Vacant Land to Park Transformations as a Catalyst for Neighbourhood Change and Gentrification in Toronto, Ontario

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Geography and Planning
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Given the lack of vacant land in the City of Toronto, the redevelopment of available land tends to be highly contested. Stakeholders may advocate for the land to be developed as a park in order to increase social, economic and environmental services provided to residents, both at the neighbourhood scale and city-wide. However, concerns have emerged related to “green gentrification,” which is the exclusion or displacement of vulnerable populations through the creation of green amenities in marginalized neighbourhoods.

Using a case study approach to three vacant land to park transformations, this thesis examines how neighbourhood change and gentrification are perceived by actors engaged in the park development process. Using historical analysis, stakeholder interviews, resident surveys and quantitative data analysis, this thesis reveals how the potential for park developments to accelerate gentrification is complex and highly politicized, and perceived more strongly on the ground than it is reflected in changes in quantitative data.
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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

The City of Toronto has a reputation as a “city within a park,” but with an expected population increase of 500,000 residents by 2032, there is a need to acquire new parkland in order to maintain the city’s current average of 28 m$^2$ of park space per capita (City of Toronto, 2017). Given the lack of available land in Toronto, opportunities for parkland acquisition are uncommon, especially within the old city boundaries. Occasionally, the City of Toronto has redeveloped vacant or underutilized sites as parks, as it is virtually impossible to acquire greenfield sites for parkland purposes.

The redevelopment of vacant land in cities is receiving significant attention in both the planning literature and policy documents in North America. While planners and policy makers may advocate for the benefits of transforming these spaces into green amenities such as parks or community gardens, the literature suggests some challenges associated with this land use change, specifically highlighting green gentrification as an unintended consequence of remediation. This section will detail the urban processes leading to land vacancy; challenges and opportunities involved with redeveloping vacant land; and the potential for negative impacts as a result of the vacant land greening.

1.1 Vacancy in Cities: Challenges and Opportunities

In many North American cities, the out-migration of industry and subsequent decline in resident population has led to high rates of residential and commercial vacancy, and an overall vacant land problem. This section describes how, for the purpose of this research, vacant land is classified, and the challenges and opportunities associated with deindustrialization and vacancy in cities.

1.1.1 What Counts?

For the purpose of this research, the term “vacant land” will be used to describe “all land that is unused or abandoned for the longer term, including raw dirt, spontaneous vegetation and emergent ecologies, land with recently razed buildings, perimeter agricultural land fallen out of cultivation, brownfield and other contaminated sites, or land that supports long-term, abandoned
derelict structures” (Németh and Langhorst, 2014, p.144). Another commonly used term in the literature is “brownfield sites,” which is described by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as “abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination” (De Sousa, 2003). While brownfields or post-industrial landscapes are a focus of several researchers’ work, this research uses the broader term _vacant land_ in part because Toronto does not have an inventory of brownfields, but one exists for vacant land, and also because this provides a more holistic view of what types of spaces can undergo greening in the city. As such, I use vacant land as an all-encompassing term that includes brownfields, post-industrial land, vacant sites with or without buildings, with or without contamination, and so forth.

1.1.2 Deindustrialization, Declining Cities and Vacancy

Broader processes of deindustrialization in the United States and Canada have led to an increase in land abandonment. In cities like Toronto, this is a significant source of the vacant land that has been made available for redevelopment. There is an abundance of literature analyzing the decline of industry, particularly in the rust belt of the Northern United States, focusing on issues like industrial land abandonment, population decline, unemployment, poverty and crime (Harrison, 2017). For example, the rapid growth of cities like Detroit, Cleveland and Pittsburgh were followed by quick decline, the closure of manufacturing facilities, warehouses and other industrial activities (Hackworth, 2016). Cities experiencing deindustrialization and vacancy experience challenges including “decreased tax bases, infrastructural abandonment and residential migration” (Burkholder, 2012, p. 1155). As a result of population loss due to out-migration of residents who become unemployed following factory closures, high numbers of vacant lots and derelict buildings (industrial, commercial and residential) are left behind in what are called “declining” or “shrinking cities” (Xie et al., 2018). Unfortunately, vacancy tends to be concentrated in lower-income neighbourhoods and associated with heightened rates of crime and low property values (Anderson and Minor, 2016).

Cities in Southern Ontario experienced similar deindustrialization processes, but with less significant patterns of land abandonment or vacancy and are much less researched than their American counterparts (Hackworth, 2016). According to Hackworth (2016), despite deindustrialization, the City of Toronto has been able to maintain its influence and employment
base because it is the province’s capital (significant government employment), the location of three major universities, has a large population size and is the financial centre in Canada. The success of Toronto as an urban centre has radiated out towards smaller cities in Southern Ontario, such as Hamilton and Oshawa, supporting their transition through deindustrialization in ways that American cities were unable to do, given that they are much more geographically dispersed (Hackworth, 2016). In addition, industrial towns and cities in Southern Ontario were much more diversified than their American counterparts (High, 2003).

Hackworth (2016) also argues that although, in general, Canada and the United States are quite similar in terms of governing frameworks, one factor contributing to more subtle land abandonment patterns in Canada is the forced amalgamation of municipalities by provincial governments. The amalgamation of several municipalities into the regional municipality of Metropolitan Toronto in 1998 allowed for a larger property tax base for generating revenue that supported the city as deindustrialization was occurring (Hackworth, 2016).

Similarly, De Sousa (2006) acknowledges that American and Canadian cities experienced relatively similar processes of deindustrialization and patterns of vacancy following the industrial exodus of the mid-1970s. In Canada, however, brownfield policy and management is insufficient and fragmented at all levels of government, whereas the United States and European countries have a more standardized approach to site assessment, remediation and redevelopment (De Sousa, 2000; 2006). De Sousa (2000) argues that Canadian municipalities face significant challenges in remediating and redeveloping brownfield sites in cities without the support of private investment. While American and European governments have implemented policies and programs to incentivize and reduce costs associated with brownfield redevelopment, Canada lags behind in these objectives. Instead, Canadian provinces and municipalities have taken a laissez-faire approach, leaving the problem to be solved primarily by the private sector. Although considerably less literature exists on vacancy in Canadian cities, and while the extent of the problem differs between Canada and the United States, studies conducted in the US assist in understanding how vacant land is redeveloped; however, I remain mindful that the processes and patterns are not always analogous.
1.2 Greening Vacant Land: A New Opportunity

Increasingly, vacancy is being reconceptualized as natural cycle of the evolving city (Berger, 2006 in Németh and Langhorst, 2014), which is manifested as “a cyclical existence of production, growth, waste and shrinkage” (Németh and Langhorst, 2014, p.145) rather than a more linear pattern of disinvestment and decay. Burkholder (2012) suggests that “areas of high vacancy begin to represent new emergent ecosystems at a scale that defines the city as an ecology instead of simply an entity containing ecology” (p. 1156). As such, vacancy is seen as spatially and temporally dynamic, and an opportunity to increase ecosystem services in cities. This reframing of vacant land as a natural process of urbanity and an opportunity for greening, rather than a hindrance to urban development, has the potential to contribute to the strengthening of urban ecological systems, especially the in the face of a changing climate.

1.2.1 Vacant Land Greening as a Bottom-Up or Top-Down Process

While the political environment surrounding vacant land varies by province and municipality, Adams, De Sousa and Tiesdall (2010) note that the dialogue surrounding these spaces has been shifted from being framed as a problem to being presented as an opportunity (see also Burkholder, 2012). In a rapidly growing city like Toronto, vacant land is perceived as holding significant value and potential for redevelopment. There can be immense competition over what will be developed in the remaining vacant spaces in the city – commercial and residential developments are seen as economically viable, especially as the need for housing continues to grow.

While some redevelopment efforts are part of a city-wide strategic plan or policy, others take place as one-off efforts to address single vacant lots. Burkholder (2012) identifies several American cities that are reimagining their vacant lots as sites of ecological and social potential. For example, the City of Detroit is working to address the approximately 100,000 vacant properties (as of 2014) by implementing a large-scale revitalization project called Detroit Future City (Safransky, 2014). Neighbourhoods with the highest rates of vacancy are being transformed into blue and green infrastructure (storm water retention ponds, urban forests, agriculture) as a way to increase ecosystem services and reduce urban blight (Safransky, 2014). While Detroit Future City is being praised by some for creating a model for the green city, it has been critiqued by others for its lack of community participation and engagement, and its tendency to reproduce
spatial and racial injustices already pervasive in Detroit’s geography (Clement and Kanai, 2015). The program has also been challenged for its plan to displace several thousand residents into newly revitalized and “greened” neighbourhoods (DeVito, 2014; City of Detroit, 2013). Even with an abundance of available land, deciding how to manage vacant space in a way that is appropriate for all stakeholders proves challenging. While the provision of ecological services, economic revitalization and restructuring, and decreased rates of crime are almost unanimously thought to be beneficial to residents, the way in which vacant land is redeveloped is often contested, creating conflict between residents, planners, city officials and local government.

Contrary to this, the Toronto case studies presented in this thesis were not part of a municipal greening strategy or part of strategic efforts to revitalize derelict land. In these transformations, most of the initiative develops from the bottom-up, rather than a top-down process. De Sousa (2003) points out that in Toronto, “support for ecological restoration projects typically came from established community-based environmental groups...while support for green space in under-serviced neighborhoods typically came from smaller, ad-hoc groups that were united by a community leader (or leaders)” (p. 192). As a result, these neighbourhood-scale park development projects, in general, have not been contested in the same way that the Detroit Future City and other municipally-led vacant land to green space projects have been.

