The first chapter of this research paper provides a historical overview of Leslieville, from early settlement in the 1850s up to the 1970s, in order to contextualize the current development challenges faced by those living and working in the neighbourhood today. Founded as a rural community outside of the old city of Toronto the village came into its own as gardeners, farmers and brick makers settled the area east of the Don River. After Leslieville was incorporated into the neighbouring city of Toronto in 1884 the small suburb transformed into an urban industrial centre, characterized by its working class community and environmental problems. In chapter two the paper explores how gentrifying forces have begun to redefine the area since the 1970s. A period of deindustrialization and changing demographics have transformed the neighbourhood into a creative hub, attracting middle class homebuyers and triggering a revival of the Queen Street East retail strip.

Recently, the now urban community was confronted with new development plans for the former site of the Toronto Film Studios. Chapter three provides a description of the proposed development and the current zoning restrictions on the land. SmartCentres, a private development company, bought the 18.5-acre site on Eastern Avenue with the intention of constructing a big-box style retail centre entitled 'The Foundry District.' Toronto city council opposed the development on the grounds that the site had been zoned as restricted industrial and that the land should be reserved for industrial employment. Consequently, the developers took their case to the Ontario Municipal Board.

Chapter four explores the various competing interests involved in the dispute over the Foundry District. The developers, city council, and members of the Leslieville community offered a variety of different reasons as to why the complex should, or should not be permitted. Some members of the community joined the city in their fight at the Board, organizing the East Toronto Community Coalition, in order to rally the community against the development. Other residents expressed their support for the creation of inexpensive retail alternatives in Leslieville, a gentrifying neighbourhood that is increasingly catering to a more affluent demographic and displacing the lower income residents in the process.

The proposal for the complex instigated a yearlong battle at the Ontario Municipal Board between Toronto city council and the developers. Chapter five provides a detailed look at how the hearings progressed and explains the ultimate ruling made by the Board. After hearing testimony from both sides of the debate and from members of the Leslieville community the Board sided with the city and halted the development plans. While the city claimed victory, a recent announcement from SmartCentres revealed that the developers plan to appeal the decision, suggesting that the dispute might not yet be over.

Throughout the paper Leslieville is treated as a neighbourhood in transition and a case study in gentrification and urban change. In the sixth and final chapter the consequences of the land dispute are discussed and considerations are made as to how the city of Toronto might proceed with future development in the area. Leslieville is currently a mixed-use neighbourhood where industry, residential and commercial development are situated in close proximity. This research paper aims to explore how neighbourhood transformation and current urban development trends might impact communities across the city of Toronto.

## **Chapter One**

### *Leslieville's Historic Beginnings and Subsequent Growth*

*1850 - 1970*

Leslieville, like many of Toronto's unique neighbourhoods, was initially founded as a small rural village located on the outskirts of the old city. During the early years of the nineteenth century the area east of the Don River was covered in marshlands. These swampy flatlands were slow to develop despite their close proximity to the burgeoning city to the west (Fletcher 100). It was the rich potential of the soil that drew the earliest settlers to the area, first attracting farmers and later on providing valuable resources for a booming brick making industry. The village grew up around these early settlers and the first prominent business in the district, Leslie and Sons Nurseries, which was founded by George Leslie for whom the neighbourhood is named. It was Leslie's initial investment that encouraged residential and later industrial growth in the area. The following chapter will consider the social and economic changes that occurred in Leslieville throughout two periods of development: Early settlement, from the early 1800s toward the turn of the century, and Annexation and beyond, from 1884 to the 1970s.

## **Early Settlement**

### *Historic Families: The Ashbridges and the Leslies.*

The Leslie and Ashbridge families are considered to be among the original settlers in Leslieville. The Ashbridges, a Quaker family, arrived in the area just before the turn of the nineteenth century in 1793 (Discover Toronto's Historic Leslieville). Arriving from Pennsylvania as United Empire Loyalists they were given grant land that reached approximately six hundred acres north of what is now Ashbridges Bay (Discover Toronto's Historic Leslieville). At this time the Bay extended four kilometers from Woodbine Avenue to Cherry Street and as far north as Eastern Avenue at some points. The vast marshlands were claimed by

lake filling for industrial expansion in the early 1900s. The Ashbridge family cleared their new land that extended from the original shoreline, now Lake Shore Boulevard, up to Danforth Avenue and established a profitable farming business. Their home was situated on what is now the northwest corner of Woodfield Road and Queen Street East and is considered to be the earliest known site of residential



**Atlas of the City of Toronto and Suburbs 1884**

Charles Goad

Source: Toronto Reference Library Atlas Collection

habitation in east Toronto (Leslieville Then and Now). To this day, the Ontario Heritage Trust has preserved their 1854 house and two acres of their original homestead.

While the members of the Ashbridge family are thought to be the earliest settlers in the area it was not until the arrival of the Leslie family that the village truly began to emerge. George Leslie, born in Scotland in 1804, immigrated to Canada with his family in 1824 (Wise and Gould 172). Leslie initially found work as a landscape gardener in the old city of Toronto. As he grew more successful in his skills he moved east across the Don River along the Queen Street Bridge, one of the few crossings in place at the time. Once settled in the east end Leslie took up a twenty-acre site of grant land near the intersection of what is now Queen Street East and Pape Avenue. The spacious fields and rich soil east of the Don provided an idyllic site for farming and in 1849 Leslie established Leslie and Sons nurseries (Leslieville Then and Now). The business supplied the local area and the neighbouring city of Toronto with fresh produce, plants and flowers. Leslie quickly divided a portion of his land and sold these plots to early settlers in the

area, forming the beginnings of the village (Leslieville of Yesteryear). In 1852 Leslieville became an official address with George Leslie serving as postmaster in the village's first post office on the corner of today's Queen Street East and Curzon Street (Brown 96). Ten years later Leslie was elected to the Toronto city council and retired from the laborious work of the nurseries, leaving the business and his position at the post office to his son George Junior (Wise and Gould 173).

### ***The Brick Making Industry***

In *Toronto's Lost Villages* author Ron Brown investigates the rich heritage of many of the early villages across Toronto, including Leslieville. He explains that the land east of the Don River not only provided excellent soil for farming but also "contained a thick layer of fine clays that lay beneath the top soil" (Brown 97). The rich soil provided the emerging neighbourhood with an important natural resource. The land use potential lured the brick making industry to the area during the second half of the nineteenth century. One of the first brick makers in Leslieville was James Russell who opened his operation in 1857, followed by David Wagstaff who began in 1863 (Brown 97). By 1870 business directories for the area listed nine such yards, some of which grew to be among Canada's largest operations (Brown 97). The Leslieville brickyards supplied the bricks and building materials that were needed to construct commercial and residential buildings in the emerging village and in the larger city to the west. The importance of this early brickwork is a prominent feature in present day architecture. The original bricks supplied by Leslieville can still be seen in the beautiful Victorian housing across the city of Toronto.

## ***Housing***

*The Toronto City Directory 1873* identified Leslieville as a major suburb of Toronto, describing it as “a thriving village, suburban in character with a population of approximately four hundred people” (274). Most of the early residents of the village established their homes close to their employment, chiefly in the brickyards and the nurseries. In *Your Guide to Toronto Neighbourhoods* author David Dunkelman



**House on Logan Avenue 1897**

Source: Toronto Reference Library Canadian Historical Picture Collection

describes the unique architectural characteristics of the housing in the area:

Leslieville’s older houses along Queen Street and south of Eastern Avenue were built in the late 1800s. They include Ontario Cottages, Second Empire row houses and Victorian Houses. Leslieville’s second generation of houses, north of Queen Street, were built in the early 1900’s. This district includes modest detached and semi-detached houses as well as a large number of bungalows that are among the tiniest houses in Toronto (105)

These early homes were built of brick, brick veneer, frame and tarpaper and residents heated their homes with wood and coal (Leslieville of Yesteryear).

## ***Commercial Development***

Kingston Road, before it was renamed Queen Street East after annexation in 1884, was the primary location for commercial development during these early years in the village. Businesses opened along the strip, which ran east to west, in order to serve the increasing

number of workers and families populating the area. In addition to the farmers, nurserymen and brick makers working in the village *The Toronto City Directory 1873* also listed numerous blacksmiths and laborers as well as a pastor and carpenter (274-275). A number of Leslieville's residents also found work as grocers and butchers. These early businesses were supplied with fresh produce from local farms and meat from a piggery located on Leslie Street and a slaughterhouse on Curzon Street (Brown 96). A public house by the name of Uncle Tom's Cabin stood at the corner of Kingston Road and Curzon Street. The hotel was kept by two Englishmen, George Smith and William Cook, and was the centre of social life in the village (Guillet 320). Many of the local businesses, especially the nurseries and brickyards, were inactive during the winter. During these cold months Uncle Tom's became the meeting place of choice for cards, dominoes and drinking amongst the neighbourhood's residents and workers (Guillet 320). The original building has since been replaced by a more substantial brick Morin house and renamed The Duke of York Hotel (Brown 96). The local landmark remains open today but the building has become significantly run down and the bar has earned a reputation as one of the neighbourhood's seedier businesses. During this time period a stagecoach traveled twice a day along Queen Street East between Leslieville and the old city of Toronto, a distance of approximately two miles, to deliver mail to the residents of the suburban village (Fletcher 28). Residents also utilized the stagecoach as a method of transportation to Toronto for day trips and shopping excursions.

### ***Churches and Burial Grounds***

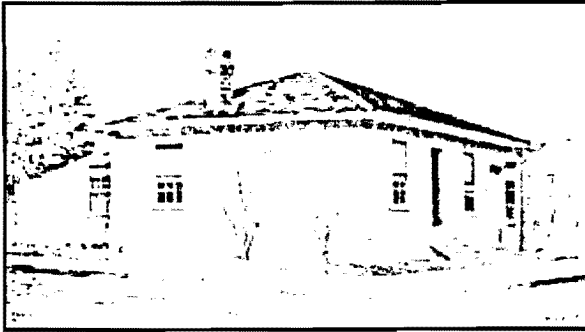
A number of churches were built in Leslieville during the 1880s to serve the growing population. The Leslieville Church, now Queen Street East Presbyterian, was the first

Presbyterian place of worship east of the Don. The church had a small congregation of twenty-five members including George Leslie and his family (Robertson). In 1849 two prominent Jewish businessmen established Holy Blossom Cemetery on Pape Avenue (Laidlaw L1). At the time the cemetery sat amidst prime farmland on the outskirts of Leslieville and was accessible only by a dirt path that led from Kingston Road (Kezwer). The founding of this first cemetery was significant for the Jewish community in Toronto. In a recent article for the Toronto Star author Stuart Laidlaw explained the importance of this early burial ground:

Until immigrants Judah Joseph and Abraham Nordheimer put down their £20 for the land on what is now Pape (just south of Gerrard), few Jews who came to Toronto seemed to stay long...the pattern for immigrants then was to make some money and be on their way, and Jews were no exception. But by buying this land, Joseph, a jeweler, and Nordheimer, a piano maker, effectively declared that they had found a home (Laidlaw L1).

This small cemetery was one of the first physical signs of a Jewish community, not only in the east end but also in the neighbouring old city of Toronto. The first Jewish families in the city were buried at this important site and the headstones reveal that the early immigrants were predominantly from villages in England. Newer stones show birthplaces around Germany and Eastern Europe, indicating Jewish immigration prior to and during World War II. The cemetery closed to new burials in the 1940s, but the site remains open today for visitors to the area. Leslieville is also home to Toronto's second Jewish burial ground, the Goel Tzedec cemetery, now renamed the Jones Avenue Cemetery. Bought as farmland back in 1883, Chevra Kadisha Chesed Shel Emes, as it was formally known, was consecrated in 1896 (Di Matteo). In 1919 the cemetery lands were sold off to the Goel Tzedec conservative congregation, one of three Jewish

congregations in the entire city at the time (Di Matteo). The cemetery is still in partial operation today and stands as a testament to the beginnings of the Jewish community in Toronto.



First School in Leslieville 1909  
Bernard Joseph Gloster  
Source: Toronto Public Library Website

### *Alexander Muir: Leslieville's Historic Resident*

In 1863 the growing village opened its first public school, a one-room log cabin, where Alexander Muir served as principal from 1863 until 1870 (Leslieville of Yesteryear). In addition to his position as the first principal of Leslieville Public School,

Muir earned considerable notoriety when he penned his famous song 'The Maple Leaf Forever.' In *Over the Don* historian Ron Fletcher recounts the now famous story of the origins of this patriotic piece:

While on a stroll in October of 1867 George Leslie, the eminent nurseryman, informed Alexander Muir of a songwriting competition...A prize was being offered for an original composition honoring Canada as a new nation. It was at that very moment a leaf fluttered down from a tall maple tree in Leslie's nursery and landed on Muir's shoulder (22).



Alexander Muir 1855  
Source: Toronto Public Library Website

According to Leslieville folklore the brilliant autumn maple leaf that fell onto Muir's jacket that day inspired him to compose his now infamous song. Muir submitted 'The Maple Leaf Forever' to the patriotic poetry contest held by the Caledonian Society of Montreal and won second prize (Discover Leslieville). The song went on to become a quasi-national anthem among English speaking Canadians, eclipsed only by the

current national anthem (Discover Leslieville). Today, the neighbourhood celebrates this historic tale with a portrait of Alexander Muir on the Leslieville mural at the corner of Queen Street East and Jones Avenue. In addition to the mural the suitably named Maple Cottage stands at 62 Laing Street with a plaque memorializing the famous resident and his contribution to Canadian heritage.

## **Annexation and Beyond**

### ***Leslieville becomes South Riverdale***

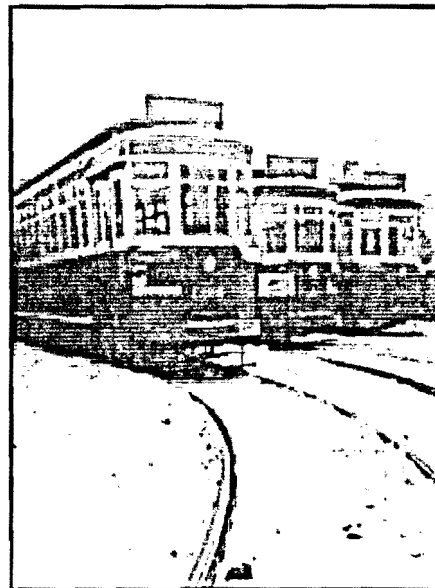
By the late nineteenth century Toronto was developing into a large city. With this rapid expansion the emerging commercial centre began incorporating surrounding suburban villages into its boundaries. On March 25, 1884 Leslieville and Riverside, the neighbourhood directly to the west of Leslieville, were incorporated into the city of Toronto and the area as a whole became known as South Riverdale. Annexation to Toronto brought many modern changes to the rural area and transformed the farming village into a mixed-use industrial centre.

### ***Transit Expansion***

In its early years the residents of Leslieville relied predominantly on the stagecoach as a method of transportation. As the neighbouring old city of Toronto began to expand the shallow waters along the waterfront were transformed by land reclamation to make way for railways (Hayes 80). The railways facilitated and encouraged the growth of the city and its surrounding suburbs. In 1865 the Grand Trunk Railway added a station in Leslieville that stood at the level crossing with Kingston Road. The station was replaced at the turn of the century with a larger

more architecturally impressive building (Brown 97). The lower Don River was straightened in 1880s to allow the Canadian Pacific Railways access to the waterfront from the east (Hayes 102).

