Bringing People Together First: Gentrification Dynamics and Inclusive Communities in South West Toronto

Report by Leigh Snyder, Project Coordinator
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Community University Research Alliance
Neighbourhood Change & Building Inclusive Communities from Within
Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto
455 Spadina Avenue, 4th floor
Toronto M5S 2G8 Canada
Fax: 416 978-7162
Website: www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/cura

CURA Team Co-ordinators:
Maureen Fair, St. Christopher House, Toronto
J. David Hulchanski, Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto

Research Team
This research was conducted by the Community Development Student Research Team:
Melodie Chan, Nelson Rosales, Nancy Slamet, Andrew Koch, Regan Mancini and Gisela Vanzaghi, coordinated by Leigh Snyder and advised by Professor Daniel Schugurensky of OISE/UT and Jennifer Woodill, Coordinator of Volunteer and Community Relations at St. Christopher House.

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1. Introduction

Toronto’s west-central neighbourhoods have been the site of considerable neighbourhood change in the last few decades. Shifts in languages spoken, fluctuation in rental housing availability and changes in median income are just a few indications of the on-going transformation of Toronto’s west-central communities (CUCS and St. Christopher House, 2005). The physical, economic and social changes that have been seen in this area have inspired this study to ask: How can community engagement play a role in maintaining and encouraging inclusive neighbourhoods amid shifts in Toronto’s west end?

The idea of social inclusion in neighbourhoods has been identified by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities as central part of the vision for successful municipalities (2003). In addition, social inclusion is highlighted in the City of Toronto’s official plan. The City of Toronto defines a successful city as having an “enviable quality of life [that] is diverse, equitable and inclusive” (2006:3). Inclusion is integrated throughout Toronto’s official plan appearing in policies on housing, employment and the development of the built environment (2006). The creation of inclusive neighbourhoods is clearly recognized as an important character of healthy and strong cities and neighbourhoods.

Community engagement has also been identified by a number of scholars as being central to the development of strong, inclusive neighbourhoods. In Building Inclusive Communities: Cross Canada Perspectives and Strategies, Culltherbuck and Novack identify engaging youth and building broader civic consciousness as strategies to achieve inclusive communities (2003:9). Similarly, Kennedy and Leonard outline ten strategies to strengthen communities and optimize the effects of neighbourhood change. Based around community-building tactics, they identify community organization and efforts to re-knit the community as paramount in this process (2001:28).

The importance of community involvement and social inclusion in shaping how neighbourhoods grow and change is clear, but how is this knowledge put to work in a practical context? This project attempted to answer this question by working with St. Christopher House, the community partner in this study, to seek out the experiences and opinions of residents and local social service providers in west-central Toronto. Through the use of focus groups, participants reflected on their experience of neighbourhood change, which helped this project to lay the groundwork for community members to
become engaged in activities to promote inclusive neighbourhoods.

2. Background

2.1 CURA

A five-year research initiative was funded by the Community University Research Alliance (CURA) program of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada – the community-university partnership between the University of Toronto’s Centre for Urban and Community Studies and St. Christopher House — and it explored three main questions:

1) How can we preserve existing lower-income and socially and ethnically mixed, affordable neighbourhoods in the face of forces that are raising costs (particularly housing costs) and displacing or excluding certain people, businesses, and community services?

2) How can people in urban neighbourhoods successfully shape the development of their environment to create a community that is socially cohesive and inclusive?

3) What can we learn from recent and emerging community practice about effective action against negative forces and support for positive forces to ensure better community outcomes?

These research questions are being investigated by a number of researchers from various disciplines including geography, sociology, political science, urban planning, adult education and community development who are working collaboratively to advance the current research in the field of neighbourhood change. This project, carried out in the summer of 2006, is a small part of the overall CURA research effort. Focusing on how people can successfully shape the development of their environment to create a community that is socially cohesive and inclusive, this project has aimed to investigate and bring forth ways in which communities can actively create and shape inclusive and diverse neighbourhoods.

2.2 An Ongoing Effort

Building on past research done under the CURA grant, this project aimed to broaden the spectrum of voices heard from the research catchment area. Before this project was begun, a similar study, Taking the Pulse: Gauging Neighbourhood Change
in the Downtown West End, surveyed 108 residents during St. Christopher House’s annual Community Sweep, a door-to-door volunteer recruitment event. Through a detailed survey, Taking the Pulse aimed to develop policy and planning recommendations based on resident’s concerns and views about neighbourhood changes. By using a fifty-five person sample selected from seven of the eight neighbourhoods in the St. Christopher House catchment area\(^1\), the geographic base for this study, this project was able to build upon the existing data gathered from area residents with a specific aim to begin to engage participants in actions to build inclusive communities.

Figure 1. St. Christopher House Catchment area and CURA Study Neighbourhoods

3. Objectives

Using qualitative data gathered from focus groups this project aimed to accomplish three goals:

1) Collection of qualitative data: to obtain the views, perspectives and recommendations for action from the residents themselves.

2) Pre-engagement: to begin to have residents partake in a discussion about what can be actively done to create healthier, more inclusive communities.

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\(^1\) No focus group was conducted in the Liberty Exhibition neighbourhood because the area lacked residents involved in volunteering at St. Christopher House and due to its status as a newly residential neighbourhood.
3) Build community: to create a better sense of community among St. Christopher House volunteers – the population from which the study sample was taken – bringing together people with common interests.

The major goals of this research were driven by these objectives, along with the project’s basic guiding question: “How can community engagement play a role in maintaining and encouraging inclusive neighbourhoods amid shifts in Toronto’s west-end neighbourhoods?”

4. Methodology

4.1 Sample

The objectives of this project directly informed the selection of the population for this study. Because of the explicit desire to engage with St. Christopher House and its volunteers in creating inclusive communities, most of the participants in the study were recruited from a list of active St. Christopher House volunteers who also live in the study catchment area.

St. Christopher House has approximately 200 volunteers living in the study area, which provided a base for the project recruitment. A total of forty-four volunteers were involved in the project, thirty-nine participated through neighbourhood focus groups and an additional five participants who were unable to attend the focus groups responded to the research questions through email. This sample was chosen because of its convenience as well as its ability to reach residents in the seven chosen neighbourhoods of the geographical study area.