When redevelopment takes place, De Sousa (2003) suggests that greening objectives tend to be human-oriented and justified by community needs or in conjunction with other renewal efforts in order to gain public support and to secure funding required to make these transformations happen. Greening efforts, especially those that work to expand Toronto’s public park system, are encouraged by the city, but are challenging to achieve due to political will, funding and public support required to achieve vacant land revitalization, especially in competition with commercial and residential development (De Sousa, 2000; 2003).

1.2.2 Vacant Land Greening for Social, Environmental and Economic Benefits

In cities, redeveloping vacant land into parks and green space can provide a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits including: “enhancement of environmental quality...renewal of urban cores...(and) increased utilization of existing municipal services (De Sousa, 2000, p. 834). When new parks are built, the benefits provided to urban residents by parks
are wide-ranging and well-documented at the neighbourhood and city-scale. These include, but are not limited to:

- **physical**: opportunities for recreation and leisure.
- **social**: improved sense of community, increase in social interaction and social ties.
- **psychological**: improved mental health and well-being, reduced stress.
- **ecological**: improved air quality, carbon sequestration, storm water management.
- **economic**: increased housing costs, property values and tax revenue.

(i.e. Chiesura, 2004; City of Toronto, 2013; Rigolon, 2016; Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014; Rigolon and Németh, 2018)

More specific benefits associated with redeveloping vacant land or brownfield sites in cities include: increasing property values where they were previously depreciated by a derelict site, crime reduction (Anderson and Minor, 2016), increased feeling of safety (Garvin et al., 2012 in Anderson and Minor, 2016); creation or expansion of ecological habitat and increased biodiversity, improved neighbourhood “aesthetics,” economic stimulation, the development of long-term social networks and the building of social capital (De Sousa, 2003). The redevelopment of brownfields is perceived as being particularly less cost-effective and presents greater risks than greenfield development, because of the need to clean-up contamination (De Sousa, 2000; 2003).

While all of the benefits noted above are integral to quality of life in cities, municipal governments have been increasingly focused on quantifying the ecological services provided by parks and other “green” infrastructure including the urban forest and natural systems (Gabriel, 2016). The City of Toronto, like many other cities, has also been framing the need for green infrastructure as a necessity for climate change mitigation and adaptation, or in terms of economic benefits, such as raised property values (City of Toronto, 2007; 2012; 2013). Given that ecological services (i.e. carbon sequestration and storm water management) are easier to quantify, they tend to be the focus of the discussion, although the social, psychological and physical benefits are recognized more broadly. While the potential to provide ecosystem services is significantly higher in American cities where vacancy is more significant, the provision of environmental benefits has still been used as a rationale for redeveloping vacant or underutilized land as green space in Toronto (De Sousa, 2003).
1.2.3 Vacant Land Greening to Improve Equity in Access to Parks

Research on the equitable distribution of parks has taken different approaches in measuring park proximity, park acreage and park quality, and results have varied across studies (Rigolon, 2016). For example, some research has found that visible minorities (i.e. blacks and Latina/os) may live in closer proximity to smaller parks, whereas white and more affluent communities tend to have access to larger and higher quality park spaces, although they may live further from these spaces (Rigolon, 2016). In response, many cities have developed strategies to improve the equitable distribution of parkland with mandates to focus on “underserved” neighbourhoods. The City of Toronto, however, does not currently have any critical research that evaluates the distribution of parkland based on metrics such as ethnicity, income, spoken language or recent immigration, which have been found to be significant indicators for inequitable distribution of parks in other North American cities (Rigolon, 2016). However, the City of Toronto is in the process of developing a new Parkland Strategy that includes objectives associated with access and equity, based on socio-demographic variables, including age and newcomers to Canada.

Since vacancy is more evident in low-income or racialized neighbourhoods, municipally-led reinvestment and redevelopment is often prioritized in these neighbourhoods. In cities such as Detroit and Philadelphia (City of Detroit, 2013; Pearsall, Lucas and Lenhardt, 2014), reinvestment in vacant land is used as a way to eliminate blight, increase safety, and improve neighbourhood vibrancy by promoting additional economic reinvestment and reframing of vacancy as opportunity. For example, in Philadelphia, where vacant lots are not equally distributed across the city, efforts have been made to “clean and green” about 5,000 of the city’s 40,000 vacant sites (Heckert and Kondo, 2018). Though the program did not explicitly include goals of increasing class and race-based equity in access to parks, Heckert (2013) finds that Philadelphia’s vacant land greening efforts successfully improved class and race-based inequities, presumably because these inequalities are implicit in the city’s distribution of vacant land.

1.3 Green Gentrification

Greening efforts are said to provide environmental services and increased quality of life for all urban residents, in addition to providing green jobs and economic benefits to those who have been most disadvantaged by deindustrialization and the rise of the service economy (McKendry...
This discourse within urban sustainability as a win-win situation for all city residents has been met with resistance by those who are concerned that greening efforts increase gentrification processes in cities (McKendry and Janos, 2015). As a result, many scholars have acknowledged the negative impacts of vacant land redevelopment on vulnerable communities, suggesting the potential for gentrification from urban greening initiatives in low-income neighbourhoods (Pearsall, 2010; Foster and Sandberg, 2014; Checker, 2011; Anguelovski, 2016).

1.3.1 First, Second and Third-Wave Gentrification

Though systematic gentrification has existed since the 1950s, efforts in the early 2000s were made to classify gentrification into “three waves,” with transitional periods in-between (Hackworth and Smith, 2000). In general, the three waves of gentrification are described by Hackworth and Smith (2000) as follows:

First-wave gentrification (sporadic and state-led), prior to 1973:
This wave of gentrification occurred more sporadically in inner-city neighbourhoods within the US, Western Europe and Australia. Reinvestment was funded by the public sector in attempt mitigate private-market disinvestment and state involvement was usually rationalized under the guise of solving urban decline. This type of intervention typically impacted the working-class.

Second-wave gentrification (expansion and resistance), 1973 to mid-1980s:
In this wave, the scope was broadened to include new cities that had not previously experienced gentrification. Rather than the state-led approach of the previous wave, local governments instead prompted a private-market solution by introducing public policies that encouraged economic growth and re-investment by the private-sector.

Third-wave gentrification (recessional pause and subsequent), 1990s and beyond:
The recession in the late 1980s significant slowed or ceased gentrification processes in some neighbourhoods in the early 1990s, unlike past recessions that had very little effect on slowing gentrifying cities. The effects of this were so impactful that some even suggested there was a process of “de-gentrification” and “the demise of gentrification.” However, from 1993 onward, there was a resurgence of gentrification, spurring reinvestment and the rise of key housing market indicators of gentrification.

Increasingly, gentrification is becoming a concern in terms of a public policy and planning perspective and is especially of concern to urban geographers with an emphasis on equity and environmental justice. Certain policies, such as government improvement grants, have even accelerated gentrification in cities (Lees and Ley, 2008). Though municipal governments are rarely clearing and redeveloping neighbourhoods to intentionally gentrify them, “local
government had to be persuaded, often through political protest, to cease and desist from clearance and high-density redevelopment, in order that preservation, renovation and modest infill might proceed for a new middle-class population intent on enjoying the urbanity of old neighbourhoods” (Lees and Ley, 2008, p. 2379).

While earlier gentrification discussions revolved around increasing rents, cost of living and working-class displacement, perhaps a more common image is that of trendy cafes, shops and more street-level phenomena that act as signifiers of gentrification (Slater, 2006). Additionally, while the word “gentrification” certainly has adopted a negative connotation, the now-bustling neighbourhoods are seen as a sign of economic resurgence, reinvestment and potential for future cities (Slater, 2006).

1.3.2 Green Gentrification

Green gentrification (also known as “environmental gentrification” or “ecological gentrification”) is described as “the implementation of an environmental planning agenda related to public green spaces that leads to the displacement or exclusion of the most economically vulnerable…while espousing an environmental ethic” (Dooling, 2009, p, 621). More specifically, green gentrification represents:

“the convergence of urban redevelopment, ecologically minded initiatives and environmental justice activism in an era of advanced capitalism. Operating under the seemingly a-political rubric of sustainability, environmental gentrification builds on the material and discursive successes of the urban environmental justice movement and appropriates them to serve high-end development that displaces low income residents” (Checker, 2011, p. 212).

As such, it is easy for stakeholders to market large-scale transformations of vacant land as a way to improve ecological sustainability, assist in the provision of ecological services, or for social or economic improvements in a neighbourhood, but these revitalization efforts, when taking place in vulnerable neighbourhoods may have unintended consequences. Curran and Hamilton (2012) suggest that the potential for gentrification near brownfield sites is intensified, although green gentrification is not exclusively tied to vacant land or brownfield redevelopment. Green gentrification is also not only related to the development of parks, but can be associated with the development of bike lanes, tree planting and other green or environmentally-conscious initiatives.
Scholars have begun to re-examine the challenges associated with removing locally undesirable land uses (LULUs) such as vacant land or toxic industries from historically disadvantaged or racialized neighbourhoods, suggesting that as greening efforts take place in these communities, parks and green spaces instead become “green” LULUs (Anguelovski, 2016). While parks and green spaces are desired by underserved communities, the negative impacts associated with green gentrification can make green space more undesirable than the original vacant or toxic sites, since it has the unintended consequences of driving up costs of living and displacing original residents.

While research related to gentrification (more broadly), environmental justice and environmental racism have existed in the literature for decades, the literature on green gentrification has just begun to emerge and few case studies exist. The attention being drawn to this concept is growing, but at present there are few examples that provide models of preventative measures or solutions to these processes. As further research becomes available, with case studies in diverse contexts, more North American cities may be able to develop policies or planning strategies that work to protect vulnerable populations while providing the environmental amenities associated with greening projects.