After annexation Kingston Road was renamed Queen Street East as a continuation of the thoroughfare running east to west across Toronto. The forerunner of the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), the Toronto Railway Company extended the Queen Street streetcar service east across the Don in 1887 (Neighbourhood Plan). In 1911 a steel truss bridge was built along Queen Street East over the river to replace the original stone bridge. The new structure was built at a cost of \$250,000 and immediately



T.T.C. # 1382 at Russell Carhouse 1951  
James Victor Salmon  
Source: Toronto Public Library Website

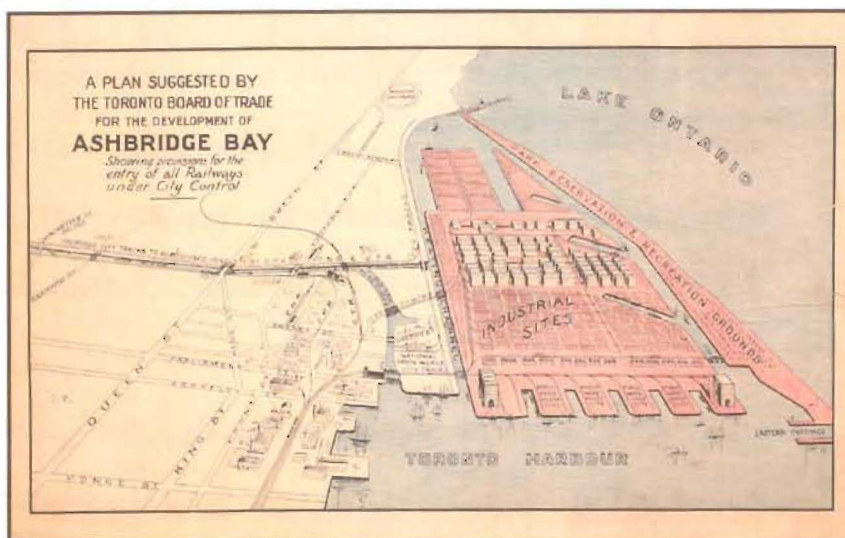
after it opened to traffic the old bridge was demolished (Fletcher 25). Increased access to the

city gave greater mobility to families and workers from the neighbourhoods across the Don River, who were predominantly working class and limited by their modest incomes. The city required the railway company to reduce fares during rush hour so that average working people could afford them (Neighbourhood Plan 1.1 b). In 1913 the Russell Carhouse TTC yards were erected along Queen Street East at Connaught Avenue to provide maintenance and storage for the expanded transit service in the area.

### *The Changing Waterfront*

At the beginning of the twentieth century there was an acute shortage of space for industrial expansion in Toronto. In addition to this land shortage there was also public outcry

about the pollution in the Toronto Harbour and Ashbridges Bay (Hayes 120). The Bay, a mixture of marsh and shallow water, was becoming heavily polluted, principally by manure from cattle kept in the nearby barns at Gooderham and Worts distillery (Hayes 104). In 1912 the Toronto Harbour Commission published plans for the reclamation of Ashbridges Bay for industrial purposes. In addition to creating new space for industrial growth the extensive plans also included many recreational components such as new parks and a pier as well as a boulevard linking the western harbour with the facilities in the Bay (Hayes 120). The infilling was proposed as an effort that would enhance the economic



Plans for the Development of Ashbridges Bay 1912  
Toronto Board of Trade  
Source: Toronto Public Library Website

value and social usefulness of Toronto's waterfront. The project was grand in scale but was ultimately limited by unforeseen global events. The city was unable to proceed with all of the plans for the waterfront because its priorities were diverted during the First World War. Shortage of labour and resources during the war meant that work proceeded slowly and the commissioners concentrated on the basic infrastructure and dredging while the creation of parkland became a secondary objective (Hayes 124). After a decade of work a significant part of the Bay had been reclaimed and the marshlands in the east end were transformed into a large Port Industrial district.

### *The Growth of Industry*

By the early 1900s the clays in the soil of the former village of Leslieville began to deplete and the active brick making industry dwindled. Residential houses were built over the yards as they closed, but while brick making declined the area began to attract other forms of industrial development. By 1903 South Riverdale had experienced substantial industrial development, with most of the industry situated south of Eastern Avenue (Neighbourhood Plan 1.1 c). In this period of industrialization, factories located close to major transportation facilities in the centre of the city where rail and water transport met. After the reclamation of Ashbridges Bay large industrial buildings such as the A.R. Clarke Tannery, Toronto Iron Works, Sunlight Soap and the Canadian Metal Company moved to the newly created Port Industrial area. Lighter forms of industry such as small-scale carpentries, plumbers, printing shops and the Wrigley Gum Factory also located in the east end during this time period (Discover Leslieville). The industry in South Riverdale was characterized by its diversity, in the size of the factories and types of manufacturing. Plants ranged from making soap, rubber products, toys, food and beverages, electrical apparatus, paper goods and a wide variety of metal products (Kerr and Spelt 136).

Due to the lack of zoning controls on the land at the time, the bulk of South Riverdale was developed for industry in the first quarter of the twentieth century (Neighbourhood Plan 1.1 c). The land around the factories was built up with predominantly low income residential housing in order to provide homes for industrial workers. This heavy concentration of factories located in such close proximity to housing created environmental concerns for the residents in the area. Many of the industrial facilities generated a large amount of pollution and over time the neighbourhood began to encounter problems with soil and water contamination and odours in the air. In 1912 the Ashbridges Bay Wastewater Treatment Plant was built at the bottom of Leslie

Street. The facility was designed to replace the dumping of raw sewage directly into Lake Ontario, a historical practice that had resulted in a layer of thick sludge covering the water to a distance of several hundred feet from the shoreline (Hayes 104). The facility was a necessary solution to Toronto's waste management problems but the odours created by the plant worsened the already poor air quality in the area. While many of South Riverdale's factories created pollution and produced foul smelling odours there was at least one advantage for some residents living in the heavily industrial neighbourhood. Residents in the area surrounding the George Weston Bakery enjoyed the smell of freshly baked bread wafting through the air along Logan Avenue. Both positive and negative, this important industrial expansion in South Riverdale during this time period established the neighbourhood as one of the most mixed residential-industrial areas in Toronto.

### *The Mixed-Use Community*

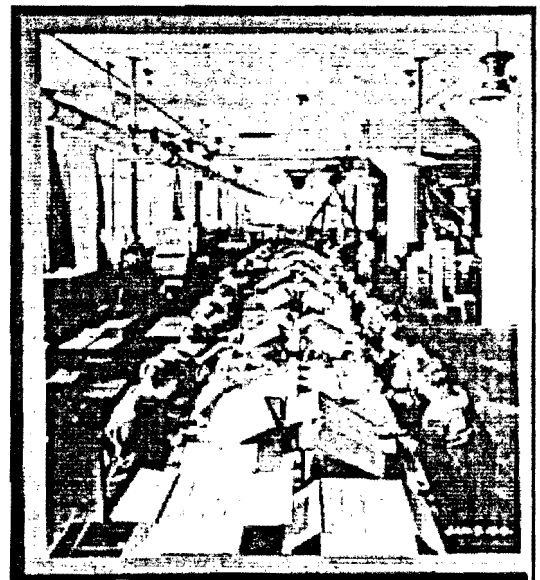
At the time of annexation the population of Leslieville was only six hundred people, still a small and relatively rural village in comparison to Toronto (Discover Leslieville). At the turn of the century two main factors accelerated the growth of Toronto's east end: the spread of public transit, which resulted in greater mobility for families with modest incomes who worked downtown; and the development of industries that employed local residents and encouraged the construction of more workers' housing (Neighbourhood Plan 1.1 d). In addition to the industrial and residential expansion during this time, South Riverdale also saw a degree of commercial development. Annexation allowed for the extension of water, sewer and transit services to the area across the Don River (Brown 98). Locations along the streetcar route were highly accessible and local independent retailers set up shop along Queen Street East in order to service the

growing community. Due to the mixed-use nature of the area many of the stores were interspersed with houses, industrial buildings, service stations and used car lots (Neighbourhood Plan 4.2). Because the neighbourhood was home to low-income industrial workers many of the stores did not find great success along the commercial strip. Consequently, the retail along Queen Street East was characterized by high turnover rates and many vacant or rundown storefronts up until the 1970s.

The spread of public transit in addition to the continued commercial and industrial development in the area accelerated residential growth in South Riverdale. During the early 1900s Bruce School and Riverdale Collegiate Institute on Gerrard Street East both opened in response to the overcrowding experienced by the local schools (Leslieville Then and Now). Along with the public and separate schools various other services opened in order to meet the needs of the growing population. A fire hall and recreational facilities such as Riverdale Park and the Toronto Baseball Grounds also opened in the early twentieth century (Neighbourhood Plan 1.1 b).

### *Toronto in Wartime: World War I*

When Canada entered World War I in 1914 many of the building and expansion projects across Toronto had to be put on hold as the city turned its attention towards the war effort. While construction halted, industrialization and manufacturing leapt forward during this time period as factories struggled to supply the military with the munitions and materials needed to fight the enemy in



Colgate Palmolive Factory 1919

Pringle and Booth

Source: Toronto Reference Library Website

Europe ("The History of Toronto"). The lives of women changed dramatically when a scarcity of male workers forced employers to hire women on an unprecedented scale. Women's employment in factories around the city began to change perceptions of established gendered roles and social structures. Many people suffered without adequate heat during the winter of 1917-1918 and a coal shortage forced schools and even some wartime industries to shut down temporarily ("The History of Toronto"). The soldiers returned to Toronto in 1918 leaving behind thirteen thousand Toronto men that had died in Europe (Hayes 143).

### *Between the Wars*

The period between the end of the World War I and the beginning of the World War II is especially interesting because of the enormous changes that took place, both in the landscape of the city and the lives of its inhabitants (Cotter 10). The period immediately following World War I was a difficult time for the city. Inflation increased the cost of living by fifty percent between 1915 and 1919 and the city's social fabric suffered from tensions between unions and industrialists ("The History of Toronto"). The initial post-war retrenchments were followed by a period of strong recovery and rising prosperity through most of the 1920s. City life picked up and living conditions for the majority of Torontonians improved as "slums were cleared and indoor toilets, central heating, electricity and telephones became the norm" (Cotter 11). The twenties were in many ways the first modern decade of the twentieth century, with widespread expansion of city services and housing, the increasing popularity of the automobile as well as changes in attitudes toward women. New employment opportunities appeared for women in workplaces previously unknown to them. In 1921 about 30 percent of working women were

employed in factories and other heavy industries, including machine shops and garment and textile sweatshops (Cotter 124).

The buoyant times of the twenties came to an abrupt end with the stock market crash of October 1929, signaling the beginning of the longest economic depression the country had ever seen. There was a deep recession in manufacturing, first caused by a drop-off in demand from the United States, and then when Canadians also stopped buying unneeded luxuries. Construction, except for a few elite projects



The Single Men's Unemployed Association parading to Bathurst Street United Church 1930  
Source: Digital image from Library and Archives Canada

already under way, ground to a halt, demand for goods plummeted and manufacturing jobs across the city began to disappear (Hayes 144). Torontonians lost their savings and their homes when businesses fired workers, raising the unemployment rate in the city to 30 percent by 1933, and cut the wages of those who retained their jobs, with the result that salaries fell by an average



of 40 percent ("The History of Toronto"). Unemployment became a fact of life during these hard times, especially for the many people in the working class community of South Riverdale who relied on factory work. Some larger homes in South Riverdale were converted from single-family residences into rooming houses and flats as the increasingly hard-pressed middle class could no longer cope with these properties and had to move to smaller houses farther away from the city centre. During the Depression, a makeshift

Homeless Men in the Don Valley 1930  
Source: City of Toronto Archives

community of six hundred unemployed and homeless men, mainly World War I veterans, formed in the Don Valley. They constructed shacks out of tin, sheet metal, cardboard, and pieces of wood and local residents often helped these people, bringing them clothing, bedding, and food (“The History of Toronto”).

### *The Second World War and Beyond.*

Throughout the 1930s the population of Toronto struggled to live and work in the midst of social and economic upheaval, changing moral codes, and the growing pains of an expanding city (Cotter 13). The Depression years were followed by a boom in employment and manufacturing brought on by World War II. In 1939 Torontonians rallied again to fight in Europe and Canada became one of the allies' pre-eminent suppliers of war materials. Much of the nation's output came from factories in and around the downtown and many of Toronto's older facilities were re-tooled to meet wartime needs (“The History of Toronto”).



A Wartime Industrial Worker 1943  
Source: City of Toronto Archives

In 1945 the soldiers returned home from Europe and the following years resulted in a dramatic population increase caused by the postwar baby boom and immigration. Toronto's population swell brought about postwar housing shortages, high rents and rising prices across the city. This period was also time of economic expansion and an increasing standard of living. People wanted houses for their expanding families and found room to grow in the suburbs surrounding the downtown (Hayes 156). Suburban growth occurred rapidly throughout the 1950s and land in these areas shot up in value. Don Mills, Toronto's first major suburban development,

was designed as an idyllic neighbourhood with a variety of housing and industry in addition to a regional shopping centre (Hayes 156). Future suburban development mirrored these early plans, industrial parks were built in close proximity to employee housing and design favoured automobile traffic over public transit. As the suburbs grew, residents and industries began to relocate to the more spacious and affordable land. While the areas outside of the city were growing Toronto's downtown core also experienced considerable change.

From the late 1940s until the early 1970s the old physical fabric of Toronto's inner-city was dramatically altered. Across the downtown and in its surrounding neighbourhoods high-rise developments, public housing projects and the construction of expressways eradicated large swaths of the old city (Caulfield 25). In the 1960s the construction of the Toronto-Dominion Centre at King Street and Bay Street, the first of the international style post-war bank towers, caused the destruction of a splendid 1913 classical bank building because it did not 'fit' the architectural vision of the new development ("The History of Toronto"). The loss of such landmarks over the next decade encouraged people to demand that the city's built heritage be preserved. In the 1970s there came a strong reaction against this destructive form of city building that spurred a significant shift towards the protection of older neighbourhoods and buildings as the first waves of gentrification began in the city.

### *Population Change in Leslieville from the 1800s – 1970*

The demographic characteristics of Leslieville residents have changed dramatically since the area was first settled in the mid 1800s. A few early families, such as the Ashbridges, were from the United States but most of the village's residents were emigrants from the British Isles (Leslieville Then and Now). While the majority of those living in Leslieville during these early

years were Anglo-Saxon there was one other prominent ethnic group. In the 1880s a large number of Russian Jews fled the pogroms and immigrated to North America following the assassination of Czar Alexander II (Kasher 240). Toronto's first Jewish cemeteries were consecrated in Leslieville during this time period, suggesting that there was a small Jewish community in the area, although later on many moved further west to the emerging Jewish neighbourhoods in the downtown core such as Kensington Market.