In addition to conducting focus groups with St. Christopher House volunteers, two focus groups were held with local service providers. The first focus group consisted of ten participants that were selected from St. Christopher House staff who both live and work in the study area. The second service provider focus group was held at CultureLink, a settlement services agency in the Parkdale neighbourhood. Six participants attended, including a local small business owner and a service provider from the east side of the study area. The purpose of holding these focus groups was to draw on the unique knowledge of social service staff in the area, as they serve and interact with a great cross section of community residents and could reflect not only on their own experiences in the neighbourhood, but the changing needs of their clients.

Working under time and resource constraints, this sampling method allowed the researchers of this project to speak with a large cross section of residents in a short
amount of time, providing a quick but detailed look at the issues facing residents as well as their personal perspectives on what can be done to create inclusive and diverse neighbourhoods.

4.2 Recruitment

Recruitment of volunteers was coordinated by a research partner at St. Christopher House. Contacting volunteers by email, participants were invited to take part in a two-hour discussion about neighbourhood change and building inclusive communities. This invitation attracted long-term and short-term residents to the table as well as newcomers, youth and retired residents.

The staff focus groups were similarly organized. Available staff members at St. Christopher House were recruited through the project’s research partner at St. Christopher House. A staff member at CultureLink assisted the researchers in recruiting service providers from the Parkdale area.

4.3 Profile

While this study did not formally collect socio-economic data from focus group participants, information gathered through the focus groups did allow for a general profile of the project participants to be compiled.

Volunteers

A total of forty-four St Christopher’s House volunteers participated in the project, thirty-nine through focus groups and five via email response. The sample, while small, drew participants from all across the St. Christopher House catchment area. Eighteen of the participants were women and twenty-one were men ranging in age from age 13 up to those in their 70’s. Participants also included members reflecting Canadian, Brazilian, Portuguese, English, Farsi, Chinese, Aboriginal, Tamil, and Italian backgrounds.

The tenure of the participants’ residency in the neighborhoods spanned from less than a year to adults who had lived in the area for their entire lives. Participants also reflected a range in terms of socio-economic status. Present in the sample were people who rent, renters who are struggling with increased rents on their property, people who have experienced homelessness, people on social assistance, people on long-term ODSP because of mental and/or physical disabilities, new house owners, business-owners and condo-dwellers. The focus group participants also came from a range of
career backgrounds including but not limited to administrative assistants, bankers, social workers, graduate students, retired persons, film industry workers, I.T. industry professionals, real estate agents and construction workers. A variety of ethno-cultural and social backgrounds were present.

While the sample did manage to include community members with a range of experiences, the use of a self-selected convenience sample limited the diversity of participants to some degree. The study attracted volunteers who were, more often than not, well educated, gainfully employed, and not necessarily negatively affected by the process of neighbourhood change. Although the sample reflected some of the diversity that exists in the community, it was not considered to be representative of all residents in the catchment area. This and other challenges are further discussed and elaborated upon at the end of the report in the section on limitations.

**Staff**

Sixteen social service staff members were participants in this study. Ten were present for the group held for St. Christopher House staff and six people were present at the focus group with Parkdale service providers. The staff at St. Christopher House included participants with Anglo-Saxon, Portuguese, Brazilian and Polish backgrounds. The staff at St. Christopher House work with diverse community members, including but not limited to newcomers, seniors, youth and adults facing barriers to work.

The six participants from the Parkdale service provider focus group included four individuals employed by service providers in Parkdale (including one who was also a small-business owner), a second small business owner, and a service provider from the east side of the study area.

**Research Team**

The research team involved in this project consisted of graduate students in several different programs of study. The team reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the issue of neighbourhood change. A total of seven students were involved in the planning and execution of the project coming from master’s programs in Adult Education and Community Development, Public Health and Urban Planning. In addition to the student researchers, the project was further supported by Daniel Schugurensky, Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and Jennifer Woodill Coordinator of Volunteer

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2 See Appendix B for brief biographies of the project researchers.
and Community Relations at St. Christopher House.

4.4 Focus Groups: Beginning a Dialogue

The project brought together participants using focus groups. Nine focus groups were held in total: seven were neighbourhood-based focus groups, drawing volunteers from the communities of Dufferin Grove, Roncesvalles, Parkdale, Little Portugal, Little Italy/Palmerston, Trinity-Bellwoods, and Niagara. Two additional focus groups were comprised of local service providers from St. Christopher House and from service providers in Parkdale.

Each focus group was facilitated by at least two researchers. For ethical reasons, consent forms were explained, read and signed by each participant before the commencement of each focus group, since each group discussion was to be digitally recorded and transcribed by the research team. The facilitators administered and prompted the participants using the following guiding questions:

1) What have been the most important changes in this neighbourhood in the last decade?

2) What have been the positive impacts of those changes? How can those positive changes be supported and sustained?

3) What have been the negative impacts of those changes? What has been done so far to address them?

4) How do you envision a healthy, inclusive neighbourhood?

5) What can be done in the next years to maintain or create more inclusive and diverse communities?

6) What actors can be identified as key players in creating more inclusive and diverse communities?

These questions were developed to lead participants through the focus group in a structured but organic fashion, starting with the identification of changes that participants felt were important, followed by a discussion of what could be done in the neighbourhood and by whom, in order to make it a more inclusive place to live.

The use of focus groups served both as a method to obtain rich qualitative data, and also as a way to create a space for community residents to come together and share their ideas, experiences and opinions with one and other and to begin a dialogue.
among residents about neighbourhood change. Unlike other methods of data collection, the use of focus groups added an interactive and fluid dimension to the research process, allowing for a group of participants to think collaboratively, debate and discuss issues of common concern in their own neighbourhoods.

This method of data collection also bears limitations. While focus groups can be an easy and relatively low-cost method of collecting data in a short period of time, there is considerable room for bias from the moderator in affecting the process of data collection by inadvertently influencing or shaping the discussion. In addition, the very nature of group interaction limits the degree of generalizability of the data, as the responses given by participants are highly contextual (Pollard, 2006). The nature of group discussion can also, at times, stifle some voices and amplify others depending on the group dynamic of the participants. In recognition of these limitations, a conscious effort was made to reflect not only the prevailing attitude of each of the focus groups, but to capture the diverse experiences and ideas of all parties, reflecting the complexity and depth of the effects of neighbourhood change including the positive and negative effects seen and felt by the project participants. These issues and other weaknesses of the methodology are discussed further in the Limitations section of this report.