1.3.3 The Pernicious Paradox

The negative impacts related to green gentrification present difficulties when the objectives of greening efforts are to address the inequitable distribution of parks or environmental services, but instead reproduce or exacerbate these issues. Checker (2011) describes the challenges associated with green gentrification as a pernicious paradox and poses questions about this contradiction:

“must they reject environmental amenities in their neighborhoods in order to resist the gentrification that tends to follow such amenities? What happens to environmental justice activism when it meets state-sponsored sustainable urban development? How is it enabled or disabled in the context of rapid urban development, consensual politics and the seemingly a-political language of sustainability?” (p. 211).

Similarly, Wolch, Byrne and Newell (2014) acknowledge this paradox that is often glazed over by authors when discussing green gentrification. If greening projects, especially more permanent projects like parks, tend to increase housing costs and displace original residents of a neighbourhood, then is maintaining status-quo (whether this means low levels of ecological services or high levels of contamination) the optimal strategy to prevent gentrification?
Green gentrification is especially problematic when connected with environmental justice activism. For example, a neighbourhood may fight to have a vacant and contaminated former industrial site cleaned up by their municipality, arguing that the location of the site in their community was intentional and associated with environmental racism. Yet, if this site were to be cleaned up and redeveloped as a neighbourhood park, thus inciting a process of gentrification and subsequent in-migration of wealthier and white residents, then the original and racialized community who fought for the redevelopment may not be the ones who benefit from their activism.

It is recognized that low-income and racialized communities should not give up their right to a healthy environment for the sole purpose of resisting gentrification. Anguelovski (2016) identifies this as a topic for future research:

“How do activists manage the tension between fighting for neighborhood improvements and indirectly attracting wealthier and whiter newcomers? In turn, what are the anti-green gentrification policies, regulations, funding schemes, and participation mechanisms that municipalities put in place to address the conflicts that emerge from neighborhood greening projects and/or to address displacement and other social/racial threats?” (p. 31-32).

Though the literature on green gentrification is new and emerging, it presents an interesting opportunity and challenge to discover ways of resolving and resisting environmental injustices in cities.

1.3.4 Just Green (or Clean) Enough

While there is a definite need to meet local sustainability objectives, a new narrative of urban greening is developing around the phrase “just green enough” (Curran and Hamilton, 2012; Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014), where smaller greening projects are preferred over grandiose plans to re-shape a neighbourhood through the large-scale acquisition and redevelopment of industrial land. The “just green enough” paradigm is described by Curran and Hamilton (2012) as the strategy of environmental cleanup that “makes room for continued industrial use and blue-collar work, where cleanup does not automatically or exclusively lead to the ‘parks, cafes, and a riverwalk’ model of a green city” (p. 1028). Of course, the way the strategy is employed on-the-ground will vary by context, but in general, the just green enough paradigm works to clean up the neighbourhood enough to remove toxic legacies and contamination, but not so much as to
incite a new interest in the neighbourhood that might push original residents out. Given that cleanup of contamination is not always coupled with greening initiatives, the term “just clean enough” is similarly used to describe the removal of contamination without a broader redevelopment scheme that encourages gentrification.

The example given by Curran and Hamilton (2012) is of Greenpoint, Brooklyn, a superfund site with an industrial history dating back to the 1800s. By 1892, the neighbourhood had more than 50 oil refining companies. During the 1950s, between 17 and 30 million gallons of oil were leaked into the adjacent Newtown Creek, which is still considered one of the most polluted industrial waterways in the US. From the late 1950s onward, public policies continued to make Greenpoint’s eastern portion into a dumping ground for burdensome facilities. A recent lawsuit against Exxon Mobile also created a $19.5 million environmental benefits project fund to be used for community projects. Curran and Hamilton (2012) found that community members had a quite cohesive vision for their neighbourhood. They wanted Greenpoint to be just green enough to clean up the land and water, but maintain industrial land uses and working-class residents. In Greenpoint, as well as in the Calumet Region of Chicago and the Duwamish River Valley in Seattle (McKendry and Janos, 2015), green gentrification was just one of residents’ concerns about large-scale greening projects. The other significant concern was the availability of jobs for local residents – which has proved to be challenging in a global recession (McKendry and Janos, 2015).

One of the greening projects developed in the Greenpoint neighbourhood was the Newtown Creek Nature Walk, which is described as the “ironic nature walk” since it is located adjacent to the wastewater treatment facility. The project is not extensive by any means, but it achieves residents’ desires to be closer to the water and embraces the industrial history of the neighbourhood, without rapidly or dramatically re-shaping this space. This is just one of a few examples where citizen-led political activism has challenged the notion of gentrification as inevitable and leading to total neighbourhood transformation. This is not to say that gentrification is not taking place in Greenpoint, but there are people who are actively opposing these processes and providing an alternative vision for the neighbourhood.

In sum, Curran and Hamilton (2012) present one of only a few successful examples of the “just green (or clean) enough” paradigm in practice. The literature on green gentrification continues to
grow and provide further opportunities to understand how the paradigm is employed on-the-ground. The successful “just green enough” case studies that do exist, as well as the ways in which gentrification take place more broadly, are quite place-specific, requiring strong consideration of neighbourhood needs in order to be successful. Vacant land greening projects should look to Curran and Hamilton (2012)’s example, as well as new literature as it becomes available, to consider as “best practices” for these redevelopment schemes. By encouraging resident input, embracing the community’s industrial history and maintaining the neighbourhood’s blue-collar economic base, Greenpoint was able to meet in the middle and avoid more dramatic forms of gentrification that exist elsewhere. With further research into how we can transform vacant land into green spaces in cities, vacant land greening can work to provide social, ecological, and economic benefits to residents in a more just manner than a lot of the redevelopment efforts and vacant land transformations so far; however, the use of the “just green enough” approach is limited by the fact that few case studies and successful examples of resistance to change exist. Also, because the approach relies on modifying the greening project itself, rather than external or policy-based actions to reduce the impacts of gentrification, the potential for a “just green enough” park development to slow increases in housing prices seems minimal.

This thesis examines the role that vacant land has in expanding the City of Toronto’s parkland system, with specific emphasis on the potential for green gentrification. Using three case studies of vacant land to park conversions (Sorauren Park, Woodbine Park and Wychwood Barns Park), this research investigates how community engagement, activism, and politics shape park outcomes, as well as the potential for park developments to contribute to changing neighbourhood socio-demographics and housing trends.

Using a mixed methods approach, this thesis addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the circumstances (e.g. politics, activism, community engagement, funding challenges) associated with vacant land to park conversion in the City of Toronto?

2. Does the development of parks accelerate neighbourhood change and gentrification in the three case studies?

3. How are the effects of neighbourhood change and gentrification perceived by stakeholders and residents surrounding the parks?
This thesis reveals how the potential for park developments to accelerate neighbourhood change and gentrification is complex and highly politicized, and perceived more strongly by residents and stakeholders in neighbourhoods than it is reflected in changes in quantitative data.

In Chapter 2, I describe the City of Toronto’s policies and strategies for parkland acquisition, including funds for parkland acquisition, development and improvement. In addition, I explore the distribution of parks and vacant land in Toronto’s census tracts, in order to determine whether areas of high vacancy and low parkland coincide with Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs), which are neighbourhoods targeted for reinvestment by the city. In Chapter 3, I explain the methodological approach taken in this study, including methods for mapping, interviews, surveys and quantitative data analysis. Chapter 4 explores the histories of each park, including former land uses, contestation around proposed land uses, activism required to initiate the park transformation, and ongoing park use and programming. Chapter 5 presents the narratives shared through stakeholder interviews and Chapter 6 describes the results from resident surveys. Finally, in Chapter 7, I discuss the significance of the results from this research and make recommendations for future park developments in the City of Toronto.
Chapter 2

2 The Toronto Context

The City of Toronto has long been dedicated to parks in the city and is colloquially known as a “city within a park.” As such, the city’s efforts to provide an expansive and high-quality park system have been ongoing for several decades. This section details the City of Toronto’s past and current approaches to parkland acquisition and development, as well as the city’s distribution of vacant land and parks through geospatial analysis.

2.1 A New Parkland Strategy

The City of Toronto has been working on producing a new guiding framework for parkland acquisition and redevelopment, called the Parkland Strategy. The purpose of the strategy is to “guide long-term planning for new parks, expansions and improved access to existing parks throughout the city over the next 20 years” (City of Toronto, 2017, p. I). The strategy builds upon previous plans produced by the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department (PF&R), including “Our Common Grounds 2004” and “Parks Plan 2013-2017,” which informed the city’s approach to parkland acquisition and expansion to-date.

2.1.1 The Former Parkland Acquisition Strategic Directions Report

Previously, the 2001 Parkland Acquisition Strategic Directions Report (PASDR) was used to measure access and amount of parkland over the past 15 years. However, updates in mapping technology and improved knowledge of how residents access parks necessitates the upgrading of the approach taking to identifying gaps in parkland supply (City of Toronto, 2017, p. 17). For example, the PASDR used 300 Local Parkland Assessment Cells (LPACs) as boundaries to measure hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents (p. 17). Amount of parkland was measured based on a 500m radius from each park and was expressed relative to the population.

A map was produced that displayed data divided into five quintiles based on the number of hectares local parkland per 1,000 people – the lowest two quintiles were used to create the Parkland Acquisition Priority Map. These parkland acquisition priority areas were targeted for improvement in the city’s parkland continuity and connectivity. The approach taken in the 2001
PASDR worked well to identify areas in need of parkland, but updated mapping technology allow for more detailed modeling of Toronto’s current parkland situation, as described below.