While immigrant groups began settling in Toronto around the turn of the century, few came to Leslieville until the years following the Second World War. After WWII Toronto welcomed displaced persons, refugees, and economic migrants to the city and the ethnic origins of the population changed radically. In the mid sixties Portuguese people began to move into the east end and it is around this time period that many Greek families began forming a community along the Danforth strip to the north of Leslieville (Leslieville Then and Now). The most prominent ethnic groups to occupy the South Riverdale area in the postwar period have been the East and South Asian communities. In 1968 a few Chinese businesses were established in the northwest region of South Riverdale. Over the next few decades the Chinese population grew quickly as the area along Gerrard Street East between Broadview Avenue and Carlaw Avenue became a popular, lower-priced alternative to the original Chinatown in the downtown core (Walks and August 2607). Early emigrants from Hong Kong were followed by Chinese leaving Vietnam in the late 1970s and early 1980s and then emigrants from the Chinese mainland (Walks and August 2607). Shortly after the arrival of the Chinese community the area further east along Gerrard Street East was settled by a large South Asian business and residential community. The neighbourhood, commonly referred to as Gerrard India Bazaar, originated in 1972 when businessman Gian Naaz purchased the Eastwood Theatre and began to show Bollywood films

(Gerrard India Bazaar). The area expanded rapidly as Pakistani, Indian and Sri Lankan businesses located along Gerrard Street East between Greenwood Avenue and Coxwell Avenue. Today, over one hundred restaurants, clothing stores, video stores and other businesses cater to Indo-Canadians and Pakistani Canadians in the local area and across the city. South Riverdale has become a home for a number of diverse cultural communities and in 2006 people of East and Southeast Asian ethnic origin were identified as the largest population segment in the district (South Riverdale: Social Profile #2 3).

While the ethnic diversity has changed over the years the working class nature of the area remained a constant feature of the neighbourhood after annexation through to the 1970s. In the report *Towards a Neighbourhood Plan: South Riverdale*, released by the City of Toronto Planning Board in 1976, a summary of the population of the area is provided:

The 1971 census indicated that the average family income in South Riverdale of \$7,539 was 28% lower than the city average of \$10,508. From the statistics of the census data the picture of the population of South Riverdale is a predominantly working class area, its residents mostly employed at relatively low paying jobs and subject to layoffs. Compared to the rest of the city the area has a high proportion of children and of single parent households (1.2 L).

South Riverdale has historically been an area with a high incidence of home ownership since the housing was affordable compared to other parts of the city (Neighbourhood Plan). Because of the low-income nature of the area many homeowners could not afford to carry out regular maintenance on their houses. As a result the older houses in the area, which were largely developed prior to the 1920s, began to deteriorate. *Towards a Neighbourhood Plan: South Riverdale* listed “outdated plumbing, electrical and heating systems, leaking roofs and settling

foundations” as some of the problems affecting the neighbourhood’s aging housing stock (3.1).

### *Leslieville’s Remaining Heritage*

While the former farming village has changed dramatically over time there are a few landmarks of the area’s early history still located around the neighbourhood today. Many of the prominent street names such as Pape Avenue, Logan Avenue and of course Leslie Street are a testament to the generations of market gardening families that founded the early village in the 1800s. Maple Leaf Forever Park reminds the neighbourhood of the famous song penned by Leslieville native Alexander Muir. Memorial plaques outside of the Muir and Ashbridge homes inform visitors and residents of the prominent local figures that helped settle the neighbourhood and define the early community. The home of James Price, at 100 Greenwood Ave, stands as a testament to the prominent brick making family and the early industry that helped spur growth in the area. Recently the Riverdale Community Business Centre released a neighbourhood guide entitled *Discover Toronto’s Historic Leslieville*. This publication, funded by the department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, provides a brief history of the local area as well as a guided walking tour of local landmarks and prominent heritage sites. The brochure, distributed through local libraries and businesses, encourages residents and visitors to walk through the area and explore the charm and history of Leslieville.

While some evidence of Leslieville’s heritage has been carefully preserved, much of the former village has been paved over to make way for continued modern development in the area.



C.N.R. Station Degrossi Street 1952

James Victor Salmon

Source: Toronto Public Library Website

After surviving the demise of its railway role for some years as a retail outlet the impressive turreted Grand Trunk Railway station on Degraffi Street was finally demolished in the early 1970s (Brown 97). Only a small portion of Ashbridges Bay is left after acres of landfill were dumped into the marsh for the purposes of industrial development. The old brickyards, once so important to the thriving young village, were paved over in favour of residential development. Remnants of one of the last of these yards stood by the CN railway tracks at Greenwood Avenue until the 1970s when they were also buried beneath more houses (Brown 96).

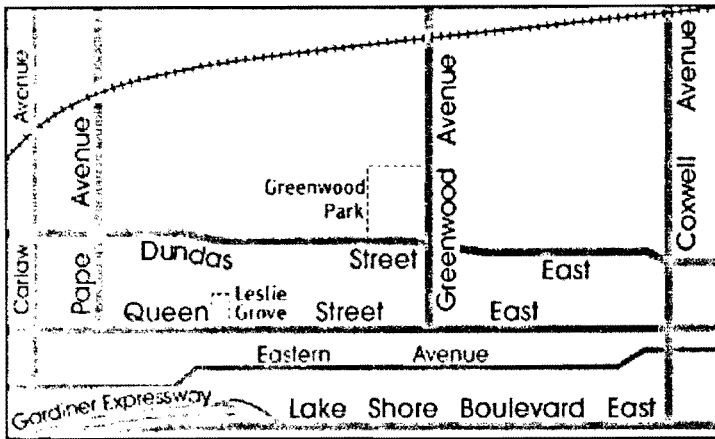
The period from the mid 1800s to the 1970s was a time of great change for the area east of the Don River. Early residents and workers transformed swampy marshlands into a thriving suburban village. After annexation Leslieville as a village disappeared and was incorporated into the larger district of South Riverdale. The region came to be defined by its working class community and mixed-use style of land development. South Riverdale remained a heavily industrial, low-income area until the 1970s when a series of economic and social trends moving throughout the city of Toronto began to change the long established character of this historical area.

## **Chapter Two**

### *Gentrification in Leslieville*

*1970 – Present*

Leslieville underwent a significant transformation in the latter part of the twentieth century and continues to evolve as part of Toronto's changing urban landscape. Today the neighbourhood's formal boundaries are considered to be between Eastern Avenue to the south, the railway tracks to the north, Carlaw Avenue to the east and Coxwell Avenue to the west. As



Leslieville Map 2009  
Source: Toronto Condos and Homes Website

one of the city's oldest neighbourhoods Leslieville has been subjected to a combination of external pressures and internal conditions that have caused a period of gentrification in the area. While Leslieville is not yet entirely gentrified like other places on the peripheries of the downtown core,

such as Yorkville, the forces of gentrification

have certainly directed the changing physical and social landscape of the area. In order to understand the nature of this neighbourhood change one can consider the theoretical perspectives behind the term gentrification and then apply these concepts to what has happened in Leslieville since the 1970s.

In 1984 urban studies academic Jon Caulfield published a detailed account of gentrification in Toronto entitled *City Form and Everyday Life: Toronto's Gentrification and Critical Social Practice*. His book provides a reference point for understanding changing demographics and other characteristics of gentrifying neighbourhoods across the city since the 1970s. Caulfield defines gentrification as "a critical social practice in which the inner city experiences a middle class resettlement as a reaction to the repressive institutions of suburban life" (Caulfield xiii). From the 1970s onwards more and more individuals and families chose to live in the downtown

rather than in the peripheral suburban areas. This return to the city movement combined with a period of deindustrialization in Toronto that began after World War II resulted in significant shifts in the function and characteristics of many of the older neighbourhoods throughout the city. The literature on the subject of gentrification identifies the processes through which old working class neighbourhoods are revitalized and reclaimed by the middle class, consequently displacing the original lower income residents. In their research on neighbourhood upgrading in major Canadian cities theorists Alan Walks and Richard Maaranen describe the changes associated with this urban phenomenon and the important policy implications of the trend. While neighbourhood upgrading can occur in any area, gentrification is a term specifically associated with neighbourhoods that were clearly working class in the early post WWII period (Walks and Maranen 2). Walks and Maranen identify the various stages of change that occur in a neighbourhood undergoing the process of gentrification:

The first, termed the 'pioneer' stage, often involves the invasion of artists and countercultural individuals. These groups bring a certain aesthetic identity to the neighbourhood that increases its attractiveness to others. In the next stage, rental tenants (and home owners) are attracted to the neighbourhood. Through further renovation of the housing stock, land values begin to rise; prompting speculation and developer interest, while nearby commercial strips attract those living outside the neighbourhood. In later stages, risk-averse groups of residents (such as) professionals, managers, retailers, and developers buy up property in the neighbourhood, as it becomes perceived to be a safer investment. Remaining tenanted buildings are deconverted, housing and retail properties are renovated,

and the neighbourhood completes its transformation, potentially into one of the more desirable locations in the city (1).

Leslieville, with its close proximity to downtown and its distinctive Victorian housing stock has been an attractive investment opportunity for the active agents of gentrification. Real estate agents, developers, journalists and retailers all contributed to the mythic speculation driving the forces of gentrification that enticed the middle class to this former industrial working class area. In his 1986 article “Alternative Explanations for Inner-City Gentrification” theorist David Ley identifies “four explanatory categories that account for inner-city gentrification in urban Canada after the 1970s” (Ley “Alternative Explanations” 522). These four categories are as follows: 1.) The Economic Base, 2.) Housing Market Dynamics, 3.) Demographic Change and 4.) The Value of Urban Amenity. This chapter applies Ley’s four-point theoretical model to the study of Leslieville in order to further understand the process of gentrification and the nature of neighbourhood change in the area.

### **1.) The Economic Base**

Ley identifies the economic base as the first major context of inner-city gentrification. He explains, “the presence of a postindustrial metropolitan economy, oriented toward advanced services and a white-collar employment, provides the economic foundations necessary for gentrification to occur” (Ley “Alternative Explanations” 524). In the decades following WWII Toronto experienced a deindustrialization of the city’s core. In the downtown more than half a million square meters of industrial space was demolished for redevelopment between 1976 and 1986 (Caulfield 77). Many plants and factories shut down due to obsolescence while others were forced to relocate to the suburbs and even overseas as a result of increasing land values in the city. As factories closed down employment in the city gravitated away from industrial work

towards white-collar, retail and service jobs. Despite the deindustrialization of the city during this period South Riverdale continued to attract industry to the area, but had very little new residential or commercial investment. From 1945 to 1970 South Riverdale remained very much the same as it had been in the early days of its development. (Walks and August 2605). It was not until the late 1970s that South Riverdale began to experience the impact of deindustrialization as well as changes in the economic base brought on by environmental activism.

With a long-standing history as a mixed-use industrial area South Riverdale acquired a reputation of contamination and pollution. In the mid 1970s the residents of South Riverdale began to express a growing environmental concern regarding the soil contamination and foul odours in the air caused by some of the local factories. Grass-roots environmental groups formed in order to generate increased awareness of the long-term consequences that the industrial plants were having on the health and safety of their community. Funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health, the South Riverdale Community Health Centre (SRCHC) opened on Queen Street East in 1976 (Discover Leslieville). One of the community centre's first initiatives was to combat the soil contamination caused by industries and large volumes of automobile traffic along the expressways in the area (Discover Leslieville). Throughout the late 1980s a series of newspaper articles dealt with the pollution in the area and South Riverdale was commonly described as "one of the most contaminated areas in the city because of industry" (Kerr). In 1980 a study was published in the *Toronto Star* reporting that the Canada Metal Company, one of the factories located at the southern edge of the district, had exceeded provincial lead limits by twenty-nine times (Dincen A5). Community organizations that formed during this time period such as the SRCHC and Citizens for a Safe Environment (CSE) pushed for soil remediation and lobbied

against the toxic emissions produced by many of the industrial plants. The “Get The Lead Out” campaign lasted from 1982 until 1985 and resulted in an \$11-million dollar soil-replacement project that saw tons of contaminated soil removed from residential lawns and gardens (People Place and Priorities 9). During this time period residents also engaged in a very public battle against the city over a proposed new garbage incinerator to be built in the district. The residents eventually won their fight and the new incinerator plans were quashed in 1989 (Walks and August 2608).

The influence of the community’s activism against industry in the area furthered the deindustrialization of South Riverdale. Throughout the 1990s many of the remaining industrial plants were decommissioned and relocated outside the downtown area (Walks and August 2608). Most industries moved to the suburbs into new single storey factories that permitted more efficient production, increased flexibility and made expansion easier. These new suburban sites also offered ample parking space, relatively little traffic congestion and freedom from conflicts with neighbouring residential and commercial districts. (Central Area Plan Review 8).

The closure of many of these heavy industrial plants and factories resulted in widespread unemployment in South Riverdale. The rapid loss of industrial jobs threatened the longstanding economic base of this working class community. While heavy industry was on the decline new professions began to emerge that would impact the direction of the neighbourhood. Deindustrialization had resulted in an abundance of brownfield land in the area and these abandoned industrial sites became available for redevelopment. The late twentieth century saw the growth of the creative economy in Toronto and many media and design related firms began to locate in the east end. In 1998 the Toronto Film Studios (TFS), a large-scale film studio complex, was built along the south side of Eastern Avenue on a former brownfield site bringing

with it supporting services such as catering and props manufacturers (People Places and Priorities 9). The film studios encouraged the relocation of other forms of creative industry to the area such as interior and graphic design studios, art galleries, and various media production companies.

In *The Rise of the Creative Class* and his subsequent work American urban studies theorist Richard Florida has promoted the importance of the creative economy as a driving force behind economic development in post-industrial cities. Florida identifies the importance of this creative class, made up of knowledge workers, intellectuals and various types of artists, and their capacity to influence urban renewal (Florida 9). The influx of creative jobs in Leslieville gradually replaced the working class industrial economic base that had defined the area for over a century. The neighbourhood was so heavily infiltrated with creative production that Leslieville earned the title of Toronto's 'studio district.' After some time external pressures began to impact the success of the film industry in the city. In addition to a strong Canadian dollar American film producers were offered tax incentives to remain in the United States and film production in Toronto slowed significantly. As part of an ongoing initiative to revitalize the film industry the studios were relocated to a multimillion-dollar studio complex in the Port Lands opening in 2009. The TFS buildings on Eastern Avenue have since been vacated and the lot purchased for redevelopment.

The once prominent manufacturing and wholesaling economic base has almost disappeared from South Riverdale. Some factories have relocated to cheaper and more modern sites in the suburbs while others have shut down entirely, victims of obsolescence, global competition and environmental backlash (Ley and Bourne 21-22). The blue-collar jobs that once dominated the area are disappearing and are rapidly being replaced by employment in the

creative economy. This shifting economic base provides one explanatory consideration when accounting for the process of gentrification in the South Riverdale area.