5. Experiences and Ideas: Words from the People

The focus group participants expressed a wide range of opinions and experiences of neighbourhood change as well as a diversity of ideas about how to promote inclusive neighbourhoods\(^3\). On the whole, there were a number of recurrent themes that arose during the focus group as well as stark differences in participant’s experiences. The following sections highlight the most prevalent and relevant themes that were discussed by focus groups’ participants.

5.1 Changes in the Neighbourhoods

When considering neighbourhood change, participants often made reference to the physical and aesthetic changes they were seeing in their neighbourhoods. Stores coming and going, old homes being replaced by new town houses, and the sense that condominiums were materializing overnight are examples of the thoughts that were expressed in the focus groups. It was abundantly clear that the environment in which the project participants live is changing, in the physical sense and in deeper ways that are

\(^3\) See Appendix A for detailed tables outlining the focus group data presented within section five.
fundamentally altering how people experience their neighbourhood. Observations about physical changes, patterns of construction, redevelopment and renewal provided an entry point, a common beginning, for participants to reflect on their experiences of neighbourhood change.

“I’ve also noticed that a lot of the properties are getting bought up. There was a hat store, or hat factory behind where I live and it got demolished and condos are going up, fourteen units in the little lane behind where there are going up…I don’t know if it’s necessarily a good thing or not, it doesn’t really matter, but certainly I’ve noticed a lot of new housing going up”. – Trinity-Bellwoods Participant.

“Where I live there has been construction for the past three years from six in the morning until seven in the evening, seven days a week.” – Niagara Participant.

“Massive gentrification, massive changes…you can just see the money coming out from the streets. Because when I came, the railroad tracks were empty, Queen Street was desolated and they started to build all those condominiums and you saw basically the money coming out to the street….all the art galleries and the boutiques that are opening up. It is quite nice, but you can see displacement too.” – Little Portugal Participant.

Participants experienced neighbourhood changes in an interconnected, complex fashion and reflected that in the focus groups by identifying the many relationships between one change and another. Eight of the nine focus groups linked their observations of physical changes to rising costs, particularly of property values and rents.

“Really [it is] quite astounding, consider that the neighbourhood has traditionally been looked at as being fairly poor and low income. And you’d think, at those housing prices, people buying those houses are not going to be low income. And it is kind of pushing up the cost. At least as far as housing goes, pushing up the cost for everybody.” – Parkdale Participant.

“The cost of housing is really out of every single person’s range, unless you go
into so much debt. You can’t afford to buy a house, you can barely afford to rent one. Rent an apartment, my rent is 50% of my salary.” – St. Christopher House Staff Participant.

While rising rents and new housing developments have had considerable impact on how a neighbourhood is experienced, distinctiveness of places comes not only from how the built form is experienced, but also from what inhabits that form. The changes in the physical landscape, as well as a shift in the social and economic picture of these neighbourhoods have begun to recast some of these area’s identities. New buildings and new developments in neighbourhoods not only brought construction, noise and heavy machinery but also a shift in demographics; new and different kinds of people moved in while some groups were noticeably absent. Each of the nine focus groups identified changes in demographics as a change that they had experienced in the past, sharing their own insights into how the people in their neighbourhood are changing.

“This was a real tough neighbourhood, very dirty tough neighbourhood. I guess the main thing that I’ve noticed is there is a certain economic group that has moved into the neighbourhood”. – Trinity-Bellwoods Participant.

“From what I remember it was always a working class area, at least where I live we went through the generation were the Jewish moved out, the Italians came in, the Portuguese came in and there were different races, different cultures, but I think they all left something behind. The Jewish are still there today, the Italians are still there today, Portuguese are there and now Chinese have moved in, in the last years or so. I think it brings a little bit of colour to the area and it does have a little bit of friction as well.” – Little Portugal Participant.

“There is a lot more wealthy professional younger people coming, particularly in my street, I’ve noticed five new couples in the past year and all the women are pregnant.” – Trinity-Bellwoods Participant.

Demographic change is not only readily noticeable on the streets and in the faces of new residents; it is also reflected in more subtle changes in the commercial orientation of these neighbourhoods. The new owners of a corner store or a supermarket
that begins to carry tortillas instead of baguettes are indicators of change, reflecting in the tastes and demands of new consumers and quietly telling part of the story of how a neighbourhood is experiencing change.

“There is a yoga studio, wine places, bars, vintage stores which has brought a kind of different flavour to the neighbourhood, which I think it is good for that area.” – Dufferin-Grove Participant.

“That’s happening in my neighbourhood big time; with the College strip where is it’s almost exclusively restaurants that open, and it’s almost exclusively Italian or Portuguese-owned stores for daily living—grocery stores, shoe stores, hardware—that are closing. It is really irritating as someone who wants to live…and shop in my neighbourhood”. – Parkdale Service Provider group participant.

“There is nothing in there under $400, you know? It is appealing to a whole new social demographic I think.” – Dufferin-Grove Participant.

5.2 The Impacts of Change

The sights, smells and sounds of these neighbourhoods continue to change: compact condominiums have been replacing duplexes, the aroma of organic roti at the farmers market now mingle with Chinese food and the dull roar of car traffic extends long past rush hour. That these kinds of changes are happening is not disputed, but just how the changes are truly affecting residents is the greater, more complex question.

A noted impact of change was in the diversity of the study area. The sense of the word “diversity” was not used in a specific manner and group participants did not universally or commonly define it. Regardless of the way the word was used, in some cases as a generic term to talk about impacts on ethnic and cultural diversity, family composition and social location of residents, the impacts of changing diversity were noticeable and also, at times, debated. In one end of the study area an increase in diversity is noted:

It used to be entirely Italian or Portuguese, and now it seems like when I play soccer on Saturday at Dufferin Grove that there are twenty different ethnic
groups represented between the twenty people that are there.” – Trinity Bellwoods Participant.

Meanwhile, in another group, the observation is very different;

“It’s becoming very homogenous, a lot of people with money are coming in, especially since developers keep increasing their prices.” – Niagara Participant.