2.1.2 Parkland Strategy Phase 1 Report Findings

In November 2017, PF&R released the Phase 1 Report for the updated Parkland Strategy, which details a methodology for parkland measurement and assessment in order to provide a current picture of parkland distribution and supply in the city. The updated parkland measurement and assessment methodology include the following updates (City of Toronto, 2017, p. 20):

- *An updated reporting unit that is fine-grained and replicable;*
- *An updated parks classification system that classifies parks by size without limiting functionality to classification type; and*
- *A new approach to measure parkland called the Park Catchment Tool, which considers access to parks by using walkability as an evaluation metric.*

Using the updated methodology, the Phase 1 Report finds, unsurprisingly, that there is significant variation in parkland supply across the city. There are areas of the city have a very high supply of parkland, such as near Rouge Park, rivers and ravines, whereas other areas of the city have a comparatively low supply of parkland, including Downtown, the Danforth, and North York Centre. Because the new methodology uses an updated park classification system, the Phase 1 Report finds that large parts of the city have a low supply of larger parks, including District and City parks. Finally, because Toronto is expecting to see a population increase of 500,000 new residents by 2032, the city’s average supply of parkland would decline from 28m² to 23.5m² per capita. The current disparity in parkland could be further exacerbated in high growth areas or areas already experiencing a low parkland supply.

2.1.3 Next Steps: Phase 2 Report

Improvements in Phase 2 of the report is set to be released in early 2019, and will “inform the development of a planning, financing and policy framework” (City of Toronto, 2017, p. 3). A few of the topics to be addressed in Phase 2 include: refining the park classification system using public and stakeholder engagement, identifying city-owned land (opportunities for land acquisition) that overlaps with areas of lower parkland supply, as well as recommendations that ensure the city’s ability to successfully acquire and implement parkland in the short, medium and
long-term future. The strategy’s next steps also include an assessment of social and cultural equity in the distribution of the parkland, focusing specifically on children, youth, seniors and new Canadians. The objective of this step is to ensure that “all residents, regardless of their socio-economic or cultural background have access to high-quality parks” (p. 35).

2.2 Current Avenues for Parkland Acquisition

The City of Toronto has several tools for acquiring space for parkland development, which include “parkland dedication requirements from development, purchases, internal transfers of City-owned land, and leasing and partnerships with other agencies and levels of government” (City of Toronto, 2017, p. 10). In Toronto, parkland acquisition is guided by Section 42 of the provincial Planning Act, as well as by policies set out in the City of Toronto’s official plan. The following sections detail the ways in which these policies are used to acquire land in the city.

2.2.1 Section 42 of the Planning Act

Section 42 of the Ontario Planning Act requires a portion of new developments to be dedicated as parkland. The amount of land required for parkland dedication varies by type of development and the area of the city that the development takes place. For new residential development in a parkland acquisition priority area (known as PAPAs), the requirement is “0.4 hectares per 300 units with a cap of 10 to 20 percent of the site area depending on the size of the development site” (City of Toronto, n.d.[b]). In non-priority areas, residential development is required to contribute 5% of the land area for parkland. Commercial or other non-residential developments are required to contribute 2% of the land area. If the commercial development is on a site less than 1,000m², then only 20m² are required for dedication (City of Toronto, n.d. [b]).

Despite these Section 42 requirements, new developments do not always contain parkland. When the amount of parkland required by a development proposal is considered too small to be useful, the city may request that the developer purchase land off-site for parkland development or add to an existing park rather than creating a smaller one (City of Toronto, n.d.[b]). The city can also request that the developers provide cash-in-lieu, which are directed into the Parkland Acquisition Reserve Fund (PARF) and used in the following four ways: “25% for acquisition of land for park purposes in the local district; 25% for park acquisition citywide; 25% for the development and upgrading of existing parks facilities in the local district; and 25% for park improvements
citywide” (Park People, p. 18). Cash-in-lieu contributions allow the city to purchase parkland in various areas of the city when opportunities arise for redevelopment.

2.2.2 Section 37 Benefits

Section 37 of the Ontario Planning Act is not always directly related to parkland acquisition, but is a tool that allows the city to negotiate funds for community benefits when a proposed development exceeds zoning height or density, requiring a zoning by-law amendment (City of Toronto, n.d.[d]). Unlike Section 42 cash-in-lieu dedications, which are directed towards a larger funding pool and then re-allocated towards different city-wide and local projects, Section 37 funds generally stay within the ward where development takes place (City of Toronto, n.d.[d]). Again, developers can either be required to directly provide the benefit negotiated between them and the local community (including city staff and the local councillor), or provide cash-in-lieu, which can be used towards smaller projects or pooled for larger capital projects. The use of Section 37 funds can include the following: heritage preservation, public art, park improvements, affordable housing, recreation centres and more. The City of Toronto has a procedure for ensuring Section 37 benefits are aligned with community needs, and that the community is both engaged and consulted in the process (City of Toronto, n.d.[d]).

2.2.3 Land Transfer and Acquisition Challenges

Occasionally, the city can acquire new lands when a city-directed development, such as road widening, takes place (City of Toronto, n.d.[c]). Alternatively, when property is no longer in use by a city agency, board, commission or division, it may be declared surplus and transferred to PF&R.

Despite multiple pathways for land acquisition, the city faces challenges in actually securing new parkland. These include high land values, low land availability, policies requiring the city to purchase land at market value, slow city purchasing process (versus faster-acting private sector), and difficulty coordinating parkland dedications from multiple simultaneous development projects.
2.2.4 Vacant Land in Toronto

Many cities, especially those experiencing severe decline and vacancy, have taken it upon themselves to create an inventory of vacant land in order to inform future management plans. For example, the City of Hamilton, Ontario has an inventory of vacant urban residential land, vacant infill lands and vacant greenfield lands, though some reports have not been updated for several years (City of Hamilton, 2018). Other cities, such as Edmonton, Alberta, opt to create brownfield inventories to target contaminated sites for remediation and redevelopment (Province of Alberta, 2018). Though park developments are not always explicitly identified as intended outcomes of vacant land or brownfield inventories, having such an inventory can certainly assist in planning for future parks in cities.

The City of Toronto’s Open Data Catalogue contains a dataset called “Address Points,” which contain various data about every parcel in the city, including a vacant land category; however, unlike other cities’ vacant land inventories, the address points data is only updated for use by emergency services. While these properties are not necessarily vacant (often containing structures and have property owners), they are sometimes unused. The challenges associated with the use of this specific dataset for the purpose of this research is described in Appendix A. In sum, it does not seem that the City of Toronto keeps an updated record of vacant parcels for the purpose of identifying space for parkland opportunities, in the same way that cities that are experiencing continued blight have done.

When expressed as a function of population in City of Toronto census tracts, the amount of vacant land and parkland display somewhat similar patterns (Figure 2.1). In some parts of the city, census tracts that have high parkland per capita also have high amounts of vacant land. In the downtown and midtown areas of Toronto, the relationship is inverse – high vacancy and low parkland is most common.
In Figure 2.2, census tracts that met conditions for low parks per capita and high vacant land per capita were isolated and displayed in red. There are surprisingly few census tracts in Toronto that meet these two conditions. The City of Toronto’s Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) are displayed in Figure 2.2, since these are neighbourhoods being targeted for social development, economic investment, engagement in municipal decision making, healthy living and physical infrastructure (City of Toronto, n.d.[e]). These 31 neighbourhoods (of Toronto’s 140 official neighbourhoods) are being targeted by the city for improvement based on several indicators in the above categories, including access to parks and need for economic investment (City of Toronto, n.d.[e]). Areas with high vacancy and low parkland only overlap with NIAs in two census tracts, likely because access to parks is only one of many indicators used to identify neighbourhoods in need of improvement by way of government intervention. Though census tracts in red are generally clustered in the downtown and midtown areas of the city, NIAs do not follow this pattern and are instead clustered in the northwest corner of the city, as well as towards Scarborough. Although most census tracts with high vacancy and low parkland are not targeted as NIAs in the city’s Strong Neighbourhoods 2020 program, these are areas of the city that are simultaneously disadvantaged by the lack of green space, yet potentially vulnerable to green gentrification if significant investments were to be made in neighbourhood parks.
High Vacancy and Low Parks
In Comparison with Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs)
Census Tracts in the City of Toronto

Figure 2.2. High Vacancy and Low Parks Compared with City of Toronto Neighbourhood Improvement Areas
Chapter 3

3 Methods

This section describes the methodological approach to understanding vacant land to park conversions through a mixed methods study incorporating geospatial techniques (see Appendix A), historical research, stakeholder interviews, resident surveys and quantitative data analysis (socio-demographic and housing data). Together, these elements work to build a comprehensive picture of park development and the potential for green gentrification in Toronto.

3.1 Case Studies: Vacant Lot to Parkland Conversions

This study includes three case studies (Sorauren Park, Woodbine Park and Wychwood Barns Park) to better understand the process, challenges and benefits of vacant land to parkland conversions. A case study approach is used to understand the contextual differences between the different parks’ developments. In particular, this study considers the role community activism and engagement play in shaping park outcomes and how park developments may contribute to neighbourhood change and gentrification, which are a result of place and context-specific factors. Becoming more prominent in geographical research since the mid-1980s (Castree, 2005), case studies are often used to “take on a supporting role to approaches that are better endowed to identify empirical patterns” (Moses and Knutsen, 2012, p.134). Further, Moses and Knutsen (2012) argue that the case study approach, especially in combination with historiography, can be useful in isolating connections that may turn out to be causal or at least, related.

Figure 3.1. Locations of Case Studies Across the City of Toronto
The three parks were chosen for several specific reasons. First, they were previously evaluated by De Sousa (2003), where fourteen parks converted from brownfield sites were examined. De Sousa (2003) focused on identifying challenges, benefits and planning practices associated with converting brownfields into parks in the City of Toronto. To expand this research and to build a more detailed understanding of the development and impacts of vacant land conversion in Toronto, three of De Sousa’s fourteen sites were chosen based on the following criteria: a) the case studies represent varying locations across the city (see Figure 3.1), b) the parks were developed within the past 25 years, and c) the parks are relatively similar in function. For example, De Sousa (2003) evaluated Village of Yorkville Park, which is a paved park shaded by stands of pine trees in a predominately commercial area. Alternatively, Sorauren Park, Woodbine Park and Wychwood Barns Park are located in the old City of Toronto in predominantly residential areas. These three parks are mostly vegetated (trees, grass, vegetable or plant gardens, etc.) and function as space for a variety of uses, including active recreation, leisure activities and events.