## **2.) Housing Market Dynamics**

Ley's second theoretical category of gentrification considers the ongoing shifts in the metropolitan housing market. As new housing stock in the suburbs inflated rapidly in price leading up to the 1970s, households turned to new smaller and cheaper central city apartments and condominiums or chose to renovate older single-family row housing in the inner city (Ley "Alternative Explanations" 523). The desirable locations and affordability of residential housing in older neighbourhoods around Toronto encouraged the renovation and revitalization of a large portion of the city's deteriorating housing stock. In the literature on gentrification this particular trend has been referred to as "white painting" (Bain, Holdsworth, Ley, Walks and August). The term started in the 1960s when houses were literally painted white and today "it connotes a house sandblasted to its original Victorian polychromatic brick, with wooden details on porches and doors and the interiors significantly upgraded" (Holdsworth 49). During the beginnings of the gentrification movement many of the houses in older Toronto neighbourhoods were in need of significant repair but were substantially more affordable for middle class real estate investment. All across the city, developers joined forces with homeowners in white painting, infilling and subdividing existing buildings to convert old neighbourhoods into new (Kosny and Springer 3).

Prior to the wave of gentrification in South Riverdale the neighbourhood housed a predominantly working class community. However, with the convergence of the baby boom, house price inflation in the suburbs, and inner-city revitalization more and more middle class individuals were attracted to the area (Ley "Alternative Explanations" 524). In his article "Municipally Managed Gentrification in South Parkdale" Tom Slater describes the features of

South Parkdale that attracted middle class homeowners to migrate to the former industrial area. The same characteristics that Slater describes in South Parkdale can also be attributed to Leslieville:

As house prices rose elsewhere in the city during the mid-to-late-1980's real estate boom, a growing segment of professional middle classes who favoured 'old city' places found handsome, spacious and affordable Victorian and Edwardian architectural heritage on broad, tree-lined streets, with easy access to employment in downtown Toronto. Their expectations were that property values would eventually rise as the neighbourhood's profile rose, leading to handsome profits in years to come (315).

As housing prices in Riverdale to the north and the Beaches to the east escalated Leslieville remained relatively affordable and the Victorian row houses in the neighbourhood gained favour among first-time property buyers looking for a good deal. The 1977 report *Towards a Neighbourhood Plan: South Riverdale*, identified the radical shifts in the housing market in the east end:

The limited supply of housing in South Riverdale is under severe pressure from several directions. On the one hand, the higher income families who are moving into the area and renovating older homes are necessarily displacing some tenants in the process; the shortage of low cost rental accommodation in the area makes it difficult for these people to find a new home. At the same time, many low-income homeowners cannot afford to carry out the required maintenance on their houses and as a result the condition of many older houses are deteriorating (3.8).

This middle class group, characterized as in-movers, were not only buying and renovating the

housing stock but also becoming residents in the neighbourhood. As the dilapidated houses were made over and wealthier residents settled in the community the real estate began to appreciate. In a 2006 article for the *Toronto Star* that trumpeted the neighbourhood as the next great place to live writer Theresa Boyle interviewed ReMax Canada agent Chris Gillet about housing market trends in Toronto. Gillet explained:

We've seen the biggest impact on prices in South Riverdale. One home in Leslieville recently sold for \$540,000. It last sold, in 1998, for \$246,000. Now we're seeing young entrepreneurs, white-collar, yuppie types moving in to that area. I've really seen the price jump in that neighbourhood. The most sought-after homes are in the range of \$370,000 to \$430,000. Five years ago, these homes might have gone for about \$250,000 (qtd. in Boyle N01).

As the real estate market in the area heats up more and more middle class in-movers are purchasing and deconverting the housing stock, causing a substantial loss of multiple rental units. These new residents can afford to seek more space than the former working class inhabitants and so houses that were previously converted during the Depression era to accommodate multiple tenants are increasingly deconverted to house just one family (Lewinberg 29). Low-income residents are ultimately displaced when their homes are sold to middle class homebuyers who can afford to pay higher property prices.

Another significant aspect of gentrification in terms of the housing market dynamics is the increasingly popular trend of loft conversions in the city. Old manufacturing spaces that have been abandoned are prime locales for redevelopment. Development companies transform these large underused urban spaces into trendy loft accommodations for downtown residents. In *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* sociologist Sharon Zukin describes how cheap

rents, unobstructed open space, oversized windows and the raw, unfinished quality of lofts in the SoHo district of New York City appealed to artists in the 1960s. “Over the next two decades artists proceeded to lay claim to these often noisy and grimy industrial spaces and converted them into live-in studios for both work and residence” (Zukin 20). Slowly the development trend expanded beyond New York City and the first loft conversions began in Toronto during the 1980s.

In “Constructing contemporary artistic identities in Toronto neighbourhoods” theorist Alison Bain explains how artists’ attempts to lay claim to space in the city are often thwarted by dominant groups intending higher-profit and higher value uses for these urban property. “What began as a very practical activity, obtaining an inexpensive, large workspace with generous amounts of natural light, established the fashion for urban residential loft living” (Bain 305). Leslieville became a developer’s paradise with plenty of vacant factories and its close proximity to the downtown core. The period following the turn of the twenty-first century saw a development boom in the South Riverdale area as many older factories were converted into residential lofts (Walks and August 2615). Ongoing projects such as the Abode Lofts, a 230-unit live/work complex in the former location of the Colgate Factory, have the funky appeal of open concept living. Many of the new lofts in Leslieville have been designed to cater to individuals involved in creative work such as architects, designers and young professionals commuting to the downtown core. In an article for the *Toronto Star* in 2005 Jenny Shim, president and editor of *Urbanation*, a publication that tracks the condo market in the greater Toronto area, describes how this current trend is changing neighbourhoods across the city. Shim remarks, “Lofts helped lead the way in creating new neighbourhoods to the east and west of downtown and are helping revitalize areas like the Junction, Roncesvalles Village and Leslieville” (qtd. in Cordileone P05).

### 3.) Demographic Change

Over the past thirty years the built form in Leslieville has remained relatively stable. Former factories have been restored and modernized into luxury loft spaces and older Victorian row houses have been renovated rather than demolished. However, while the physical space is relatively unchanged, the social landscape of the neighbourhood has shifted dramatically. Ley's third context of inner city gentrification is concerned with demographic change in gentrifying neighbourhoods. While it is important to consider housing market shifts, these changes coincide with changes in the community's demographic characteristics. Gentrification is not just a physical process but it is also a social one, involving the movement of people and the movement of capital (Smith and Lafaivre 44).

Prior to the 1970s Leslieville was home to a working class population that originated in large measure from Britain and Ireland and found work in the manufacturing belt near the Lakeshore (Ley "New Middle Class" 18). The first wave of gentrification in Toronto was brought on by a shift in the demographics of the home owning population in Canada. David Ley suggests that the beginnings of gentrification in the early 1970s coincided with the demographic bulge of the baby boom entering the housing market (Ley "New Middle Class" 25). For these first time home-buyers an inner city address represented a counter cultural act against the tyranny of suburban life that had been established across North America during the building boom following World War II. Lured by the convenience and lifestyle of urban living young professionals and middle class families began to invest in the housing stock surrounding the core of the city.

As the middle class settled in the Leslieville the income groups within the community began to shift. The working class residents, who had lived in the area for years, were now

threatened by displacement caused by the closure and deconversions of rooming houses and bachlorette buildings (Slater 10). Displacement, in the context of gentrification, can be understood as “a form of involuntary movement imposed upon lower status groups” (London and Palen “Introduction” 9). Prices in Leslieville for houses and rental units are escalating and the existing low-income residents are experiencing a dramatic loss of affordable housing in a neighbourhood that has traditionally catered to the working class demographic. Large houses that once contained two or three rental apartments are sold and deconverted back into single-family dwellings, pushing out the rental tenants in the process.

After the first wave of gentrification was well under way in the east end of Toronto the city issued a report on income change in order to assess the shifting demographics. The 1984 report contends that “as renovation activity is continuing throughout the east end neighbourhood, further displacement of low income households may be expected as the trend towards a more middle-income character continues in Toronto” (Toronto Region Incomes 12). The report, issued over twenty years ago, was correct in its prediction. Recent census data obtained for the South Riverdale district demonstrates the rapidly changing socioeconomic characteristics of the population. If we compare data between 2001 and 2006 we can see that the percentage of private households that earn \$100,000 and over has almost doubled from 12.4% in 2001 to 22.8% in 2006 (Social Profile #4 2). Those low-income persons who remain in the neighbourhood live in dilapidated older homes or assisted housing projects and subsidized residential units (McLaughlin 10). The changing population has created a sharp polarization in the community between the older residents and the new middle class in movers.

#### 4.) The Value of Urban Amenity

The fourth and final characteristics that Ley associates with inner-city reinvestment are the lifestyle amenities that a neighbourhood offers to prospective gentrifiers. While affordable housing prices and a close proximity to the downtown may initially lure the middle class to older neighbourhoods around the city, there is something more that these areas have to offer. Ley proposes that downtown neighbourhoods offer a distinct set of values often identified with an urban lifestyle (Ley "Alternative Explanations" 6). The environment and cultural amenities act as major determinants in the location of revitalizing districts. During the initial waves of gentrification in Toronto during the 1970s the "diversity, community and non-conformist nature of old urban neighbourhoods were highly valued in contrast to the disparaged blandness of the suburbs" (Ley "New Middle Class" 25).

Prior to the middle class colonization many gentrifying locales like Leslieville first witnessed a movement of artists and creative types into the area. Artists are considered to be the pioneers of gentrification as they are often the first group to cross the frontier and begin the process. Members of this cultural group identify traditionally neglected areas of the city as spaces for potential creativity and community. Theorist Alison Bain describes the appeal of these overlooked neighbourhoods:

Many artists, out of both financial and creative necessity, prefer to live and work in low-income, working-class neighbourhoods that are not congested with formally designated arts infrastructure and where the boundaries between different social groups and different land-use activities remain relatively porous.

The east end of Toronto is one such place (313).

Marginal spaces attract creative individuals because they offer unconventional places of

inspiration to work and live. As other areas in the city, particularly Queen Street West, have become increasingly gentrified Leslieville has gained popularity with this cultural group. In a 2008 article in the *Globe and Mail* Ric Santon, an artist and co-owner of Parts Gallery in Leslieville, proposed that "any neighbourhood that at one time relied on light manufacturing and warehousing and is accessible by public transit is a readymade artist colony" (qtd. in LeBlanc G.4).

In the first phase of gentrification artists, cultural producers and intellectuals, such as students, journalists and other media workers, moved into the east end neighbourhood and began to establish a new creative urban community. After this initial resettlement the agents of gentrification quickly worked to brand the neighbourhood and encourage further investment in the area. In order to revive the identity of the former village two Leslieville residents, Terry and Bruce Brackett, orchestrated a campaign to install street signs bearing the area's long lost name along the Queen Street East commercial strip. The green and white Leslieville street signs were installed in 1987 along Queen Street East between Booth Avenue and Leslie Street. The signs christened the rebirth of the area as a distinct neighbourhood within the South Riverdale district. Tom Slater describes similar motivations behind the street sign installation in South Parkdale during the same time period in the 1980s. "The re-designation of the neighbourhood as the 'Village of Parkdale, 1879' on many of the street-posts, was undoubtedly an effort to put South Parkdale on the cultural map and encourage the middle class to buy into the rich architectural, social and cultural heritage of the neighbourhood" (Slater 319). In *Accidental City: The Transformation of Toronto* author Robert Fulford proposes that the impulse to name sections of Toronto springs from two sources, "the psychological need for local identity in a big city, and the desire of retailers and real-estate people to give their enterprises an aura of distinction" (94). The

installation of the street signs in Leslieville not only symbolized a renewed interest in area pride among residents but also signified the first step in the ongoing re-branding of the area as one of Toronto's many destination neighbourhoods.

By the end of the 1990s and into the twenty-first century Leslieville was gaining considerable hype with regard to its bohemian character. The construction of the Toronto Film Studios saw a surge in creative workers in the area. In a 2003 article comparing the west and east ends of the Queen Street stretch author Oakland Ross noted "artists and art-gallery owners - driven out of the west end by rising prices - are steadily trekking to Queen Street East, especially to the Leslieville area" (Ross B1). The Queen Street East retail strip had built up considerably during this time period as antique shops, galleries and restaurants began to replace the garages, gas stations and industrial services that had once dominated the area. The area's makeover was supported by newspaper articles that promoted Leslieville as an "artsy loft district," a "bohemian enclave," and a "neighbourhood to live, work and play" (Wieditz 6). In "Constructing contemporary artistic identities in Toronto neighbourhoods" theorist Alison Bain conducted a series of interviews with residents in Leslieville. In her article Bain shares the positive opinions held by some members of the community regarding the changing neighbourhood. One Leslieville local explained, "I know a lot of people who compare South Riverdale to Brooklyn...its really diverse, especially during the summer time when you've got everything and anything going on...low-income families and everything else all seem to coexist somehow" (qtd. in Bain 313). However, as the rental prices in the neighbourhood continue to increase these bohemian artists and creative types are forced to relocate to other areas of the city to make way for middle class relocation.

In recent years the social and cultural character of the neighbourhood has certainly seen a

significant shift. In an area where blue-collar workers once occupied neglected apartments designer strollers now crowd inside gourmet cafes for Sunday brunch. One of the most ubiquitous signs of gentrification arrived on Queen Street East in May of 2006. At the intersection of Logan Avenue now stands a Starbucks coffee shop, a symbolic indication that the area has *arrived* in terms of its revitalization. The construction of the coffee franchise signifies a certain neighbourhood cachet and in turn the name brand retailer has attracted other forms of retail and residential investment to the area. "When I see a Starbucks going in, I rub my hands together because I know property values are going up," said real estate agent Diane Walton in an interview with the *Globe and Mail* (qtd. in Hoffman). The construction of a Starbucks on this once unremarkable street corner acts as an indicator to investors that the former working class neighbourhood is transforming into a trendy and hip urban setting. While some store fronts along Queen Street East remain run down or abandoned, the retail strip continues to evolve in order to cater to the changing tastes of the community. Along the street coffee shops and resto-lounges stand amongst organic grocers and home décor stores. The Leslieville Cheese Market, a purveyor of high priced cheeses from around the world, is an example of the new type of businesses in the area that aim to serve an incoming population with a high disposable income and an affinity for gourmet tastes. The prevalence of sales offices for ongoing loft developments throughout the neighbourhood also suggests the shifting lifestyle orientations in this east end community.

Examining the changes in the Leslieville using David Ley's four explanatory accounts for gentrification, the economic base, shifts in the housing market and population demographics and the value of urban amenity, demonstrates the phenomenal transformation that this old Toronto neighbourhood has undergone in the past thirty years. However, it is important to recognize that

Leslieville has not been entirely colonized by the middle class. Some writers and academics have identified the area as ‘partially gentrified’ citing the remaining presence of industrial firms and social housing complexes as an indicator of an incomplete form of revitalization. If the gentrification process is ongoing in Leslieville it might be said that it has been more gradual here than in other areas of the city. The neighbourhood is still home to auto-repair garages, the Weston Bakery, used-appliance outlets, the large TTC streetcar yard and a sprawling postal station. Amongst the trendy and upscale retailers along Queen Street East one will still find housing projects, pawnshops and the decidedly down-market Duke of York tavern.