However residents chose to define diversity it was linked and related to how other impacts were understood and interpreted. Many of the changes and impacts that were mentioned by project participants were interrelated. Like any living and evolving organism, the neighbourhood unit reacts to change, setting off an endless chain of events. The participants’ perceptions and observations of change told a story of a ripple effect: one element affecting the greater diversity of the neighbourhood, which affects the affordability of homes, and therefore the market orientation of businesses and ultimately the perceived exclusion of some residents from the neighbourhood, a trajectory highlighted by this compilation of participant views from across the study area:

…. [a certain economic group] has sort of taken away a certain amount of the ethnicity of the neighbourhood.”
“…it’s appealing to a whole new social demographic”
“…fewer business are catering to regular folk”
"I don't know what happened to all the people who used to live in the rooming houses…”
”…there is a built-in exclusion of who is going to frequent those [new businesses] places.”

The most poignant critiques of neighbourhood change that were raised by participants were in the realm of the negative effects of neighbourhood changes, particularly in terms of exclusion and polarization.

““I think there is probably two solitudes, you have the poorer people and the wealthier people and you can see a real exclusion in terms of… well it is almost like a different world.” – Parkdale Participant.
What speaks most to the complexity of neighbourhood change is that amid the concern over a growing gap between rich and poor, the lamentation of lost mom and pop stores, the concern over displacement of long time residents and worry over decreased affordability, there were positive impacts observed that seemed to stem from the very same root as the negative impacts

“I think it is good that more people are moving into the area because it’s certainly safer and nicer if it’s more of a residential area instead of a bunch of empty buildings….I don’t feel unsafe.” – Niagara Participant.

The simple act of being able to walk the streets comfortably at night was revelled in and simultaneously linked to the presence of new stores, businesses and the increase of people on the street.

“Once it was dangerous before, or it did feel that way, and now that there’s all these nice stores and galleries it feels safe.” – St. Christopher House Staff Participant.

The impacts of change, both positive and negative, allowed participants to begin to think critically about their neighbourhood, how it has been evolving and how they truly feel about the changes that have been occurring. Moreover, it allowed them to think outside of what their own reality is today and dream of what an ideal, inclusive neighbourhood could look like in the future.

5.3 Visions for Inclusive Communities

When posed with the question “How do you envision a healthy, inclusive neighbourhood?” participants put aside the impossibilities of bureaucracy, budget concerns and real-world limitations, and they let themselves dream.

“I think that the healthiest neighbourhood is a good mixture of all different cultures and nationalities and well, backgrounds”

“A place where you can feel safe”

“Being able to have a relationship with your neighbour and the businesses that you support, they are all invested in the neighbourhood”
“A good community is one that has room for everybody in it. Maybe they are not all best friends but at least there are affordable stores and a reason to stay in that community”

“What families with different social status and education level can rent in the same building, it will be diversified.”

These reflections on change helped to initiate a dialogue among participants, allowing them to find common ground and express shared concerns around the issue of neighbourhood change. It also set the groundwork for the focus group participants to begin brainstorming and thinking about concrete ways in which inclusive communities could be created.

5.4 Approaches to Inclusive Communities

Dialogue

As the focus group participants moved into a discussion of what could be done to create inclusive neighbourhoods, the conversation shifted from personal accounts of neighbourhood change to how to manage change and make it work positively and benefit all area residents. The responses to ways in which neighbourhood change could be addressed were varied, including suggestions for affordable housing policy, stronger policing, increased involvement of youth, and greater support of local businesses. While many of the suggestions were unique, a consistent theme was that of communication: among residents themselves and with politicians and local decision-makers alike.

“Communication is always a good start. As long as residents feel they can express their concerns and have their voices heard by the powers that be, things whether good or bad will/can be addressed and, hopefully the appropriate changes made.” – Niagara Participant.

The importance of feedback to the community, involvement in planning and development decisions as well as day-to-day communication among residents emerged consistently as being critical in building stronger relationships among neighbours and therefore healthier, more inclusive, communities. For example, one Dufferin Grove participant suggested the creation of block councils:
“Block councils or smaller area councils, where you can get together and [be] in charge of putting out information for that area.”

The idea of communication among people was recurrent. Allowing people to get to know one another, and to understand their neighbours on an interpersonal level surfaced as being paramount to creating strong communities. Participants from Trinity-Bellwoods and Parkdale had these thoughts to share:

“I would really like to see a lot more inter-cultural contact.”

“For a diverse community to have meaning there has to be points of contact.”

Community Space

Places for people to engage with others in their community on a peer-to-peer level, no matter what their station in life, were seen to be lacking in most neighbourhoods. The development and support of places or activities that facilitate such interaction among residents were seen as key ways to build unity and cohesion among residents. Public parks such as Dufferin Grove Park were frequently noted as locations that successfully serve as such a place, centralizing community-building actions, not only by Dufferin Grove participants but from other focus group participants as well.

“You get people from all economic levels and cultural background[s]. They really do all interact in that park. It’s a positive change.” – Parkdale service providers.

In addition to establishing strong communication bonds among themselves, residents consistently mentioned the need to communicate with elected officials and local decision-makers.

“It is important that residents feel they can make an impact on elected representatives…I don’t think our local politicians—in the neighbourhood and in Toronto—are worse then they used to be, but I think it is hard for them to connect to and represent their constituents.” – Niagara Resident by email.
Community Involvement and Participation

Establishing clear connections with local councillors, members of parliament and even property developers were all noted as ways to take control over the changes that are occurring in the neighbourhoods.

“Make sure they [developers] put parking in the area, make sure they create daycare, make sure that they keep the green area, that they keep the beautiful old buildings and keep the aesthetics. They have a lot of power, they influence policy, they influence politicians, period. Those are some of the people to go after rather than fighting with them, you can come to a good compromise.” – Trinity-Bellwoods Participant.

With better opportunities to communicate, participants felt that their voices could be rightfully heard and their suggestions acted upon. With guidance and contact with the right people, the participants felt that effective policies could be implemented, but also made it clear that politicians could play a stronger role in fostering inclusive neighbourhoods.

“I don’t know how to get the attention of policy makers…but there needs to be some policy work…and we care and we have energy and we share common philosophies but it does come back to resources…the policy makers have to be the ones.” – Parkdale service providers.

“Do you think your city councillor has a part to play in that creating community you talked about? What could they do? That’s his job, isn’t it?” – Trinity-Bellwoods Participant.