3.2 Park Descriptions

Sorauren Park

Sorauren Park is a 2.42-hectare neighbourhood park located in Toronto’s west end. The park is bordered by single-family homes in the south and west sides, factory lofts and condominiums to the north, and a rail line along the northeast corner. The park’s historical uses include a plant for the Dominion Steel Bridge company, a Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) bus garage, and a film studio, in addition to a linseed mill on a property adjacent to the current parkland, the building for which still stands today (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.).

In the early 1990s, plans were made to transform the main building into a garage for municipal garbage trucks (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.); however, this plan was met with significant resistance by the community, who argued that their neighbourhood lacked green space and active recreation opportunities. Through partnerships between local residents, community groups, the city councillor and school trustee, the proposed use of the site was rejected and a park was developed.
When the park opened in 1995, it was predominantly an ecological habitat with active recreation uses, including tennis courts, baseball and soccer fields (De Sousa, 2003). Over the years, several modifications were made to the park’s design. A patch of “habitat area” (De Sousa, 2003) was removed to implement the dogs off-leash area, an abandoned building on-site was renovated into the Sorauren Park Fieldhouse (2008), and a town square was built (2014) to provide space for community programming and the weekly farmers’ market. As a result of ongoing interest from local residents since the early 1990s, the City of Toronto as committed to redeveloping the former linseed mill, which sits on the parks eastern boundary, into a community centre for 2023. The park is actively programmed by a local community group, Friends of Sorauren Park, who run events including movie nights, pizza dinners and the annual pumpkin parade, now a city-wide event, which originated in Sorauren Park.

Woodbine Park

Woodbine Park is a 11.33-hectare park located in Toronto’s east end, along the shoreline of Lake Ontario. The park was built on the grounds of a former horse racetrack, known as Greenwood Racetrack, which operated for 150 years (Friends of Woodbine Park, n.d.). Today, the park is bordered by residential units on the east side, commercial properties on the north side, and another park and skatepark on the western border. On the southern edge, Woodbine Park connects with Ashbridge’s Bay, as well as Toronto’s eastern beaches and boardwalk.

The decision to transform a portion of the former racetrack site into a park was a drawn-out process that was promoted primarily by the local city councillor at the time, with some community engagement. Negotiations were made between the city and the property developers who purchased the land in order to dedicate a portion of the site to creating a park. Because the proposed park was located in a “park rich” neighbourhood, the project received some opposition at city council who believed their wards were more in need of the park funding.

In the years before the park was finally built, the residential community on the other portion of the former racetrack lands was developed, consisting of around 400 single-family homes and 450 condominiums (Friends of Woodbine Park, n.d.). Much of the park functions as natural habitat, including a pond, in addition to a playground, splash pad, bandshell and other features throughout the park. The park is programmed by the City of Toronto primarily as a festival space.
for events including large-scale music festivals, food and cultural events. In 2012, a “Friends of Woodbine Park” group developed out of the more established “Greening Ward 32” community group, in effort to improve the stewardship and management of the park and to promote residents’ voices to the city (Horner, 2012). Friends of Woodbine Park focused on native species plantings for a few years, but has not been active since around 2015.

Wychwood Barns Park

Wychwood Barns Park is a 1.8-hectare park located near the Wychwood Park, Bracondale Hill and Hillcrest Village neighbourhoods. The park itself surrounds Artscape Wychwood Barns, which is a multi-use community space with affordable housing for artists, artist studios, office space and community space developed within the former Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) streetcar barns. The park is surrounding by residential streets on all sides, but is in close proximity to the nearby St. Clair Avenue West commercial strip. When Wychwood Barns Park is referred to in this research, it includes both the community space and the park that surrounds it.

As the result of community activism and concern over the future use of the vacant site, residents began building momentum around preserving the streetcar barns when they were set to be demolished. Artscape, a non-profit organization with emphases on affordable artist housing and creative placemaking, was brought on board in the early stages of the project to assist in the community consultation process and to develop a vision for the adaptive reuse of the barns.

Today, Wychwood Barns Park functions as a vibrant and dynamically programmed community hub. The park space contains an off-leash dog park, children’s playground and splash pad, a sports field, beach volleyball court, and plenty of picnic tables. In addition to the affordable artist housing and studios, the barns are home to a diversity of tenants including non-profit organizations, theatre companies and a nursery school. A weekly farmers’ market is the space’s main draw, but community-based events and occasional private events keep Wychwood Barns actively programmed. While the organization that fought to save the barns, Friends of a New Park, is not active in providing events and community building, the Wychwood Barns Community Association (WBCA) works as a connection between Artscape and the community.
3.3 Historical Research

To understand the histories of each case study, several methods were used to research past events related to the park. First, a web search was used to identify any relevant websites or online content. For each of the parks, a search was made with the current name of the park (i.e. “Woodbine Park”) and the former name of the site (i.e. “Greenwood Racetrack”). Each of the parks had at least one website that described the history of the site from the perspective of a local community group, although for Wychwood Barns Park and Woodbine Park, these groups are currently inactive. Wychwood Barns Park has a detailed development history written on one of Artscape’s websites (artscapediy.org) that is unlike what is available for the other two parks. In addition, the parks’ histories and current uses have often been written about by news outlets, avid local historians and blogs.

Past newspaper articles written about the former land use and current parks were most useful in understanding conflict and decision-making processes that were not included in most other formats. Using the database LexisNexis Academic, a thorough search was completed for each of the parks, which returned hundreds of news articles. These were reviewed chronologically and incorporated into the historical narratives for each park. Together, the results from web searches, historical news articles, and narratives from stakeholder interviews (described below) were instrumental in creating a historical account of the development of each of the parks.

3.4 Interviews and Survey Data Collection

Interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders, to collect qualitative recounts of park development, as well as perceived impacts of vacant land to park transformations. Attempts were made to contact as many individuals involved in the both the original park development process and those involved in organizations currently active in each of the three parks. Potential participants included former and current city councillors, the City of Toronto’s Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department, local organizations and activists.

Former city councillors were contacted if they were in office either at the time of lobbying and citizen engagement related to the park or if they were in office when the park was built. A few former councillors were unable to be contacted because their contact information was not available online and those currently in office did not have contact information for them.
Artscape, a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to providing affordable spaces for the arts and creative placemaking, was contacted because of their role in managing Wychwood Barns. The City of Toronto’s Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department was contacted to understand the city’s approach to vacant land acquisition and redevelopment of these lands into parks.

Organizations working in the park were identified through web searches. The types of organizations that exist (or existed previously) in each of the parks varied: a “friends of the park” style group was present for Sorauren Park (Friends of Sorauren Park) and Woodbine Park (Greening Ward 32 and Friends of Woodbine Park, both inactive). At Wychwood Barns Park, an organization, called Friends of a New Park, worked to lobby for the barns’ redevelopment in the early 2000s. Today, the Wychwood Barns Community Association (WBCA) is a board of volunteers working to connect Artscape to the surrounding community (Artscape Wychwood Barns, n.d.). Each of these organizations were contacted through their various online channels.

Names and contact information for local residents who were involved in park developments was obtained from other interviewees. One interviewee, Cookie Roscoe, was contacted because her work in advocating for the redevelopment of the barns was documented on Artscape’s website, and she currently works as the farmers’ market manager for The Stop Community Food Centre’s Green Barn, located at Wychwood Barns. Despite her employment at the barns, Cookie was interviewed in her personal capacity as a local resident and activist for the redevelopment of Wychwood Barns.

In total, six interviews were completed for Wychwood Barns Park, five interviews for Sorauren Park and two interviews for Woodbine Park (Table 3.1). Several attempts were made to contact additional individuals for Woodbine Park. As will be described in subsequent sections, there is currently no significant resident or community groups present at Woodbine Park, and thus no responses were received. An informed consent process was followed, based on a University of Toronto approved ethics protocol. Participants were given the option to remain anonymous, although all gave permission for their name to be associated with their responses.

The interviews used a semi-structured approach, with questions developed to obtain qualitative descriptions of the interviewee’s experience of the park development, ongoing work to program the space, as well as any impacts the park has on neighbourhood change and gentrification (see Appendix B for interview questions). Interviewees were not directly asked about ways in which
the park has contributed to neighbourhood change and gentrification, rather they were asked to report how the park, if it all, has produced any negative impacts on the community. This indirect approach to asking about neighbourhood change and gentrification was used in an attempt to avoid suggesting ideas to the interviewee. A secondary set of interview questions were created for Andrea Bake (City of Toronto; Parks, Forestry and Recreation), since she was not being asked about one park specifically. Instead, she was asked about the land acquisition and park development process from the perspective of the city.