Leslieville still faces some challenges with crime and lingering concerns about pollution in the area. Until 2007 a fortified site along Eastern Avenue was the main base of the Toronto chapter of the Hells Angels, the world's largest outlaw motorcycle club, considered a criminal organization by Ontario courts (Edwards). The almost one hundred year old Ashbridges Bay Wastewater treatment plant lies to the south of Leslieville and the facility still creates foul smelling fumes that waft into the neighbouring residential areas. Leslieville is also home to three community housing projects. The newest project is Woodgreen Community Housing that opened in 1995 on the site of a former envelope factory. The 150-unit complex located on Queen Street East houses seniors and disabled adults in freehold town-homes (Discover Leslieville). There are also two older housing projects in the area, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Veterans Housing, built in 1945 and Riverdale Co-op Houses Incorporated, established in 1974 (Discover Leslieville). The continued presence of inexpensive, low-income housing projects in the area contributes to the diverse social mix within the community.

While the neighbourhood is revitalizing to a certain degree, in a 2008 article for the *Toronto Star* columnist Kenneth Kidd suggests that what is happening in Leslieville should not

necessarily be considered full on gentrification, but rather a form of what he calls 'trendyfication.' Kidd explains, "If the neighbourhood is still home to active industry, replete with filth, fumes and trucks, then the area might become trendy on some level but won't easily progress to anything recognizably gentrified" (ID 1). The high proportion of public housing has not yet been entirely offset by trendy loft development and some believe that the area will remain home to these seemingly incompatible lifestyles. Kidd goes on to compare Leslieville to a similar Toronto area just across the Don River in the neighbourhood of Cabbagetown:

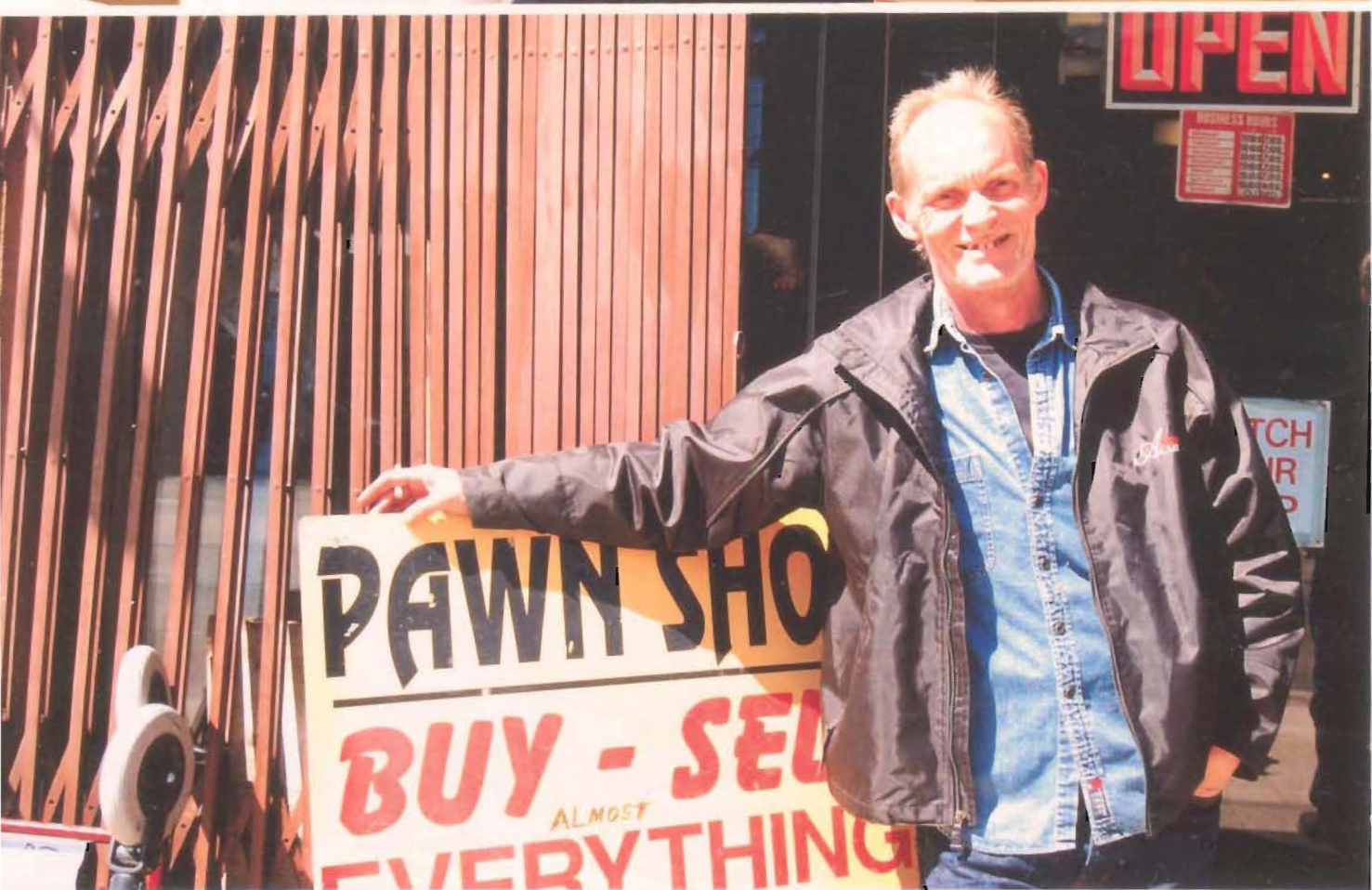
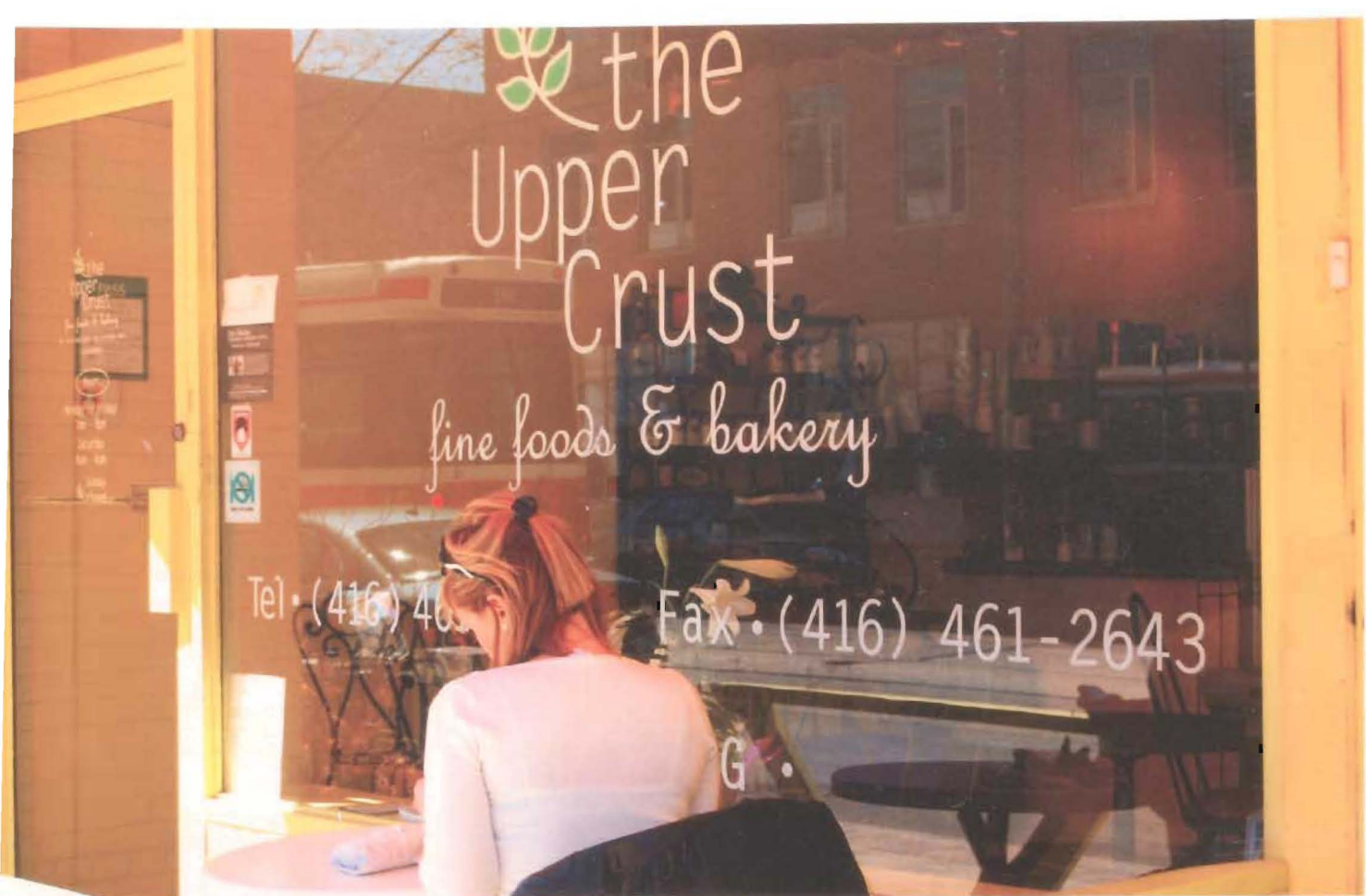
Today, Cabbagetown is home to some spectacular, multi-million-dollar dwellings.

But the neighbourhood still has a great many rental properties. Regent Park lies just to the south, and the towers of St. Jamestown loom to the Northwest. You mix all that together and you end up with a Parliament St. that still looks as comfortably shabby as it did a half century ago - scarcely a totem of complete gentrification (ID 1).

Like Cabbagetown, Leslieville has seen improvements in its housing stock and demographic changes in the past thirty years but has not witnessed unbridled gentrification. It is an area of transition with a diverse social mix and a variety of different land uses. While loft developments and Starbucks may attract middle class in-movers to the area it is rougher around the edges than the more gentrified northern neighbourhoods of Toronto such as Yorkville or the Annex. The people and buildings that have defined this area for generations have undergone a significant transformation in recent years and yet the neighbourhood has still managed to retain its shabby-chic personality, for now.

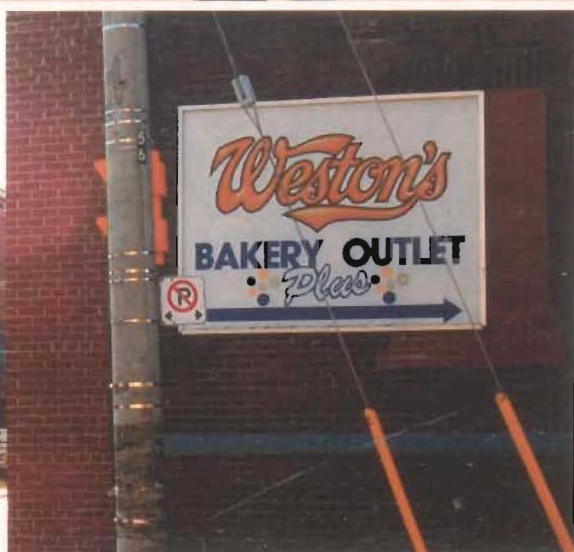












## Photographs

*All photographs author's own unless stated otherwise.*

### Page One

Top: Leslieville Street Sign Queen St. East

Bottom: Leslieville mural at the intersection of Queen St. East and Jones Ave

### Page Two

*Before & After Starbucks: North East corner of Logan Ave and Queen St. East*

Top: Early 2006 (Photograph courtesy of Joe Clark [www.leslieville.org](http://www.leslieville.org))

Bottom: April 2009

### Page Three

*Two Leslieville locals*

Top: The Upper Crust Bakery on Queen St. East

Bottom: Queen and Jones Pawn Shop on Queen St. East

### Page Four

Top: Duke of York Tavern at Queen St. East and Curzon St.

Bottom: Run-down and vacant Queen St. East storefronts

### Page Five

Top Left: Newly built town homes for sale on Morse St. at Eastern Ave

Top Right: Renovated Victorian housing along Logan Ave

Bottom: Leslieville Cheese Market on Queen St. East

### Page Six

Top: Colourful Queen St East retail strip

Below: Woodgreen community Housing Centre on Queen St East

Bottom: Weston's Bakery at Eastern Ave and Logan Ave

Right: Leslieville neighbourhood banner featuring maple leaf and film strip

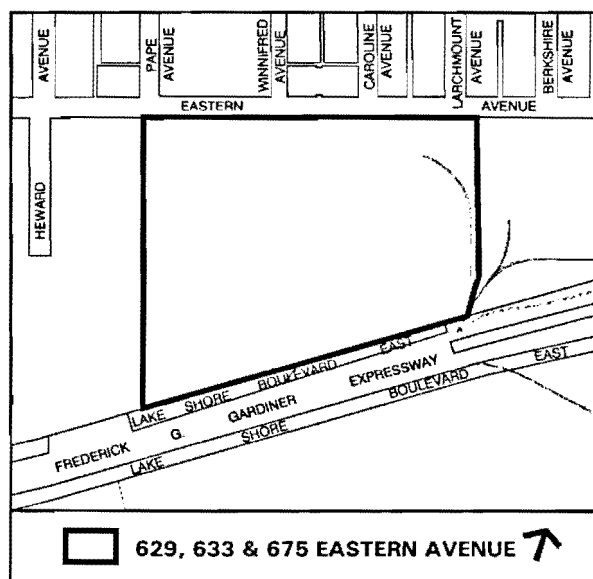
## **Chapter Three**

### *The Foundry District*

#### *Proposed Development on Eastern Avenue*

In the past Leslieville was home to a predominantly industrial economic base, but a recent proposal by SmartCentres, a private development company, threatened the historical character of the neighbourhood. When the Toronto Film Studios (TFS) on Eastern Avenue, announced their plans to relocate to a new film studio complex opening on the Port Lands, the soon to be vacant site became a prime target for development. Although a large portion of the industrial land in the area had already been displaced in favour of commercial and residential expansion, the development plans for Eastern Avenue became a large and significant point of contention for the Leslieville community and Toronto city council.

The site in question, located at 629, 633 and 675 Eastern Avenue, lies between Leslie Street and Carlaw Avenue. Rose Corporation, the owners of TFS, hired consultants and drew up plans for a mixed-use development that would have seen a combination of condominium towers, retail stores and live/work spaces (Tossell ID 5). City planners and Paula Fletcher, the ward representative for the South Riverdale district, opposed these initial plans over the inclusion of residential property on industrial



Site for proposed SmartCentres development 2008  
Source: Foundry District Webpage

land. Rose Corporation was forced to reconsider their plans and eliminate the controversial residential component of the development. At this point SmartCentres, Canada's largest retail developer and operator, purchased fifty percent of the land from Rose Corporation for roughly \$14-million and the two companies entered into a partnership to create a new vision for the 18.5-acre site. SmartCentres drew up plans to build a commercial project entitled The Foundry

District. The plans for the complex included expansive retail, tentatively anchored by a Wal-Mart store, as well as restaurants, service components and a surface level parking lot with 1,900 parking spaces (Economic Analysis i). The urban retail project was touted as a departure from the conventional big box design of SmartCentres' other commercial undertakings around the Greater Toronto Area such as the complex at Wilson and Bathurst. The Foundry District was estimated to cost over \$200 million to build and would have opened in 2011.