6. Findings and Analysis

The comments made by the focus group participants indicate a sophisticated knowledge of the issues related to neighbourhood change. There were no easy answers to the questions posed to the participants. The discussions that the researchers had with participants reflect the deep and complex nature of neighbourhood change and how it affects residents. While an intricate issue to quantify, the words of the residents fell into patterns that are able to reflect on how residents are experiencing and living with change and where community engagement can fit to the equation.
Ambivalence among the Majority

On the whole, participant’s feelings toward neighbourhood change were ambivalent. On the one hand many negative consequences of change were identified as concerns: rising rents, growing displacement of residents, and decreasing diversity. On the other hand, there were equally strong expressions of the positive impacts, namely an increased sense of safety, embracing of a burgeoning cultural scene, and happiness with new businesses, restaurants and an increase economic vitality of neighbourhoods.

These contradictory comments revealed a tension between intentions and behaviour. While participants lamented the loss of the neighbourhood they once knew, at the same time they embraced many of the impacts of the changes they had noticed. The sense of ambivalence that was expressed by many residents may be a factor in keeping them from being more active in organizing against changes they did not like in the neighbourhood, and therefore may be a roadblock to creating inclusive communities.

Passionate Issues are Often Single Issues

In many instances, there was a considerable amount of passion expressed regarding specific issues such as housing, preservation of architectural heritage or degradation of the environment. Many participants had single, personal issues with which they strongly identified and were active in or organized around. Participants would often identify many issues as being important to them, but in their actions, they would dedicate their time and effort to one particular issue or cause.

Limited Neighbourhood Identity

Aside from the neighbourhoods of Dufferin Grove and Parkdale, participants did not express a strong sense of neighbourhood identity or unity. On the whole, there was a lot of crossover of issues among neighbourhoods and many issues raised were not specific to a particular neighbourhood but rather to the west end as a whole. The strongest element of identity that was mentioned was not corner stores, major intersections or local coffee shops but rather common green spaces. As an activity to begin the focus groups, participants were asked to point out the location of their home and one of their favourite places on a large map. Many of the participants chose parks, such as High Park, Dufferin Grove Park, the Lake Ontario waterfront and Trinity-Bellwoods Park as places that they liked and identified with most. Parks and open
spaces were seen as truly common grounds where people could relax as well as interact and engage with others.

**Scarcity of Spaces to Share Information**

Revisiting the theme of communication, the dissemination of information was mentioned many times during the focus group sessions and emerged as an important finding. The feeling that pertinent neighbourhood information was not getting back to residents was pervasive. People were unaware of major development applications, uninformed of the pending closure of businesses or seemingly the last to find out about neighbourhood projects or initiatives. Establishing clear communication lines among residents and also with local decision makers was of paramount concern. With the right information, residents felt that they would be better equipped to organize or act on issues that they felt were important to their neighbourhood.

Moreover, participants did not feel equipped with the right tools to be engaged in the local decision-making system. While they recognized that they could phone their local councillor about a concern, getting that concern acted upon was another issue. Residents did mention some local residents’ associations, but on the whole were not actively involved with them. This could be due in part to the lack of residents’ associations across the catchment area or because residents’ associations focus on the needs of certain groups such as homeowners. While there may be mechanisms in place for residents to be contacted and informed of local decision-making processes, these mechanisms were not utilized to their full potential.

**Emphasis on Community-Based Solutions Not on Policy**

When asked to present ideas with respect to creating inclusive neighbourhoods, participants overwhelmingly focused on community-based solutions, rather than government policy. Before people organize and act on issues of concern in their neighbourhoods, they want to build the community among themselves first, creating space for people to get to know one another better. Community picnics, yard sales, festivals and social gatherings were commonly mentioned as ways to increase contact between residents and form bonds on a personal level, not just convening to address a passing “hot button” issue.

The suggestions made by the focus groups show a willingness and desire to create inclusive and diverse neighbourhoods through government policy initiatives, but...
more commonly through neighbourhood and community-building activities. These two approaches to creating inclusive communities can be seen as reinforcing one another. Through building stronger communities, neighbourhoods can support and lobby more cohesively for better and stronger initiatives in their area.

**St. Christopher House: A Community Leader**

Participants spoke of creating inclusive communities both through individual actions and also through greater policy-related actions. St. Christopher House was seen by some participants as a figure at the confluence of these two approaches, simultaneously being able to address needs and wants of area residents while also wielding some influence with local decision-makers. St. Christopher House was often mentioned as a centralized and neutral location, a point of contact for all people to be involved with. This characterisation further supports the notion of St. Christopher House as a current and future leader in community engagement and organization around issues of neighbourhood change.

### 7. Recommendations

Residents recommended many ways in which community engagement could help foster inclusive communities in the study area. Below are some of the many concrete ideas for action that were conveyed by project participants.

**Community-Building Activities**

- Organize community events such as block yard sales, festivals or community picnics.
- Actively promote volunteering to new residents in the area to increase their awareness and contact with other kinds of area residents.
- Organize a neighbourhood clean-up day for people to come out into the streets to meet with one another over the common cause of beautifying their neighbourhood.
- Work with St. Christopher House to implement community engagement.

**Information Dissemination**

- Develop small neighbourhood unit councils, such as block councils suggested by a Dufferin Grove participant.
- Create bulletin boards for posting notices in spaces commonly used by area residents.
- Increase awareness of local decision-making processes by holding civic engagement awareness sessions to inform residents of their local resources.
- Encourage the use of community institutions such as libraries or community centers as places to meet other residents or a dissemination point.
- Develop a community-run newsletter to notify residents of happenings in the area.
- Increase the use of a community web page based at St. Christopher House for the sharing of information.

These recommendations will be clarified and discussed at a forum, planned for October of 2006, with the project participants. This forum, to be held at St. Christopher House, will provide an opportunity for participants to hear about the ideas that other focus groups shared in their discussions. In addition to disseminating information, the forum will focus on specific community-building actions and engagement activities that residents can take part in, focusing on how to turn these recommendations into actions.

8. Limitations and Challenges

During the course of this project, a number of insights were gained not only about neighbourhood change but also about the research process. There were limitations and challenges around the research methodology used in this study and the composition of the research sample.