Table 3.1. List of Interviewees by Park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sorauren Park</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Ward 14 City Councillor, <strong>Gord Perks</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>● Former City Councillor and Deputy Mayor, <strong>Chris Korwin-Kuczynski</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Former City Councillor and Mayor of the City of Toronto, <strong>David Miller</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Local resident and activist, <strong>Doug Bennet</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Local resident and activist, <strong>Kathy Allan</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Wychwood Barns Park</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Ward 21 City Councillor, <strong>Joe Mihevc</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Local resident and activist, Farmers’ Market Manager at The Stop, <strong>Cookie Roscoe</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Local resident and activist, <strong>Schuster Gindin</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Local resident and activist, <strong>Elizabeth Cinello</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Architect, DTAH Architects, <strong>Joe Lobko</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Managing Director of Artscape Wychwood Barns, <strong>Margo Welch</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Woodbine Park</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Ward 32 City Councillor, Chair of the Parks and Environment Committee, <strong>Mary-Margaret McMahon</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Former City Councillor, <strong>Sandra Bussin</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>City of Toronto</th>
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<tr>
<td>● Program Standards and Development Officer for the Planning, Design and Development section of Parks, Forestry and Recreation, <strong>Andrea Bake</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Interviews were transcribed and coded manually. Initially, a coding scheme was used to represent responses to questions. For example, for the question “In your opinion, has the development of the park had any negative impacts on the surrounding neighbourhood,”
interviewee's response to this question would be given the code "negative impacts." If an interviewee spoke about negative impacts at another point in the interview, that passage would also be coded as "negative impacts." Where subcategories could be identified, they were including in the coding scheme (i.e. "leadership - councillor" and "leadership - resident"). Several new subcategories emerged through this open coding process, including the role of politics and conflict in the lobbying process. Interviews were re-coded for these unanticipated themes.

Passages from the interviews were then organized by category and coded once more. Using an axial coding process, categories were analyzed for further subcategories and their relation to one another. For example, it became evident that "conflict" was most often associated with "engagement" and consultation processes for two parks, but more commonly related to current "programming" for the third park. Through this process, narratives began to emerge for each park and the most common themes across all three parks were identified. These include: engagement and activism; politics; conflict; housing and neighbourhood change; and each theme contains several subcategories.

3.5 Resident Survey Collection and Data Analysis

Resident surveys were used to build on interview findings, and to learn how residents use the park and their perception of changes happening in their neighbourhood. For each park, paper surveys were distributed to 250 households within a 500-metre walking distance of the parks’ boundaries (750 surveys total). A 500-metre boundary was chosen because this is the metric formerly used by the City of Toronto to determine access to a park (City of Toronto, 2013), although a new method is being developed for the upcoming Parkland Strategy. While the city previously used a 500-metre radius from the geographical centre of the park to measure access, I opted to use Google Maps to determine survey distribution boundaries based on 500-metre (maximum) walking routes to the perimeter of the park (see Figure 3.2).
Of the 250 surveys per park, 200 were delivered to single-family dwellings, some of which are divided into multiple units, and residential units above storefronts. The remaining 50 were delivered to apartment units, condominiums, lofts and Toronto Community Housing Corporation units (Woodbine Park only). The surveys were delivered to every fourth household using Google Maps to identify every fourth parcel. As such, a list of target households was created prior to delivery. Survey packages were placed in resident’s mailboxes for the first 200 delivered to single-family dwellings and storefront units. The survey package included an information letter and a stamped envelope to return the completed survey by mail at the resident’s convenience. The resident surveys were part of the same approved ethics protocol as the interviews.

Apartment, condominium and loft property managers were contacted in order to gain access to mail rooms for survey delivery; however, no responses were received. Instead, survey packages were mailed directly to these units. Multi-unit dwellings were identified while delivering survey packages and by using Google Map’s Street View. Using Canada Post’s “Find a Postal Code” service (online), a list of addresses for each residential complex was generated. Approximately 25% of units were identified for survey receipt, spread out evenly across the apartment, condominium and loft units that exist near each of the parks.
The Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) was contacted to obtain a list of units for their property near Woodbine Park. TCHC was unable to release their residents’ address listings, and instead requested that I visit the building to ask residents directly if they are willing to participate. Residents who were leaving or entering the apartment buildings were asked if they wished to participate in the survey. A total of twenty surveys were distributed to TCHC residents, ten for each of the two buildings near Woodbine Park. Survey distribution at the TCHC locations were completed on February 15th, 2018 beginning around noon and took approximately one hour to distribute the twenty surveys to residents willing to complete them.

In general, survey questions were modelled after the interview guide (see Appendix C), except for the omission of questions regarding the history and development of the park, since the majority of residents would have little to no knowledge of this. Again, participants were not asked about gentrification directly, instead prompted to identify changes in their neighbourhood over time. For example, residents were asked to describe the character and socio-demographic composition of their neighbourhood, then asked if, in their opinion, these attributes have changed over time. The survey completion rate is as follows:

- Sorauren Park: 88/250 = 35.2%
- Woodbine Park: 66/250 = 26.4%
- Wychwood Barns Park: 62/250 = 24.8%

Completed surveys were transcribed into SurveyMonkey, which was useful in producing summary statistics and data visualization. The SurveyMonkey platform made it easier to search survey responses by keyword (i.e. “gentrification). Simple statistics were produced from quantitative survey questions, whereas qualitative questions were coded in a similar fashion to the interview transcripts. For example, the results from the question “how would you describe the character of your neighbourhood” were reviewed to determine common themes. These responses were tallied (i.e. 14 out of 50 respondents mentioned a feeling of community in their neighbourhood) and responses that were more descriptive were flagged for further coding. For instance, responses that discussed “gentrification” were coded further to determine what survey respondents seemed to consider to be the markers of neighbourhood change and gentrification. Like the interviews, an informed consent process was used and participant anonymity was protected.
3.6 Quantitative Data Analysis

Data related to housing, socio-demographics, and building renovations were used to identify if perceived levels of neighbourhood change and gentrification are compare with quantitative measures of neighbourhood change in each park’s neighbourhood. This analysis used the census tracts that overlap with the 500-metre boundary used for survey distribution to define park’s neighbourhood for the quantitative analysis (for example, see Figure 3.3). The number of census tracts in each boundary varied: five for Sorauren Park, four for Woodbine Park and three for Wychwood Barns Park. Several variables were examined from two census years prior to park development until present (the most recent census year was 2016) to represent different components of neighbourhood change (Table 3.2). Because each of the parks were developed at different times, the datasets temporally vary based on the age of the park and how many censes were completed since development. Sorauren Park has seven years of data, Woodbine Park has five, and Wychwood Barns Park has three.

![Figure 3.3. Example of Census Tract Selection Based on 500-Metre Survey Distribution Boundary, Woodbine Park](image)
Table 3.2. Variables Analyzed, Including Description and Source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-Demographic Data</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Rate of Immigrant Population</td>
<td>‘Immigrant’ refers to a person who is, or who has ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident. Such a person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this group.” (Statistics Canada, 2016).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Rate of Visible Minorities</td>
<td>‘Visible minority' refers to whether a person belongs to a visible minority group as defined by the Employment Equity Act and, if so, the visible minority group to which the person belongs. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as &quot;persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour&quot; (Statistics Canada, 2016). Beginning in 1996, the Statistics Canada began asking census respondents whether or not they identify as a visible minority. As such, data is not available prior to 1996, affecting only Sorauren Park’s dataset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Educational Attainment</td>
<td>The system for reporting educational attainment was modified a few times throughout the census years in question, but in general, those who completed an apprenticeship, trades certificate or diploma, a university or non-university certificate, diploma or degree were counted as having a post-secondary education. Those who attended a post-secondary institution but did not complete the requirements were not counted as having a post-secondary education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Income</td>
<td>Average total individual income was used to understand changes in census tract income over time, in part because it was the most consistently measured income variable throughout the study period. “Total income' refers to the sum of certain incomes (in cash and, in some circumstances, in kind) of the statistical unit during a specified reference period” (Statistics Canada, 2016).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing Data</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Housing Tenure</td>
<td>“‘Owner household' refers to a private household where some member of the household owns the dwelling, even if it is still being paid for” (Statistics Canada, 2016). This number was used to calculate the percent of population who rents their dwelling in each census tract.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Average Value of Dwelling (Owner Occupied Private Dwellings, Owner Estimated)</td>
<td>“‘Value (owner estimated)’ refers to the dollar amount expected by the owner if the asset were to be sold” (Statistics Canada, 2016). As such, tenant occupied dwellings are excluded from this variable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Number of Building Permits Issued Post-Park Development</td>
<td>The City of Toronto’s Open Data Catalogue dataset called “Building Permits - Cleared Permits Prior Years” was used to analyze the number of permits issued annually in census tracts surrounding each park. Data only exists for 2001 onwards because previous data “were entered and processed on numerous pre-amalgamation legacy systems with varying data collection capabilities and standards” (City of Toronto, 2018).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The number of building permits issued from the year of park development until present was used as a proxy for gentrification, recognizing that as neighbourhoods gentrify, a common byproduct is the renovation of single family homes and other dwelling units. Using ArcGIS, the building permit GEO_ID was joined with their respective location using the Address Points dataset. The number of permits (cleared permits for prior years, cleared and active permits for 2018) was counted within the boundaries of each park’s census tracts for each year following development. Because data only exists from 2001 onward, a limited dataset exists for census tracts surrounding Sorauren Park (built in 1995). Results of permit counts over time were graphed; one graph for each of the three parks.

The socio-demographic variables retrieved from the Canadian Census were chosen because of their relationship with neighbourhood change, including gentrification impacts, and include immigrant populations, visible minority populations, education and income. These variables were also used in David Hulchanski’s (2007) *The Three Cities within Toronto* report as measures of neighbourhood change and income polarization. Unlike Hulchanski (2007), this research does not look at socio-demographics in each census tract across the city. Instead, changes in values in the census tracts surrounding each park were compared with the average across the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) in order to compare the direction and magnitude of local changes with city-wide changes. This was completed by graphing data from each park’s census tracts alongside the Toronto CMA average for two census years prior to development until the 2016 census (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Census Years Included in Quantitative Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Name</th>
<th>Year Built</th>
<th>Census Years Included in Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sorauren Park</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1986 - 2016 (7 census years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodbine Park</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1996 - 2016 (5 census years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wychwood Barns Park</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2001 - 2016 (4 census years)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For Woodbine Park and Wychwood Barns Park, census tract boundaries remained static over the timeframes above. For Sorauren Park, census tracts were split twice to accommodate increasing density. Specifically, census tract 47 was split into 47.01 and 47.02 beginning in 2001. In 2016, CT 47.01 was split into 47.03 and 47.04 (see Table 3.4). The division in 2016 was in response to increasing density resulting from the redevelopment of former factory buildings into condominiums and lofts on the northern boundary of Sorauren Park. When graphing data for Sorauren Park CTs, the 2016 boundary names are used. For years prior to census tracts being split, the original values are used. For example, CT 47.04 uses data from CT 47 and CT 47.01 for years 1991-2011, despite these values representing a larger geographic area in previous years.