After purchasing the land and creating the development plans for the site SmartCentres applied to Toronto city council in 2006 to rezone the land in order to build the commercial complex. The entire area south of Eastern Avenue between the Don Valley parkway to the west and Leslie Street to the east is currently designated "An Area of Industry" in the *Official Plan Part I – CityPlan* released by the City of Toronto Planning and Development Department in 1993. The plan prohibits commercial uses in areas reserved for industry, except for those commercial uses that provide direct service and support to industrial uses. An amendment to the zoning by-law that regulates the site would have allowed SmartCentres to expand the range of permitted retail, service and commercial uses for the space. The developers needed to obtain a site-specific exemption under section 18.3 of the *Official Plan Part I – CityPlan*.



Aerial photograph of development site and surrounding area 2008  
Source: Foundry District Webpage

Initial applications by SmartCentres for an amendment to the restrictions on land use were rejected by the city council. Citing Section 2.1 of the *South of Eastern: Official Plan Proposals*, released by the City of Toronto Planning Board in 1982, the Toronto city council opted to employ their regulatory power so as to “reserve those areas South of Eastern which are primarily industrial for continued industrial use.” This district has been a subject of concern for city council since the initial waves of gentrification began impacting the area in the 1970s. According to the *Central Area Plan Review* released by the City of Toronto Planning Board in 1976, the area on Eastern Avenue was defined as part of the city’s central industrial district. This special zoning category was created to separate commercial and industrial uses and thereby protect industry from competition from high commercial values. (Lewinberg 26). The planning board recommended that the city should follow a policy of retaining and renewing its industrial base (*Central Area Plan Review*). A year later the City of Toronto Planning Board released another document concerning the South Riverdale district. The 1977 *Towards a Neighbourhood Plan: South Riverdale* outlined a specific mandate to protect the neighbourhood from large-scale redevelopment. Section 4.5 b) of the plan states:

Land zoned for industrial purposes tends to be cheaper than land zoned for residential or commercial purposes and the disappearance of the supply of cheaper land has serious consequences for those industries wishing to locate and remain within the city (Neighbourhood Plan).

Industrial firms have played an integral part in the history of South Riverdale and it has been the city’s responsibility to protect this vital sector of Toronto’s economy. Planners saw that in order to preserve working class neighbourhoods there was a need to ensure that the places of employment for working people were also retained (Lewinberg 26). When approached by

SmartCentres, city council chose to uphold the current regulatory policy governing this particular area of Toronto. Consequently the developers took their application to rezone the land from industrial to commercial to the Ontario Municipal Board for appeal.

The Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) is a provincially mandated body where development applications, those either approved or refused by municipalities, can be appealed (“History of the OMB”). The Board acts as an independent quasi-judicial body and has historically ruled in favour of developers in matters regarding private commercial development. In the summer of 2007 the OMB ruled in favour of three large condominium developments in Toronto's gentrifying Queen West Triangle area, arguably disregarding reasonable modification requests from both Toronto city council and an articulate and well-organized citizens' group (Leighton Opinions). With the power to overrule the decisions of elected municipal officials some feel that the Board threatens the cultural policy foundations of the city of Toronto. In an article in the *Toronto Star* concerning the SmartCentres matter Christopher Hume, referred to the OMB as “a remnant of 19th-century paternalism” and suggested that local area residents and politicians are powerless in decisions regarding city planning (Hume “Decision on Eastern”). Hume went on to argue that the province should have abolished the Board long ago and that in the twenty first century there is no place for a body that is “unelected, unaccountable and unwanted” (Hume “Decision on Eastern”).

In the past, SmartCentres brought a similar case to the OMB concerning a development in Guelph Ontario. The OMB sided with SmartCentres and permitted the construction of the retail complex despite the objections of local residents and city representatives. In the *Guelph Mercury* journalist Tony Leighton wrote:

The OMB, created long ago in 1897, might have been a good idea. A fair tribunal

intended to protect citizens from shoddy development and developers from hysterical ‘NIMBYism.’ Maybe there was once a judicious, far-sighted, unbiased OMB that prevented inept or corrupt city councils from being seduced by unscrupulous speculators. That would be good. But what if the OMB became the very beast it was intended to fight? What if instead of a balanced tribunal of high-minded altruists, we got a politically appointed hard-hearted gang who consistently make unexplained one-sided decisions in favour of the development industry, imperiously ignoring the wishes of citizens and their elected representatives as well as the imperatives of environmental sustainability, esthetic appeal, livability, lasting community wealth creation, and democratic self-determination?

While there have been many calls for the abolition of the OMB it has continued to exist. Consequently, SmartCentres met once again with the Board to appeal for the right to develop a commercial complex where it was not permitted, and for many, was not wanted.

The hearings on the matter were slated to begin in May of 2008. SmartCentres hoped that the OMB would side with the development proposal and overturn Toronto city council’s decision. On February 19, 2008, months before the hearings were to begin, the Board ruled that the ten acres of land occupied by Cinespace Studios at 721 Eastern Avenue could be included in the discussions of whether to let SmartCentres redevelop (Nickle “Cinespace Land”). The decision to include the adjacent land to the east of the SmartCentres site dramatically raised the stakes for those involved in the land-use dispute.

Out of fear that the Board would side with SmartCentres, as it had in Guelph, Leslieville area residents and city officials attempted to persuade the Ontario government to declare the

matter of provincial interest which would have allowed it to overrule any decision made by the Board. In the weeks leading up to the hearing, area residents, business owners and politicians organized protests and letter writing campaigns in order to attract the attention of the province (Yuen). Toronto mayor David Miller, backed by city council, formally asked the province to declare the matter of provincial interest. Miller argued that the proposal undermined the province's smart growth strategy, an initiative that emphasizes the protection of employment lands. Likening the dispute to the fight over the Spadina Expressway, which was stopped by the provincial government, former Toronto mayor David Crombie said he also supported city council's request that Queen's Park express a provincial interest in the project before the beginnings of the OMB hearings (Rusk "Leslieville Mall" A17). Ultimately, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Jim Watson chose not to involve the province in the decision explaining that it would be inappropriate for the minister to comment on a case before the OMB. During the April 9<sup>th</sup> debates and proceedings at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Watson stated "The OMB is an independent quasi judicial body and it would be entirely inappropriate for me as the minister to comment...Ministers should not and do not interfere and intervene with OMB matters" (Official Records for April 9, 2008). The refusal from the province to intervene in the matter allowed for the hearings to proceed as planned, commencing on May 21, 2008.

## **Chapter Four**

### *A Community Divided*

*The competing interests of developers, the city and Leslieville residents*

The planned Foundry District development posed a major problem for city planners determined to retain employment in the area and also divided the Leslieville community. Residents and business owners spoke out against the impact that a suburban style retail complex would have on their urban lifestyles and raised environmental concerns about the traffic the complex would bring to the area. While some community representatives were extremely vocal in their opposition to the development, others rallied behind the developers for various reasons such as job creation, the desire for low-income retail options and revitalization of the brownfield land on Eastern Avenue. Two sides emerged during the land dispute in Leslieville, those in favour of the development and those against. The following chapter outlines the issues that were at stake in the debate as to whether or not the SmartCentres project was suitable for the site.

On one side of the dispute city councilors joined forces with concerned community members to initiate an aggressive campaign to stop the development and persuade the Ontario Municipal Board to uphold the city's original decision. When plans for The Foundry District first began to surface in 2007 Leslieville residents and business owners organized the East Toronto Community Coalition (ETCC). The ETCC launched a well-organized campaign against the development. The most visible part of the coalition's efforts were red and black "No to Big Box" posters that were distributed throughout the neighbourhood. The ETCC encouraged residents and business owners to hang the posters in their windows and storefronts in order to draw attention to the negative consequences of the development and to create awareness in the community. In their case against The Foundry District the ETCC and Toronto city council referred to municipal and provincial planning documents as well as the opinions and interests of the local community.

The current retail strip in Leslieville along Queen Street East is reminiscent of a small town main street style-shopping district. The stores and restaurants are predominantly

independently owned and operated by members of the community and many of the buildings are architecturally distinct and of important local heritage value. Policies concerning the protection of such urban retail shopping areas have been established in prior city planning documents. In 1976 the City of Toronto Planning Board released *Toronto's Retail Strips: A Discussion Paper on the Viability and Future of Strip Retailing in the City*. The paper states, "the retail strip functions as an important component of Toronto's retail sector by providing suitable locations for many of the city's smaller businesses which provide competition and diversity in retail trade" (Toronto's Retail Strips 2). The paper goes on to suggest that the relocation of automobile oriented shopping centers in areas surrounding retail strips is of great concern and should be prohibited. Community members and city officials argued that Leslieville's independently owned retailers would not be able to compete with large corporately owned franchises such as Wal-Mart and would be forced out of business if the development were to be allowed.

The 1977 report *Towards a Neighbourhood Plan: South Riverdale* discusses retail development strategies and the importance of discouraging large shopping centers in the downtown. Section 4.5 b) of the report states, "the development of a shopping centre in a heavily residential area tends to cause increased traffic flow, increased noise and a disruptive effect on the balance between existing commercial facilities and area residents" (Neighbourhood Plan). Again in 1993 the city confirmed its commitment to protecting and cultivating independently owned local retailers in its *Official Plan Part I – CityPlan*. According to Section 9.15 of the plan "It is the policy of council to ensure that the location, scale and form of new retail developments in the city support the objective of retaining its retail strips as active and economically viable shopping districts." All of these city documents identify the important contributions retail strips make to the social and economic life of Toronto's residential communities. Those against the

development argued that the Foundry District undermined the regulatory guidelines concerning industrial land and retail development in Toronto. With these considerations in mind the city fought against the development proposed by SmartCentres in order to protect the vibrant local retailers and ensure the continued prosperity of Toronto's independently owned businesses.

In addition to the policies established by city planning documents the proposed development also undermined the intentions that some local residents had concerning the future growth of the community. Many of the recent middle class homebuyers that relocated to the area have done so in order to experience a certain kind of urban lifestyle. In her humorously titled article "How many funky galleries fit in a Wal-Mart?" writer Lisa Rochon spoke out against the proposed development and the negative implications the complex would have on the Leslieville community. She wrote, "what worries me is anything massive, unforgiving and homogenous...this development represents dumbed-down architecture to serve bottom-line pricing that threatens to depersonalize the neighbourhood" (Rochon R2). The large-scale corporate retail giants that would have occupied the development threatened to drive out the tired locally owned restaurants, cafes and retail stores that have come to define the character of this gentrifying neighbourhood.

The Foundry District would have been SmartCentres twelfth Toronto development and suggests a growing suburbanization of the city. As the downtown population grows many urban service centres are cropping up across the Greater Toronto Area. Urban residents are willing to travel, usually by car, to these large-scale retail destinations as they offer convenience, familiarity and a vast breadth of goods and services. In an article for the *Toronto Star* Christopher Hume referred to these structures as inappropriate and wasteful. "To handle the growth (of the city) we need to take advantage of every bit of property we have, not squander

land with one-floor retail and junk food outlets” (Hume “City Sleeps”). Members of the local community were concerned that if this complex were approved, it would set a precedent for further commercial development in the area and mark the end of regeneration period in Leslieville. Residents wanted to see the site developed for the creation of higher paying creative employment rather than a retail complex that some argued was an unimaginative and unproductive use of the land.

Many residents saw the complex not only as a threat to their lifestyles but also the health and safety of their community. The South Riverdale neighbourhood has had a long history with environmental problems. The large-scale heavy industrial sites that dominated the area for decades created tension between the factories and residents concerned about contamination and pollution. Some argued that the development of an automobile oriented retail center would threaten the pedestrian nature of the area. Paula Fletcher estimated that the big box stores would have resulted in “ten million new car trips into the area each year” (qtd. in Yuen). There are two elementary schools close to the development site as well as many residential streets and senior residences that would have been impacted by increased traffic. The noise, dust and environmental consequences of building such a large scale complex were cause for concern for environmentally conscious individuals who wished to see the area remain a green, pedestrian friendly environment. At a press conference held in late March of 2008 David Crombie, a vocal member of the opposition against the development, argued:

We didn't take down the Gardiner Expressway to provide for suburban big-box retail. That was not its purpose. Its purpose was to create a unique place on the waterfront where people could live, work and play. That's still the dream - that's

still what Torontonians have been promised, and they deserve no less (qtd. in Nickle “Heavy Hitters”).

During the period leading up to the OMB hearings members of city council and the ETCC lobbied the provincial government to intervene. In support of their cause, architect Daniel Libeskind wrote a letter to the province stating:

It is the pedestrian, the biker, the skater, the jogger, families, children and tourists, who deserve the landscape and sophisticated urbanity of this area. These types of large retail volumes belong elsewhere. A sustainable city needs an uncompromising attitude to the greatest of its natural resources and to the pleasures and enjoyment it affords to the public at large (qtd. in “World Famous Architect”).

While the city and many local community members rallied against the development, there were also numerous supporters for the project. Local residents, community groups and the development company all fought for the Foundry District to go ahead. They argued that the abandoned site would be revitalized by the development of a retail complex and would ultimately benefit a large portion of the Leslieville community and the surrounding area. After initial plans for the Foundry District were underway SmartCentres embarked on an intensive public relations campaign in the local area to promote the amenities the complex would offer to the neighbourhood. SmartCentres launched a sleek website for the Foundry



Artistic representation of the Foundry District (viewed from southwest corner)  
2008

Source: Foundry District Website

District complete with artistic renditions of the completed complex, environmental and economic reports backing the project and testimonials from community groups supporting the development. Tom Smith, vice-president of the development company, appeared on local television and radio stations and in print media to campaign for the complex. In addition to media releases and appearances SmartCentres employees fanned out across the Leslieville neighbourhood to hand out informational brochures on the development and explain the project to local area residents. According to Smith the canvassers found “about 20 percent of people were opposed to it, 30 to 40 percent supported it and the remainder were neutral” (qtd. in Rusk “Developer Woos”).



Artistic representation of streetscape architectural design 2008  
Source: Foundry District Website

In order to demonstrate the positive attributes of the project Smith explained the new urban-friendly design the development company had created. Unlike a traditional large-scale big-box complex the Foundry

District was designed to mimic a downtown streetscape, with smaller stores and a focus on pedestrian friendly walk ways and attractive landscaping. In an article for the *Toronto Star* Tom Smith revealed his vision for the project. Calling the Foundry District a ‘radical departure’ for his company he argued that SmartCentres was trying to integrate the site into the city fabric. He pointed out that “several paths will be extended through the property, running south from Eastern Avenue to Lakeshore... intended for pedestrians, cyclists and, of course, drivers trying to reach the center’s 1,900 parking spots” (qtd. in Hume “Wal-Mart and the city” A8). As part of their

intense lobbying efforts to win support for the plan, SmartCentres also bought advertising in many local newspapers showing sketches of the proposed project, with three-storey red brick buildings and pedestrians and cyclists out front (Kuitenbrouwer “Big-Box battle” A12). Throughout the hearings on the matter ETCC organizer Kelly Carmichael dubbed the project “a big box in a party dress” but Smith continued to emphasize the complex as a new form of urban retail rather than a suburban big-box development.