Sample Population

While the engagement of residents (most of whom were current St. Christopher House volunteers) was an objective of this study, it is also, inherently, a limitation. The people who are predisposed to volunteer at St. Christopher House may already have a disposition towards inclusive communities and community involvement in neighbourhood issues. Furthermore, those who chose to participate in the study self-selected themselves as interested in these issues. While this did make for interesting and engaging conversations with project participants, the participants may not have been representative of the views of St. Christopher House volunteers on the whole, nor representative of the residents of the catchment area at large. Also, see page 8 for
Methodology

As discussed in the findings, those residents who participated in focus groups expressed a certain degree of ambivalence in thinking about neighbourhood change. One reason for which this result was so pervasive in the study could stem from the structure of the research questions. Leading participants to think both about the positive and then negative aspects of change was a conscious decision by the researchers, intended to encourage the participants to think about neighbourhood change in a holistic fashion. If a similar research study was conducted in the future, the ways in which questions were asked and how they shaped the resulting discussions should be considered more closely. While the responses of the residents were rich and substantiated by similar findings in Taking the Pulse: Gauging Neighbourhood Change in the Downtown West End, the data gathered from the focus groups may not be completely representative of the pre-existing views in the larger community.

The complex issues of participants’ social locations and identities presented a notable challenge for the researchers. Neighbourhood change can affect persons of different social locations quite differently. For example, an upper middle class resident may love the new high-end retail stores; while the lower income resident may now have to travel further to buy his/her day-to-day necessities. These differing effects of neighbourhood change were noted by the participants, but the voices of marginalized populations such as low income persons, newcomers, the homeless and others were not prevalent in this study. Considering the conditions and time restrictions of this project, the data we gathered can be seen as only a small snapshot of how members of different marginalized groups feel about neighbourhood change. Future research in this area may want to take greater steps towards gathering a diverse research sample in order to present a greater range of perspectives regarding inclusive communities.

9. Conclusion and Next Steps

The focus group discussions showed the breadth and depth of issues related to neighbourhood change and also generated many concrete suggestions regarding changes that can be made in the future. Inclusive and diverse neighbourhoods are achievable. There is a wealth of support for the idea but also scepticism about the reality of implementation. A Niagara resident astutely observed, “I don’t know how you change people’s minds so that they think, ‘Yes, I want these people to feel a part of that
community’. You have to reach out to people and tell them that everyone is valuable and interesting, that they do something for our community, and I wouldn’t know how you’d go about doing that”.

The researchers hope that this project provides the CURA research team with the first steps and some of the building blocks to do just what this participant suggested: to reach out to community members and begin to build inclusive communities not only though official policies and reports but through community engagement work on the ground. The forum planned for October 2006 is one step in the process of bringing people together to revisit the recommendations they proposed and also to begin planning citizen action. Beginning with the forum, subsequent projects will use the data from this study to inform and frame community action that will redefine how neighbourhood change affects communities, making it a force that can empower neighbourhoods to reform their landscapes in positive, inclusive ways.

Most importantly, this project and subsequent follow-up projects will continue to bring the discussion about neighbourhood change beyond the agencies and researchers and directly to area residents. Through these efforts, more space will be provided for the community to exchange opinions and collaborate on activities that can support and maintain inclusive communities in Toronto’s west central neighbourhoods.
### Appendix A