Table 3.4. Renaming of Sorauren Park Census Tracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47.01</td>
<td>47.01</td>
<td>47.01</td>
<td>47.03</td>
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<td>47.04</td>
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<td></td>
<td>47.02</td>
<td>47.02</td>
<td>47.02</td>
<td>47.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4

4 Park Histories

Media and web searches reveal how each of the parks’ developments were perceived and portrayed by residents, activists, politicians and journalists. Each park’s narrative takes a different form depending on which aspects of the development were emphasized. At Sorauren Park, minimal information on the park’s development appears in media searches. Instead information is primarily provided by the community group, Friends of Sorauren Park, on their website. Discourse around Woodbine Park focuses on the decisions made to sell Greenwood Racetrack and conflict between members of council; information is not synthesized by a community group, but instead exists in newspaper articles published in the late 1980s and early 1990s. At Wychwood Barns Park, the involvement of Artscape means that a detailed history was constructed and published on the non-profit’s website, though supplementary discourses are provided in newspaper articles, community group websites and academic literature.

4.1 Sorauren Park

The land where Sorauren Park sits today has been transformed several times throughout the city’s history. It was originally a plant for the Dominion Bridge Steel Company, which produced the steel girders for the Bloor Street Viaduct, among other projects (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.). After World War I, the site was occupied by the Toronto Transit Commission to construct the Parkdale bus garage, which was operational until 1966, when it was used as a repair and maintenance facility (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.; Mallion, 2013). After the repair facility was closed, the site had a brief stint as a film studio (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.).

When this site was proposed to be redeveloped as garage for municipal garbage trucks, opposition arose that set in motion the plans to create Sorauren Park (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.). Though the waste transfer station was approved by council, when residents heard of this plan, they began to organize against it. Through the leadership of Councillor Chris Korwin-Kuczynski, Toronto District School Board Trustee Irene Atkinson and others, in partnership with the community, they were able convince the City of Toronto that the Roncesvalles-Parkdale neighbourhood was not an appropriate site for that facility. The community rallied together, organizing two streetcars full of residents to go down to City Hall and reject the city’s proposal.
A diverse group of residents were engaged, including “bikers, with their chains and studs; old Polish seniors, shaking their fingers and saying ‘Chris’ [Korwin-Kuczynski], church basements aren’t going to cut it anymore, we want a proper place for us where we don’t have to pay; we had mothers with babies in their arms; and all the kids from all the schools in the neighbourhood” (I. Atkinson in Weinberg, 2009). This action was successful in convincing the city of the need to provide green space and recreational opportunities in the neighbourhood, and as a result, the plan to create the municipal waste transfer site was cancelled.

The first iteration of park design was kept relatively simple. The concrete slab that served as the base of the TTC bus garage was left on-site and covered with soil and landscaping (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.). This was more a cost-effective approach to remediation and allowed the park to be developed in a timely manner (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.). As a result, however, the drainage of the park is poor and vegetation, including trees and grass, only grow well around the perimeter of the park (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.). Despite taking the more affordable approach to remediation, $1.2 million was spent by the city to remove the contamination left by previous industries (Noble, 2015).

A property immediately adjacent to the park had long been scouted as a site for a future community centre. The former building for the Canada Linseed Oil Mills Ltd. was built in 1910, as part of a burgeoning industrial boom along Toronto’s western rail lines connecting with the rest of southern Ontario (Noble, 2015). Because of the decline in popularity of linseed oil, the facility was closed in 1969 and has remained vacant ever since (Noble, 2015). The derelict building is a popular site for photographers and “urban explorers” who appreciate the building’s character and graffiti left by previous visitors.

In 2000, the linseed oil mill property was purchased by the City of Toronto for a reported $2 million (Noble, 2015). Shortly thereafter, the soil was decontaminated and the asbestos fire-proofing was removed from the building, as well as in another building adjacent to the park, which is now the Sorauren Park Fieldhouse (Noble, 2015). The city commissioned a feasibility study in 2003 that determined the building could be converted into a community centre and through surveys and community meetings, it was found that residents were in support of this plan (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.). The Wabash Building Society was established in 2006, formed out of the very active Roncesvalles-Macdonell Residents’ Association, with the main goal of
continuing to lobby the City of Toronto to transform the property into the much-needed community centre to serve the Parkdale, Roncesvalles and Brockton communities (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.; Noble, 2015).

The Sorauren Park Fieldhouse, a former administrative building for the linseed oil mill was also targeted for redevelopment and community use and was completed in 2008. After the building was no longer in use by Canada Linseed Oil Mills Ltd., it was converted into an after-hours speakeasy, though very little details can be found on this part of the building’s history (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.). Today, the building is used as storage space, washrooms for recreation programs, and an event space for local community groups (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.). The Wabash Building Society promoted a “baby steps” approach to park development, as they found success in transforming smaller elements of the park, like the fieldhouse, before tackling bigger projects like the community centre redevelopment (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.; personal communication with D. Bennet). The funding to transform the fieldhouse into a usable community space was provided through a combination of the following sources: fundraising campaigns, donations, grants provided by the Evergreen Foundation, city funding, as well as Section 37 benefits from condominium and loft projects in the neighbourhood (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.).

Next, the Wabash Building Society concentrated their efforts towards a small, fenced-off piece of land located between the fieldhouse and the linseed oil mill property, which previously contained the flax seed grain elevators (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.). This was transformed into the Sorauren Park Town Square, used primarily for the weekly farmers’ market, as well as other community events like movie nights in the park (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.). With most elements of the park finally complete, in 2016, the Wabash Building Society changed its name to “Friends of Sorauren Park” to reflect the organization’s broader scope and work as a community group, providing events and programming to the neighbourhood (Friends of Sorauren Park, n.d.).

After the successful redevelopment of the fieldhouse and town square, activism at Sorauren Park shifted towards the community centre that had been promised by the city, but little progress had been seen. Apparently, when the property was purchased, the city was unable to provide the approximately $20 million required for the redevelopment of the building and sought out public-
private partnerships to build condominiums on the lot that would help fund the transformation (Noble, 2015). The looming possibility of the site being sold off to private developers encouraged the Wabash Building Society’s formation in 2006 (Noble, 2015). As such, Friends of Sorauren Park’s efforts to solidify the city’s plans for the community centre have been ongoing. In 2016, a fundraising campaign was launched where local residents and supporters of the project could purchase (on a pay-what-you-can basis) a “key to the park,” which were affixed to the fence that separated the park from the future community centre (Parkdale Villager, 2016). This visual representation of support for the community centre, as well as community investment in the project, finally paid off in 2017 when city council voted to commence work on the redevelopment (Friends of Sorauren Park, 2017). In 2017, there was “$50,000 budgeted for pre-engineering…followed by design in 2018 and 2019, with shovels in the ground planned for 2020, towards a 2022 or 2023 opening” (Friends of Sorauren Park, 2017). The estimated cost for the project was set at $32.4 million.

Today, conflict at the park appears to be minimal. The dogs-off leash park was not formalized until about 15 years post-park development, so there were concerns in earlier stages of the park’s life about dogs running throughout the park, especially during markets or youth sports games (Hatfield, 2009). However, this conflict seems to have been quickly resolved after the dogs-off leash area was fenced in. Because of the lack of conflict, both in terms of the park’s development and ongoing programming of the park, there are few newspaper or other media sources describing Sorauren Park’s transformation.

Today, the presence of the park in the neighbourhood is used as a selling-point for both future condominium developers and home buyers. In 2015, a National Post journalist describes all of the neighbourhood features that prompted a property developer to purchase land near Sorauren Park and redevelop the space as new condominiums (Van De Ven, 2015). In the article, the property developer states, “I really liked this site because it was so close to Sorauren Park. It’s a very well-used, well-programmed park” (Van De Ven, 2015). The presence of Sorauren Park, in addition to the proximity to several streetcar lines, the Roncesvalles Avenue commercial strip and High Park, are used repeatedly in newspaper articles promoting properties in the neighbourhood.
Similarly, an article published in the Parkdale-Liberty Villager in 2012 describes a local artist, Catherine Beaudette, who used her art to support the Wabash Building Society after being attracted by the work they were doing to redevelop the adjacent Sorauren Park brownfields (Hatfield, 2012). In the article, Beaudette says, “What is interesting about it is that it is obviously a community effort. People have come together and collectively brainstormed and come up with great ideas and I think that parallels how many artists work” (Hatfield, 2012). She also describes ways in which she perceives the neighbourhood to be changing, by describing how the neighbourhood used to feel far away but as artists moved in it began to improve, and restaurants and stores followed suit. Beaudette describes this process as common across the City of Toronto and says the Roncesvalles case is no difference, that artists have tended to improve a neighbourhood and make it more desirable.

Sorauren Park continues to be a well-loved and active neighbourhood park in the Roncesvalles and Parkdale neighbourhoods. Because the park was easily accepted by the community, as opposed to the suggested municipal waste transfer station, it functions as a source of pride and gathering space in the neighbourhood. The park supports a diversity of uses including youth sports leagues, the weekly farmers’ market, dog walkers, tennis players, and picnickers. With the community centre finally in the works, Sorauren Park will likely see some changes and increase activity in the years to come.