The design aesthetics of the complex were not the only aspect of the project that SmartCentres promoted in order to gain support the Foundry District. The developers appealed to the need for increased job creation and further stimulation of the underused brownfields in the area. In their application to the city to amend the *Official Plan Part I – CityPlan* SmartCentres presented evidence from a 2007 economic analysis of the development site. The report, prepared by consulting firm Altus Clayton, accused the city of restricting growth opportunities in the area:

The excessive emphasis on attracting office and industrial development alone and the unnecessary restrictions on mixed-use developments obstruct rather than stimulate the desired revitalization and growth of the SEA (South of Eastern Avenue) Employment District. If the project were allowed an estimated 1,152 person-years of employment would be generated directly on site and another 691 person-years of employment generated indirectly in firms providing materials and services for construction. When operational the Foundry District would provide an estimated 1,750 jobs on-site (Economic Analysis iii).

Smith claimed, “seventy percent of retail spending is leaving the area and going elsewhere...the project is about keeping money in the community (qtd. in Kuitenbrouwer “The big-box angle on retail” A8). While those opposed to the development contended that the jobs were unsubstantial

minimum wage jobs others argued that retail and service positions would provide valuable employment for members of the local community. At the OMB hearings SmartCentres lawyer Dennis Wood argued that the jobs offered by the many tenants in the Foundry District were in fact good jobs and moreover that they were real, not theoretical jobs (McKenzie 42). In response to this statement Eric Gillespie, lawyer for the ETCC, argued, "it's not just the quantity of jobs but the quality that we as a community have to carefully consider" (McKenzie 42). Those opposed to the development identified the retail and service jobs created by the Foundry District as a short-term fix rather than a long-term vision for creating employment within the community.

While some claimed the jobs created would not be good stable jobs others maintained the importance of retail in the overall employment growth in the city. In an article for the *Toronto Star* Elizabeth Evans, director of the Ted Rogers School of Retail Management at Ryerson University, made a case for the potential benefits of the development and the influx of jobs it would create for the local community and beyond. She wrote:

These investments create and enhance jobs in retailing and also drive employment and growth in supporting industries...the spin-off jobs that come from retail development and ongoing retail store operations are considerable – from architects, engineers, electricians and plumbers to transportation service providers, signage companies and advertising agencies (Evans AA8).

Evans argued that the retail jobs created by big-box developments serve as a critical portal to the world of work for young people, new Canadians, disabled Canadians and mature workers. On the other hand, Paula Fletcher took a firm stance against the long-term value of retail employment in the area. "A retail job is worth \$33,000 a year to Toronto's economy" said Fletcher, "a value-added job is worth \$106,000 a year...multiply each of those by 2,000 and you

can see the yearly difference in a value-added jobs strategy” (qtd. in Vincent “Wal-Mart: Blessing or curse?” A10). SmartCentres also claimed that the development would give a financial boost to the city, providing millions of dollars in fees from building permits, development charges and property taxes. According to the economic analysis prepared by Altus Clayton the complex would have paid roughly \$3.8 million in property taxes to the city every year once completed as well as about \$3.85 million in one-time development charges and \$1 million in one-time building permit fees (Economic Analysis iii).

In anticipation of the environmental concerns surrounding the project SmartCentres submitted environmental assessments to the city. According to a planning rationale prepared by an environmental consulting group hired by the developer:

Phase I and II environmental assessment studies were undertaken on the site lands, from this a risk assessment was prepared and accepted by the Ministry of Environment and the result is that there is no need for soil decommissioning to bring the property into compliance with regulation 153/04 of the Environmental protection act (Bousfields Incorporated 2).

SmartCentres also contracted ORTECH Environmental group to prepare a dust and odour study to address air quality concerns. The scope of the dust and odour study was based on the Ontario Ministry of the Environment Guidelines, specifically Guideline D-1 on Land Use Compatibility, and it was determined that the land uses and facilities surrounding the proposed development site would not be expected to cause odour or dust complaints in the surrounding residential area (Ortech Environmental). A noise study was also performed by the MMM Group in order to determine the impact of road traffic on the residential areas as well as the impact of sound produced both on and off site. The report concluded “the proposed development should not be

constrained by future traffic noise from Eastern Avenue or Lake Shore Boulevard, or by stationary sound from the proposed development” (MMM Group).

Local environmental groups in Leslieville such as TEARA (The Eastern Avenue Residents Association), STEAR (Support The Eastern Avenue Revitalization) and GOE (Greening of Eastern) gave their approval to the site development. The groups released a series of reports and letters endorsing the environmentally sound nature of the project that SmartCentres then published online on the Foundry District website. While those opposing the complex recruited Libeskind to support their cause, those in favour of the development obtained the support of Jack Diamond, another prominent architect. A letter written by Diamond to New Democratic Party leader Jack Layton was obtained and published in the *Globe and Mail* on April 7, 2008. In the letter Diamond expressed his support for the development and encouraged a rethinking of the issue:

This development will be a healthy, positive extension of urban fabric and good city planning principles in this community. It represents a significant step forward in building healthy, street-related retail, healthy neighbourhoods and supports the community (qtd. in Rusk “Architect gives retail project thumbs up”).

Still, those opposed to the project maintained that the area should be preserved for future industrial purposes. During a press conference on the matter Sandra Bussin, ward representative for the Beaches, remarked “Eastern Avenue isn’t the prettiest street in the world but there needs to be an understanding that this is the last location in the city core for industrial uses” (qtd. in Nickle “OMB Hearing”).

While many local residents joined the city and the ETCC in fighting the proposed development, others accused the opposition of elitism and insensitivity toward the needs of low-

income residents in the area. Kevin Walters, president of the Eastern Avenue Residents Association, expressed his disappointment with local New Democratic Party councilor Paula Fletcher who cultivated the 'NO' side of the issue. In an interview for the *Toronto Star* he argued that the NDP "are the ones whipping up all the opposition, yet so many of their core supporters are low income and need the opportunity to shop at a place like Wal-Mart" (qtd. in Vincent "Wal-Mart Blessing" A10). The gentrification in Leslieville over the past thirty years has seen many of its long standing working class residents displaced and their needs silenced in favour of a growing middle class population. The 1976 discussion paper *Toronto's Retail Strips* speaks to this concern. Section 3.3 Changes in Retail Strips states, "If high income families begin to move into a traditionally low income area, and the nature of the stores begins to change as a result, the low income population could find itself with insufficient retail facilities to satisfy its needs" (Toronto's Retail Strips).

Although some Leslieville residents were in favour of the retail development the extremely well organized efforts of the East Toronto Community Coalition and city council left many supporters of the Foundry District feeling as though their opinions were not recognized. Lisa De Haan, a single mother of three who lives in the community, spoke to the National Post about her frustrations with the ongoing battle. The coalition's No to Big Box campaign, which included lawyers and architects, was well organized, backed by politicians, and could raise more than \$70,000 at a single fundraiser while De Haan and other supporters of the development didn't have the time or resources to compete (Hui A1). In a letter to city council last year, De Haan expressed her anger with the situation and her position as a lower income individual living on social assistance. Haan wrote:

We are functioning, contributing members of this community, and as such, have a

voice as well as the right to use it. Don't tell me I have to go shopping on Queen Street; I couldn't afford it...we do what we have to do to get by but our choices are very limited (qtd. in Hui A1).

While lawyers and representatives for both sides of the dispute engaged in a formal hearing at the Ontario Municipal Board, the battle also played out on Leslieville's neighbourhood streets. During the dispute, tensions between competing interests were evident in the community. Residents and business owners clashed with one another over the perceived need for such a large-scale retail development and the direction the neighbourhood should take. At one point the dispute became so polarized that Leslieville merchants were on high alert after an anonymous individual put up posters across the neighbourhood that declared "No yuppies in Leslieville" and rallied residents to vandalize local property (Hui A1). The controversial posters were designed to mimic the "No Big Box" posters created by the ETCC. These posters confronted the changing



Remnants of a "No Yuppies" poster  
on a telephone pole in Leslieville 2008  
Source: CityTV news

demographics in the area and were a clear attack on the gentrification sweeping through the neighbourhood. Plastered on hydro poles and buildings the posters read, "Yuppies and their stores prey on neighbourhoods, they push up rent while pushing the neighbourhood out...don't look to others to solve the problem, we have to solve it ourselves" (Hui A1). The message of the anonymous posters expressed the underlying

frustrations of some community members with the middle class in-movers and seemed to incite a call to arms against the so-called yuppie residents and business owners. "The posters urged

residents to *save* the community by acting out against young, urban professionals by boycotting their stores, smashing their windows and painting graffiti" (Loriggo A3). Kelly Carmichael, co-chair of the ETCC, said she was disheartened and shocked by the posters that seemed to criticize her group's efforts. "When somebody takes over our artwork, its divisive and very destructive...it's a cowardly little stab at the community" (qtd in Loriggo A3).

These posters are reminiscent of previous clashes between cultures and classes in Toronto neighbourhoods throughout the city's history. In *Accidental City: The Transformation of Toronto* Robert Fulford discusses some of the community tensions in the neighbouring Beaches area during the twentieth century:

In the summer of 1933 the area acquired a short-lived anti-Semitic movement...the so-called swastika clubs claimed they were merely protecting their district from outsiders...Later on in the 1980s as the Beach transformed into 'The Beaches' a recreational destination for people across the Toronto region, some local people grew resentful and a short-lived organization, the Beach Residents Against Tourists, sprang up (100-101).

Fulford's first hand account suggests that the area has had a historical problem with conflict between members of different cultural groups. During the 1920s Jewish people across Toronto were banned from beaches and hotels and the middle class attempted to keep them out of *their* professions (Cotter 13). These east end communities, in the past and today, have labeled outsiders and taken action against people they perceive as threatening to their established way of life.

In considering the various interests and issues that were at stake during this dispute it is clear to see that the question of whether or not to permit the development on Eastern Avenue was

not a simple matter. It is important to consider the extent to which mega projects like the Foundry District are not only shaping new landscapes but also contributing to growing social polarization within the city. (Ley and Bourne 20). How do we begin to account for the tension and conflict that occurred in the Leslieville neighbourhood during the course of this land-use debate? “Over its history Toronto’s neighbourhoods have undergone tremendous changes, frequently accompanied by great social upheaval...while some have been destroyed and rebuilt, others have managed to adapt their physical forms to the ever-changing demands of successive population groups” (Kosny and Springer 1). As gentrification continues to change the residential demographics in Leslieville there is an inherent risk of increased polarization within the community.

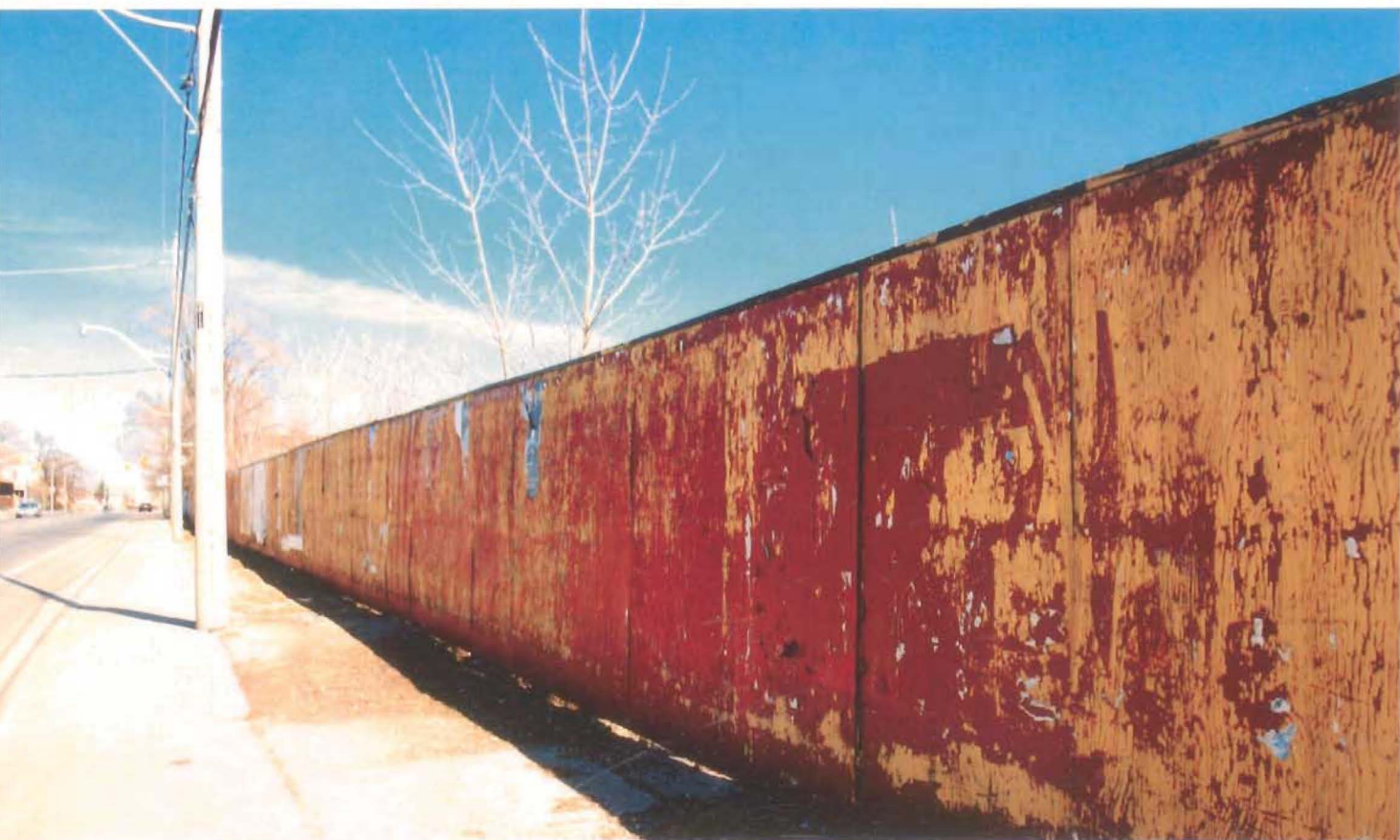
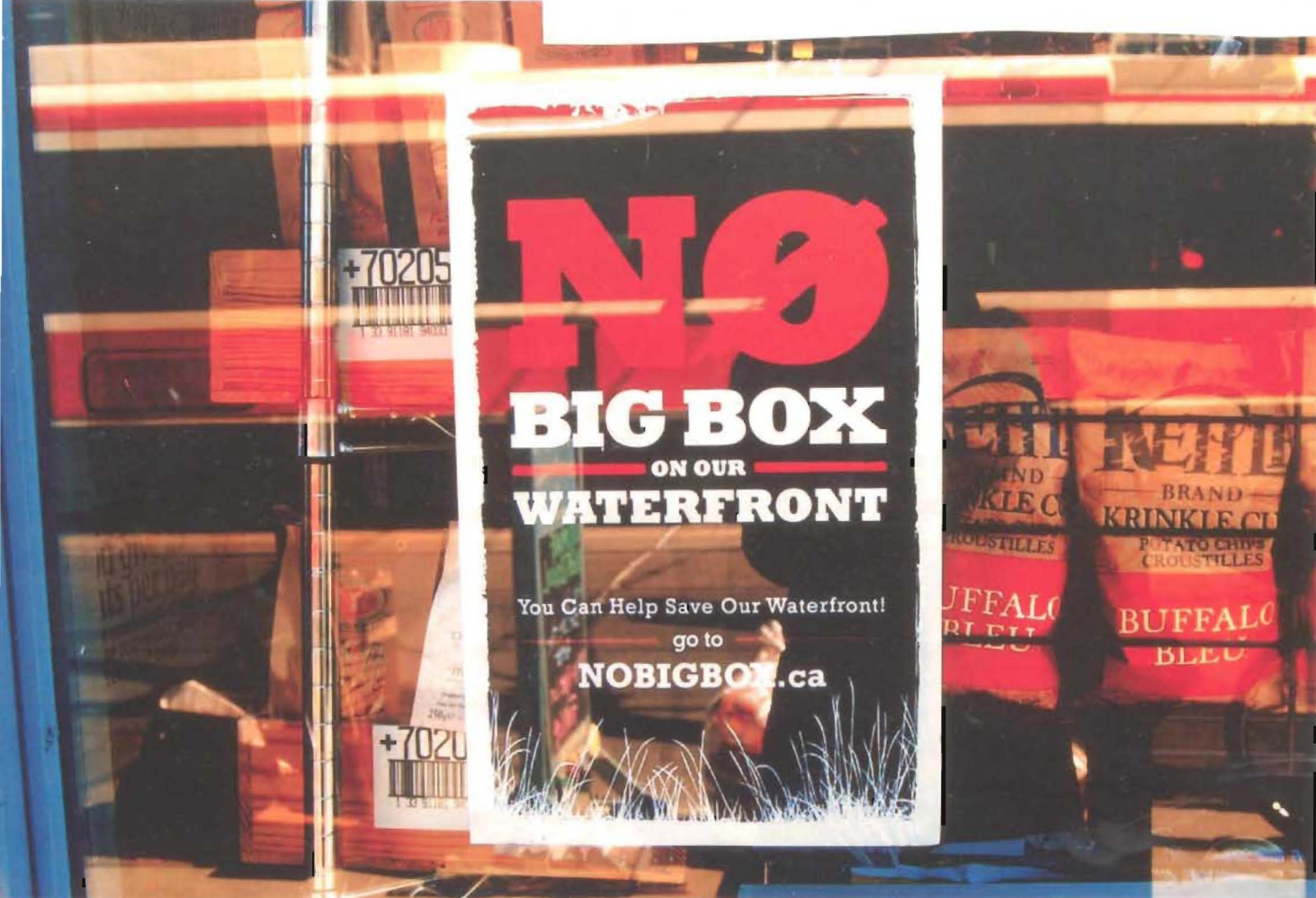
Neighbourhoods that are in transition are likely to become sites of urban contestation and negotiation. The new lifestyles that have relocated to Leslieville have brought irrevocable changes in social composition and significant shifts in the socio-spatial relationships in the area (Holdsworth 46). Examining the SmartCentres land development dispute requires us to understand the underlying tensions in the local community. Alterations in land-use patterns and changes in the composition of the neighbourhood populations are resulting in new patterns of social organization within inner cities (London and Palen “Introduction” 4). The threat of the proposed Foundry District development was simultaneously a catalyst that brought cohesion amongst some members of the community, in the form of the ETCC, and also a dramatic polarization between quarrelling residents and business owners.