**Summary of Key Issues by Theme**

Table One. *Changes Observed in Neighbourhoods, Grouped by Theme*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical changes in landscape</td>
<td>- Participants from each of the nine focus groups observed new buildings, construction of condos, new homes or home additions.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Residents in Roncesvalles and Little Portugal noted a few old buildings being torn down and expressed concern for loss of heritage.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Participants in Little Portugal, the St. Christopher House staff group and the CultureLink staff group all noted that rooming houses have been converted into single family homes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changing Demographics</td>
<td>- Each of the nine focus groups mentioned that changes seen include increases or decreases in specific ethnicities, as well as shifts in the age of incoming residents. Participants from Roncesvalles noted a decrease in the Polish population and Parkdale residents noted an increased involvement of Sri Lankans in the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Parkdale residents also noted more wealth coming into the neighbourhood seen in new developments and businesses along Queen St. West.</td>
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<td>- While participants in all areas expressed some thoughts about demographic change, each neighbourhood has its own unique demographic issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising Costs of Property, Rents Goods and Services</td>
<td>- Rising value of property was mentioned by all focus groups except for Little Portugal. For some the change was dramatic – for example, the value of a participant’s home in Roncesvalles tripled in the last seven years.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Parkdale and Niagara residents noted rising rents, mentioning that some have had to leave because they could not afford rent or high property taxes.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Participants from Parkdale and Dufferin Grove noted that costs of general goods and services were also rising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in Safety</td>
<td>- Parkdale, Dufferin Grove, St. Christopher House, CultureLink and Trinity-Bellwoods participants mentioned an increase in perceived safety, noting an increased sense of comfort in the neighbourhood.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Less visible drug-dealing and prostitution was also noted in Dufferin Grove, Little Portugal and Trinity-Bellwoods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>- A change in diversity, which was not universally defined by the focus groups, was often noted. Some participants noted more diversity while some less. This issue was debated among participants in Little Italy.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A participant in Niagara noted that diversity was an attractive factor when moving into the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer Families, More Young People</td>
<td>- Little Portugal and Little Italy reflected on fewer families in the area while CultureLink participants noted more children and families in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher Congestion</td>
<td>- Residents in Roncesvalles noted an increase of vehicular traffic in the area, which made for unpleasant environmental conditions on the streets.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- An increase in noise due to traffic was also noted in Little Italy while participants in Dufferin Grove noted that more people from outside of the neighbourhood were traveling through the area, adding to congestion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Convenience and Access to Services</td>
<td>- Many of the focus groups noted that there were changes in the composition of stores and services provided in the neighbourhood. The extent to which these were accessible to all was different from group to group. Participants in Little Italy thought that the services were still largely affordable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Participants from Dufferin Grove noted that some new stores were financially out of reach of some residents while others were marketed towards mid- and low-income people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Unity</td>
<td>- Community unity was noted to be increasing in some places and decreasing in others. Dufferin Grove Park was a mentioned not only by Dufferin Grove resident but by Little Italy and CultureLink participants as a hub of community activity and grassroots organizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Participants from the CultureLink focus group noted a sense of cohesiveness in Parkdale, the neighbourhood where their office is located.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Residents of Little Portugal noted a decrease in attendance to the community picnic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Niagara residents also noted a decrease in community activity, mentioning the lack of an active residents association or community events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty or Abandoned Spaces Being Reused</td>
<td>- Among the construction and physical changes to the landscape, residents in Dufferin Grove noted that some new businesses were reusing old or abandoned spaces, which helped to enliven the neighbourhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing of Small Independent Stores</td>
<td>- The closure of small, independent businesses was of concern to residents of both Little Italy and Dufferin Grove.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in Higher-End Shops and Restaurants</td>
<td>- The emergence of higher-end shops, galleries and restaurants was noted by residents in Little Portugal, Dufferin Grove, Trinity-Bellwoods, Little Italy and participants from both the CultureLink group and the St. Christopher House group. Roncesvalles participants noted more restaurants and shops, but also noted their continued affordability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Polarization of the Neighbourhoods</td>
<td>- Parkdale and CultureLink participants both expressed concern about the increasing sense of polarization in the community between socio-economic classes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table Two. Summary of Suggestions to Create Inclusive Neighbourhoods, Grouped by Theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More Open Spaces</td>
<td>Participants from Roncesvalles, Parkdale, Little Italy and the St. Christopher House focus group all mentioned preserving or increasing open space as important to creating healthy inclusive neighbourhoods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in Social Services, Programs, Involvement of Youth</td>
<td>Participants from Parkdale and Little Italy identified increasing programs for community involvement as important while the St. Christopher House and CultureLink focus groups noted a need for more financial and political support for these kinds of initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Affordable Housing Through Policy Changes</td>
<td>While many identified increases in rents and property values, only participants from Parkdale, Little Italy and Dufferin Grove identified the creation of or the protection of affordable housing as ways to create inclusive neighbourhoods. Affordable and genuinely mixed-income housing was noted by participants from the CultureLink and St. Christopher House focus groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Community-Led Initiatives for Engagement</td>
<td>Support for community-led initiatives was a common response from many of the focus groups. Participants from the Niagara, Little Portugal and Little Italy groups identified community events such as block parties, sidewalk sales, Bar-B-Q’s and festivals as helping to increase socialization among residents. Neighbourhood groups and residents associations were also cited by Niagara and Roncesvalles as being important. The involvement of schools, particularly students doing community service was highlighted by participants from Little Italy. A general need for increased consultation with the community was noted by CultureLink participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Communication to Residents about Neighbourhood Issues</td>
<td>Communication with and among residents was a reoccurring theme in the focus groups as a way to increase community involvement and foster inclusiveness. Participants from Trinity-Bellwoods suggested the use of notice boards to disseminate community information and those from Dufferin Grove suggested creating block councils. CultureLink participants noted the importance of community newspapers in local communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Local Businesses</td>
<td>The loss of small local businesses was mentioned by participants from Dufferin Grove and Little Italy as a negative impact of neighbourhood change. To counteract this, participants from Trinity-Bellwoods, Little Portugal, St. Christopher House and Dufferin Grove all suggested that local businesses be supported, both in patronage and by means of organization into business associations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Meeting Places for</td>
<td>The need for more interaction among community members was highlighted by participants from Trinity-Bellwoods and Parkdale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-Building</td>
<td>Increasing the number of places that act as “points of contact” was expressed as a necessity for neighbourhoods. Gardens and libraries were some of the places mentioned that already serve this function.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Civic Engagement   | - Creating a more engaged citizenry in general was brought up by the focus group participants as way to increase inclusiveness.  
|                    | - The need to change people’s mentality about how to affect and shape change in their neighbourhoods was mentioned, and the encouragement of volunteering was noted as a way to accomplish this. |
| Engaging with Developers | - Participants from Trinity-Bellwoods suggested that communities work with developers to make their desires for the neighbourhood well known. |
| Government Involvement | - Having the ear of the local and provincial councillors was noted by Niagara, Parkdale, CultureLink and Roncesvalles participants as being an important step towards making changes that would work to sustain and create inclusive neighbourhoods. |
| Support Local Ethnic Organizations | - Roncesvalles residents noted that giving more government support in the form of grant money or giving incentives to local ethnic businesses and organizations would be a way to maintain their presence in the neighbourhood. |
### Summary of Key Issues by Focus Group

#### Table Three. **Summary of Issues By Neighbourhood or Focus Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood/Focus Group</th>
<th>Changes Observed</th>
<th>Suggestions Provided for Inclusive Neighbourhoods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dufferin Grove</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Physical changes in landscape including condos, construction, reuse of old buildings</td>
<td>- Support community-led initiatives for engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Demographic changes—more young people and families</td>
<td>- Increase affordable housing through policy changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Renewed economic vitality</td>
<td>- Increase communication to residents about neighbourhood issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Improved access and selection of goods and services</td>
<td>- Support local businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Improved safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Increased costs of property and rents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Closing of small neighbourhood stores</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Italy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Less diversity</td>
<td>- Create more open spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fewer families</td>
<td>- Encourage a less car-dependant community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Increased costs of property and rents</td>
<td>- Increase in social services, programs, involvement of youth and seniors and First Nations people</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Increase in noise pollution, traffic congestion</td>
<td>- Involve schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Improved access and selection of goods and services</td>
<td>- Increase affordable housing through policy changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Increase in community action and initiatives at grassroots level</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Less community feeling in neighbourhood</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Little Portugal</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Physical changes in landscape including condos, construction, elimination of existing housing, demolition of existing housing stock</td>
<td>- Support community-led initiatives for engagement including community events, with help from St. Christopher House to organize such initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Demographic changes—more young people, more ethnic groups visible, fewer families</td>
<td>- Support civic engagement and changing people’s mentality about involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Increase in higher-end shops and boutiques</td>
<td>- Support local businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Less visible prostitution and drug-dealing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Increase in neighbourhood feeling (debated)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Physical Changes in Landscape</td>
<td>Support Community-Led Initiatives for Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Niagara</td>
<td>- Physical changes in landscape including condos, construction&lt;br&gt;- Less community involvement&lt;br&gt;- Increased costs of property and rents&lt;br&gt;- Increase in higher-end shops</td>
<td>- Support community-led initiatives for engagement, through neighbourhood associations, civic engagement and including community events&lt;br&gt;- Create meeting places for community-building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkdale</td>
<td>- Physical changes in landscape including condos, construction&lt;br&gt;- Increased involvement of Sri Lankan families&lt;br&gt;- Demographic changes—more wealthy people&lt;br&gt;- Increase in safety&lt;br&gt;- Rising costs of property, rents, goods and services</td>
<td>- Increase in social services and programs, namely, St. Christopher House&lt;br&gt;- Encourage volunteering&lt;br&gt;- Create more open spaces&lt;br&gt;- Increase affordable housing through policy changes&lt;br&gt;- Create meeting places, points of contact, for community-building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roncesvalles</td>
<td>- Rising costs of property, rents goods and services&lt;br&gt;- Increase in affordable, eclectic restaurants&lt;br&gt;- Demographic changes—fewer poles&lt;br&gt;- Physical changes in landscape including condos, construction, demolition of architecturally viable and historically significant buildings</td>
<td>- Support local ethnic organizations and businesses&lt;br&gt;- Increase accessibility to TTC, inform people about alternative transportation&lt;br&gt;- Address prostitution problem&lt;br&gt;- Create more open spaces&lt;br&gt;- Support community-led initiatives for engagement through residents’ associations and community centers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Trinity-Bellwoods | - Rising costs of property and rents  
- Increase in higher-end shops and restaurants  
- Demographic changes—wealthier, younger people moving in, decrease in ethic and social diversity (debated)  
- Increased safety  
- More convenience and access to services | - Increase affordable housing through policy changes  
- Support community-led initiatives for engagement through residents' associations and neighbourhood groups  
- Create meeting places, points of contact, for community-building  
- Increase communication to residents about neighbourhood issues  
- Engaging with developers to make community desires clear |
|---|---|
| St. Christopher House Staff | - Rising costs of property and rents  
- Increase in higher-end shops and restaurants  
- Elimination or refurbishment of rooming houses  
- Demographic changes  
- Portuguese home owners moving out, selling to wealthier people  
- Emergence of new ethnic communities—Tibetans in Parkdale  
- Inadequate public spaces  
- Increased safety  
- Decrease in the quality and availability of social services | - Mobilize the community around specific issues such as protecting green spaces, rent control or the protection of small businesses.  
- Support small businesses through the “Social Portal” and the creation of Business Improvement Associations.  
- Enforce or implement protective zoning and housing policies |
| CultureLink Staff | - Rising costs of property and rents  
- Increase in higher-end shops and restaurants  
- Increased polarization of the neighbourhood  
- Demographic changes—more seniors, more young families and babies, fewer teens  
- Increased safety  
- Concern over bad landlords and unsafe housing conditions | - Increase amount of consultation with residents in neighbourhood decisions  
- Plan for affordable mixed-income housing  
- Enforce current housing standards  
- Improve resources for community development  
- Better coordination of a shared vision for the community |
Appendix B

Researchers’ Biographies

Melodie Chan
Melodie is a M.Ed. candidate at York University and was a visiting student in a community development course at OISE/UT. Appreciating the lived experience of social, economic and cultural diversities in Toronto and abroad, her interest in this project was to learn more about various communication processes for encouraging inclusiveness in diversity. Her research and volunteer interests include exploring creative educational means of raising youth awareness and concern for global and community issues, as well as the role of faith-based groups in fostering inclusive neighbourhoods.

Andrew Koch
Andrew has lived in west Toronto for more than 10 years and is currently pursuing a MHSc in Health Promotion at the University of Toronto. Prior to returning to school, he worked with several Toronto-based organizations including the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. He has a wide range of interests that relate to ways in which healthy, inclusive, and sustainable urban communities can be created and strengthened.

Regan Mancini
As a resident of the CURA project catchment area, Regan is both a community member and a researcher who is affected by the changes within her neighbourhood. Active particularly in the international non-governmental sector, she funnels her passion for social justice into community work that exposes and addresses issues relating to the interconnectedness of an increasingly 'globalized' world. Regan is currently studying Adult Education and Community Development at OISE/UT.

C. Nelson Rosales
Nelson lived and went to school in the CURA catchment area for 12 years. He has worked on the social justice and community development issues in Canada, Latin America and Asia for several years. Nelson is currently a student in the Community Development and Adult Education program at OISE/University of Toronto.

Daniel Schugurensky
Daniel is the coordinator of the Collaborative Master's Program in Community Development of the University of Toronto. He is also the Associate Director of the Centre of Urban and Community Studies of the University of Toronto (CUCS) and an Associate Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE/UT). He is concerned about the detrimental impacts of gentrification dynamics, and believes in the importance of inclusive neighbourhoods.

Nancy Slamet
Nancy is a social justice activist who is currently studying Adult Education at OISE/UT. She participated in this research project because she is interested in fostering inclusive and diverse communities, particularly through the promotion of mixed-income and affordable housing. As a member of a housing co-op in downtown Toronto, she enjoys the richness of living in a socially, culturally and economically integrated community.
Leigh Snyder
Acting as the project coordinator for this research, Leigh is a newcomer to Toronto, originally hailing from Arlington, Virginia. Active in issues around preserving and enriching public space in urban areas, Leigh’s main research interests revolve around how changes in the built environment effect the interpretation and understanding of personal landscapes, an interest which drew her to this project. Leigh is currently studying urban planning at the University of Toronto.

Gisela Vanzaghi
Gisela is an MA candidate in the collaborative program of Adult Education and Community Development OISE/UT. Since she arrived in Canada in 2003, Gisela has been an active member in the community and has volunteered time to support the work of different non-for-profit organizations in Toronto, especially women’s organizations. In the academic field, she is conducting research on urban community development, especially on the topic of neighbourhood change and inclusive community building in the South-West Toronto neighbourhoods.

Jennifer Woodill
Jennifer is the Coordinator of Volunteer and Community Relations at St. Christopher House. She works from a community development perspective to encourage and support people in getting involved in their community and to strengthen the ties between volunteerism and civic participation. When Jennifer is not engaged in community work, she is enjoying life as a new mom, playing guitar and writing songs or playing soccer.
Appendix C

References