In the introduction to *Gentrification, Displacement and Neighbourhood Revitalization* theorists Bruce London and John Palen describe how community groups organize in order to fight against an unwanted development. “Shared sentiments and identification with a named and

bounded community may facilitate the mobilization of a critical mass of the neighborhood population to meet perceived threats” (London and Palen “Introduction” 21). The members of the ETCC were attempting to find empowerment through their organization and stop a tangible change to their community. In her work on the nature of community organizing and civic engagement Marion Orr looks at the different ways in which residents can come together to transform their neighbourhood. “Community organizations operate at the local level – confronting, negotiating and working with city councilors, appointed officials, civic and corporate leaders” (Orr 2). The ETCC began as a social network within the community that was able to organize in a constructive manner, harness the support of outside agents and effectively negotiate and change the direction of neighbourhood growth.

The landscape of this inner city neighbourhood is in flux and the community relations are complex. The lines drawn between those opposed to the Foundry District and those who were in favour of it divided the community and demonstrated the conflicting class interests in the diverse neighbourhood. Ultimately, the tense disagreement that emerged vis-à-vis the development on Eastern Avenue demonstrated conflicting visions for how the neighbourhood and the city should grow and whose interests should be served.





## **Photographs**

*All photographs author's own*

### **Page One**

Top: Vacated Toronto Film Studios property at 629 Eastern Avenue

Bottom: Studio District street sign on Eastern Avenue

### **Page Two**

Top: East Toronto Community Coalition's NO BIG BOX poster in storefront window on  
Queen St. East

Bottom: Current empty development site on Eastern Avenue

## **Chapter Five**

### *The Decision*

#### *Hearings at the Ontario Municipal Board*

The dispute between SmartCentres and Toronto city council over the zoning designation on the development site at Eastern Avenue came to the Ontario Municipal Board on May 21, 2008. The hearings lasted a period of fifty-eight days over late spring, summer, and early fall. During the hearings the Board heard testimonies from lawyers, planners, traffic experts, local health experts and academics. The OMB also heard from local area residents and representatives in order to determine if they would allow the project to go ahead contrary to the previous decision made by Toronto city council. Each side of the dispute was presented with opportunities to call witnesses to testify and provide evidence to support their position.

City council and the East Toronto Community Coalition opposed the site-specific applications on the basis that the sought after rezoning would “preclude the subject property from ever being used or redeveloped for...superior types of employment uses, and deleteriously impact the employment district” (McKenzie 33). The city’s position on the development was that it did not conform to the overall vision for physical and economic growth in the urban areas surrounding the downtown core. The city’s evidence included testimony from Pino DiMascio, a professional planning consultant; Jeffrey Climans, a professional real estate advisory consultant; Russell Mathew, a professional planning consultant with a specialization and expertise in land economics; Peter Finestone, Toronto’s Film Commissioner; as well as other professional planners and experts (McKenzie 7). The ETCC also called three witnesses: Ute Lehrer, a professional planner and professor of environmental studies; Steven Tufts, a professor of sociology with a specialization in labour markets and community economic development and, Paul Young, a landscape architect by formal training, called to testify on active transportation and community health promotion (McKenzie 8). The evidence for SmartCentres included testimony from Peter Smith, a professional planning consultant; Frank Clayton, a professional

economist with a specialization in land economics and employment; Lee Parsons, a market analyst as well as other land economists and real estate experts and professional planners, engineers and architects (McKenzie 7). Finally, the Board heard from members of the local community regarding the tentative development plans. Sixty individuals testified over three public sessions and “the opposition outpaced support for the proposed development scheme by a ratio of 3:1” (McKenzie 8).

Almost ten months after the hearings first commenced the Board finally reached their decision on March 3, 2009. A fifty-five page document written by J.R. McKenzie, vice-chair of the Board, outlined the specifics of the ruling. The OMB praised the innovative design of the complex and the extensive work on the part of the developers to create a shopping complex that was appropriate for a downtown location. The decision stated, “In terms of its built form, the proposed development scheme is responsive to its context and represents the evolution of retail building design in an urban setting” (McKenzie 32). However, despite pointing out the positive attributes of the development, such as the architectural design and the employment opportunities provided by the retail space, the OMB decided to uphold the decision made by the city and denied SmartCentres the zoning exemption. The Board found that “the Site-Specific Amendments do not constitute good planning and will very likely destabilize the South of Eastern Employment District, an area inclusive of formally-designated industrial lands” (McKenzie 53). In the decision the Board contended that the approval of the development would have undermined the industrial intentions for the land and encouraged further retail development in the area. “The introduction of the proposed development scheme would enhance land values, thereby inviting land speculation that, in turn, would erode Toronto’s employment land base” (McKenzie 42). The concern for the Board was not the legitimacy of the retail jobs as viable

employment opportunities for the area but rather the impact that new retail uses would have on the capacity of the industrial land to perform its intended function.

The Board described the complex as poor land use planning and expressed concern regarding the impact the development would ultimately have upon the surrounding land that would not be re-designated. The testimony of city witness Jeffrey Climans proved to be particularly resonant with the Board. "Mr. Climans was retained by the city to provide advice regarding market and economic issues and, in particular, the potential implications of introducing a large scale retail development in the South of Eastern Employment District" (McKenzie 38). He testified that the site-specific applications represented a threat to the viability of the employment in the district, such that their approval would undermine its economic function. Mr. Climans testified that the consequences of retail expansion would result in "lease terminations and the withdrawal of opportunities to renew leases, a displacement of price-sensitive businesses that rely on proximity to the downtown core and/or other similar companies, and a general disruption of the business fabric of the area" (McKenzie 39). Recognizing that the ruling would ultimately set a precedent for further development in the area the Board included the following statement in the concluding remarks of the fifty-five-page decision. "The Board feels it necessary to take this step so as to discourage an immediate pursuit of a similar development scheme...that would decidedly not be in the public interest over the not-to-distant future" (McKenzie 54).

The decision from the Board was seen as a long awaited victory for Toronto city council and the ETCC. In a news release mayor David Miller praised the decision stating, "Preserving and protecting employment lands is an important part of Toronto's Official Plan...this decision recognizes that position, and strengthens our ability to ensure Toronto can prosper now and in the future" (qtd. in Vincent "OMB rejects big-box plans"). Many of those opposed to the

development were shocked and surprised by the ruling. The decision went against the Board's reputation for siding with developers over community interests. Local councilor Paula Fletcher exclaimed, "It's not every day that we're that happy with an OMB decision" (qtd. in Nickle "OMB turns down"). Describing the entire experience as "crazy" Kelly Carmichael from the ETCC celebrated the decision declaring, "It means a new day for the community to decide what to do on those lands, and that's what everybody has been saying since the beginning" (qtd. in Nickle "OMB turns down").

But the decision has many individuals asking the question, what now? SmartCentres spokesperson Sandra Kaiser issued the following written statement in March:

All the voices have been heard, and we lost, while disappointed, we respect the process and the decision of the (OMB). At this time, we have no immediate plans for other development or use of the property and will assess all available options to us (qtd. in Nickle "OMB turns down").

The comprehensive website for the Foundry District was promptly removed from the Internet and no further plans were announced by SmartCentres in the immediate weeks following the decision. The Toronto Film Studios completed their move to the Port Lands, and in April 2009 the city of Toronto purchased a controversial share in the new FilmPort complex. Critics denounced the city's twenty percent investment in the studio as a thinly veiled bailout and others suggested that the city would become an unfair competitor in the film industry (Lewington "Toronto to take 20 per-cent"). Currently, the former Toronto Film Studios on Eastern Avenue remain abandoned and the buildings vacant. Some community members remain optimistic about the potential that the land has to continue to serve the film and television industry in the area. ETCC member Charles Braive, a film production manager, said he was delighted with the

decision and hopes the property will be used for future film, audio, animation or computer design projects (qtd. in Vincent “OMB rejects big-box plans”). Although, with the current economic climate many are wondering what type of investment might realistically happen in the area.

In mid April 2009 the developers made a surprising announcement that they would appeal the decision made by the OMB and seek \$1.4 million in legal costs from the city of Toronto for the 24-week hearing in 2008. The decision from SmartCentres came as a shock since the corporation made the request well after the normal fifteen-day appeal deadline for the Board. SmartCentres vice president for corporate affairs Sandra Kaiser stated, “SmartCentres believes that the Board erred in law and exceeded its jurisdiction in arriving at its decision” (qtd. in Lewington “Rebuffed in Leslieville”). While no further developments have occurred as of yet, an in-house lawyer representing the city of Toronto in the case said he would contest their bid to appeal on the grounds it was well past the deadline (Hanes).

Although the hearings at the Board are over for now, this matter still remains unresolved. Currently there are no concrete plans for how the developers will proceed with the site and so the future of Eastern Avenue and the Leslieville neighbourhood is still very much up in the air. Historically and today this area contains a mix of built forms serving industrial, retail, service and residential purposes. The decision from the OMB recognized the importance of Leslieville’s industrial heritage in the hope of ensuring that any future growth on and surrounding the site in question will happen in a way that maintains the diverse nature of land use in the neighbourhood.

## **Chapter Six**

*Reflections on the Past - Considerations for the Future*

Toronto is, and always has been, a city of neighbourhoods. By annexing neighbouring towns and villages Toronto has grown into an eclectic and diverse city. Since its humble beginnings as a farming village Leslieville has undergone significant periods of change. Today, the story of Leslieville continues to unfold as land use patterns and demographics transform over time. No longer an industrial working-class centre but not yet entirely gentrified the area is best described as a neighbourhood in transition. Extensive renovation projects, town home developments and emerging boutique retail along Queen Street East indicate patterns of middle class colonization and yet run down storefronts, industrial buildings and community housing projects are still prominent in the area. By treating Leslieville as a case study in urban development this research creates a space for analyzing neighbourhood change and gentrification in Canadian inner cities.

The recent land-use conflict on Eastern Avenue exacerbated underlying tensions in the community and called into question the growth and employment strategies of Toronto city council. The proposed Foundry District produced clear divisions between the goals of commercial developers, the city and local residents. City council and the East Toronto Community Coalition denounced the project and called for the protection of industrial land and the preservation Leslieville's locally owned businesses and urban character. Those in favour of the development fought to revitalize the area and provide for the needs of low-income residents that have been increasingly displaced by the forces of gentrification. While the city and grassroots opponents to the development were victorious in their fight at the Ontario Municipal Board we must consider the future impact this verdict will have on all of the groups involved in the dispute. Some members of the Leslieville community saw the idea of the Foundry District as a suburban invasion that would have threatened the vitality of local economy. However,

residents who cannot afford to patronize the high-end stores and organic markets along the Queen Street East retail strip would have benefited significantly from the value shopping that the complex would have brought to the area. The Foundry District would have undoubtedly created hundreds of on and off site employment opportunities but these part-time jobs would not have been the stable, high-paying jobs the community needs for long-term neighbourhood revitalization. In consideration of the variety of competing interests at stake in this land-dispute, Leslieville may be understood as an example of how a neighbourhood can act as a site of urban contestation and negotiation.

As the social and physical landscape of the city changes, competing visions for urban growth begin to collide. Negotiating how and for whom the city should develop is a challenge currently facing the city of Toronto. The city needs to enact policies that protect and advance burgeoning industries and sustainable employment. However, the city should also work towards creating strategies and encouraging projects that provide retail space and employment for lower income and working class individuals. Revitalization and increased commercial investment must not come at the expense of affordable housing and retail options. Prohibiting forms of development that offer inexpensive goods and services may further displace working-class residents outside of the downtown.

This research paper should inform efforts to build a livable and prosperous urban environment that will serve *all* of Leslieville's residents. It is important to understand the heritage of Toronto's unique older neighbourhoods in order to provide a historical context for determining the direction that future growth strategies should take. Chronicling the transformation of this former industrial centre has shown the unique role that this working class community has played in Toronto's history. By analyzing the processes and consequences of

urban change in neighbourhoods like Leslieville we can begin to formulate an understanding of how to meet the diverse needs of mixed communities around Toronto. This case study and further urban development research should help to create public policy that maintains viable employment and industry in Toronto while fostering the growth of the city as a whole.

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