4.2 Woodbine Park

Greenwood Raceway opened on October 19th, 1875 for a four-day live horse racing event and operated continuously for 119 years (Johns, 1990). It was originally known as Woodbine Park until 1955, when “New Woodbine” opened in Etobicoke (Haunch, 2016). “Old Woodbine” was kept as the name until 1963, when “Greenwood Raceway” was officially adopted (Haunch, 2016). It had become one of Metropolitan Toronto’s largest employers and generated significant revenue for the city through property and commercial taxes (to the tune of $2.8 million in 1992) (Johns, 1990; Lakey, 1993[b]). Over the years, significant funds were directed towards the improvement of Greenwood’s facilities. Twenty-eight million dollars (including seven million dollars from the province’s Racetracks Assistance Program, which would become a source of contention years later) was spent between 1986 and 1989 for upgrades to the dining room, installing tile flooring, lighting in the parking areas, and overall “beautification” (Johns, 1990).
The Ontario Jockey Club (OJC) had spent significant resources on maintaining Greenwood as the association’s most profitable track and keeping their operations compatible with the neighbourhood it was so deeply embedded within.

Continuing into the mid-1980s, Greenwood Racetrack was a Toronto institution for live horse racing. Located conveniently in the Beaches neighbourhood and easily accessible along the Queen Streetcar route, Greenwood was revered as being the only remaining urban horse racetrack in North America (Lakey, 1993[a]). Despite this, local residents and city councillors alike voiced their qualms about the track’s inconvenient location. Residents bemoaned the traffic and parking issues that were associated with Greenwood, often finding track-goers blocking their driveways and taking up all remaining street parking that was already hard to come by. Though he would change his mind later, long standing city councillor Tom Jakobek argued in September 1985 that the Ontario Jockey Club (OJC) should move its Greenwood operations to Exhibition Stadium since the Blue Jays and Argonauts were scheduled to move into the Skydome (now Rogers Centre) a few years later. The Beaches residents were already up in arms against the implementation of Sunday racing at Greenwood, so Jakobek argued that moving to Exhibition Stadium would keep the racetrack in a central location easily accessible by transit, but away from residential areas and the associated conflict that ensues (Kerr, 1985).

As early as 1955, the site where Greenwood Racetrack was located was targeted for development - a shopping centre and apartment complexes were part of the original vision (Johns, 1990). The 33-hectare site is bound by Queen Street East, Lakeshore Boulevard East, Woodbine and Coxwell Avenues; a large swath of land in an increasingly densifying and highly coveted waterfront location. In the late 80s and early 90s, a proposal by the David Crombie Royal Commission on the Waterfront encouraged the relocation of Greenwood Racetrack to a “more suitable” location so that the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario could redevelop the site (Johns, 1990). However, the president of the OJC at the time, Jack Kennedy, assured that Greenwood would not be closing any time soon (Johns, 1990). There was always speculation about when Greenwood Racetrack would leave and predictions on who the prospective buyers might be, which ranged from a new casino to the new home for Maple Leaf Gardens (Barber, 1993). Most developers who made statements about the Greenwood land agreed that the best future use of the site would be a residential development broken into small blocks with both recreational and commercial opportunities - in other words, mixed use (Barber, 1993).
On May 6th, 1993, the OJC announced that Greenwood Racetrack would be sold within 2 years, citing financial difficulties as the main reason (Young and Grottke, 1993). The property value was estimated at $20-40 million and was zoned as residential-commercial (Young and Grottke, 1993). The Ontario Racing Commission (ORC), which oversaw the regulation of all horse racing in the province until 2015, did not approve of OJC’s decision to sell the property. Although they could not stop the sale altogether, ORC had plans to make the sale much more difficult - including considering making the OJC pay back $7 million issued for renovations completed in the late 80s (Young and Grottke, 1993). The ORC held public hearings about the club’s decision to sell, with concerns being raised about the impact it will have on employees of the industry, as well as the success of the industry itself moving forward (Lakey, 1993[a]). The jockey club was not looking for tax breaks or provincial funding to keep the historic track alive; they had been losing millions each year since 1991 and expected a further $4 million in losses in 1993 (Lakey, 1993[a]).

Around November 1993, the Toronto Historical Board designated Greenwood as heritage property (Lakey, 1993[c]). Jakobek had encouraged this move, perhaps to make the site less attractive to future developers because “if [Greenwood] is ‘designated’ a heritage property for historical or architectural reasons, city council can refuse rezoning applications or permits to alter structures” (Lakey, 1993[c]).

The City of Toronto’s decision to let OJC sell Greenwood to a developer, instead of buying the property themselves, was a financial one. Toronto Mayor June Rowlands said that the city could no longer afford to acquire the site (perhaps suggesting that at one time they intended to), and Councillor Tom Jakobek added “the city is absolutely broke…[they] couldn’t even acquire a portion of it if they wanted to” (Lakey, 1993[b]). In early 1994, the OJC was receiving bids - some were offering to buy the track to maintain it for horse racing, others wanted to turn the property into housing. As these offers were coming in, several politicians began to rally to oppose some of the future developments. NDP MPP Frances Lankin and Councillor Jakobek (reneging his original proposal) wanted to bring the horses back to Greenwood (Toronto Star, 1994). The rationale behind this seems to be that while residents have had their difficulties with the track’s presence and the nuisances it brought to their neighbourhood, they learned to embrace it. Now that the track was set to close, residents had a sudden change of heart, and preferred the track over residential development (especially fearing high rises, despite the land being zoned for
low-rise residential). In response to resident upheaval over new residential development, Councillors Jakobek and Ellis, plus other east end politicians, wanted the city to review their plans and consider converting the land into a park, endorsing a motion at council to freeze development until the plans could be reviewed (Toronto Star, 1994). The year prior, the zoning of the parcel was changed from industrial to residential, and city council did not want to repeat this process to create a park (Toronto Star, 1994). The argument against Jakobek, Ellis and their east end allies was that this area, with the Boardwalk, Ashbridges Bay and a slew of other neighbourhood parks, was one of the most well-served areas of the city in terms of open greenspace (Toronto Star, 1994). Despite this, Jakobek and Ellis would continue to pressure Queen’s Park to assist with acquisition, citing that the lands are also of provincial interest (Toronto Star, 1994).

The Greenwood Racetrack property was purchased in March 1994 by River Oaks Group, a Toronto-based development group lead by Herbert Green, for $35 million. In May 1994, the deal fell apart because of environmental contamination on-site (Abbate, 1994). River Oaks Group had the parcel tested, the results of which indicated large amounts of peat and methane gas on-site and, compounded by a high water table, the resulting cleanup would eliminate any profitability in the new housing development (Abbate, 1994; Aaron, 2005). River Oaks had commissioned Construction Control Group to complete a report and the cost to remediate the land was estimated at $8.3 million (Aaron, 2005). An additional company estimated that the cost of cleanup could range from $6 to $11 million (Aaron, 2005). It was also found that the site was contaminated with “incinerator ash, heavy metals, and leaking underground storage tanks” (Aaron, 2005) making the cleanup of the site an onerous task for any future developers. An article in The Globe and Mail in May 1993 claimed, “although part of it is built on landfill, it is free of recent industrial pollution and probably would not require an expensive cleanup” (Barber, 1993). The OJC denied any claims that the site was contaminated, since it had never been used as industrial land, but the courts accepted River Oaks’ use of the termination clause (valid if environmental contamination is found). Although OJC did not agree with contamination claimed to be present by River Oaks Group’s experts, OJC was forced to return the deposit paid by the purchaser (Barber, 1993; Aaron, 2005).

At the time when River Oaks had purchased the land and still had intentions to develop housing, some politicians had concerns about the development. Councillor Anthony O’Donohue was
reported as saying, “I’ve got concerns about putting housing in there. We’ve already seen enough Moss Parks and Regent Parks in this city. If we’re going to put something in there, it better be good” (MacLeod, 1994). O’Donohue was presumably opposed to the idea of designing an affordable housing community at Greenwood and instead supported a more high-end residential development for the east-end community. Similarly, Councillor Jakobek was supposedly against the use of the site for public housing (MacLeod, 1994). To combat this, community engagement was proposed to get residents’ opinion about the use of the space. Mayor June Rowlands said, “Obviously, the planning of that land has to become very intensive with community input,’’ and Herbert Green from River Oaks Group had intended “to work with residents, government agencies and others to develop the lands in a way which contributes positively to the community” (MacLeod, 1994).

Nearly a year later after River Oaks exercised their right to terminate the agreement, the land had still not been sold. A few parties were said to be interested, but the OJC enforced a news blackout because of the controversial bid rumoured to be made by powerful Toronto developers Marco Muzzo and Fred DeGasperis (Moloney, 1995[a]). At the time, Muzzo and DeGasperis were supposed to be submitting a bid to develop the land as 800 to 1100 semi-detached homes and row houses, but the deadline passed and no one heard anything from them, so it was assumed that they were no longer interested (Moloney, 1995[a]). Again, concerns are raised by councillors about how the land will be developed, voicing resident apprehension towards the residential development. Councillors Ellis and Christie argued that the 2.2 hectares of green space outlined in Muzzo and DeGasperis’ proposal would not be enough to satisfy local residents (Moloney, 1995[a]). Councillor Christie began to voice opinions about redevelopment plans. He criticized the City of Toronto for not asking Metro Toronto Council to assist in the acquisition (which would be in addition to $7 million in assistance provided by the province) (Moloney, 1995[a]). Rather than wait until a developer purchased the land, then buy a small parcel from them at a significant markup, Christie suggested that the city buys the whole site first, then sells portions off for development (Moloney, 1995[a]).

It seems that by May of 1995 the fight for a public park at Greenwood Racetrack was in full swing. Residents and politicians were upset because developing a park now would cost taxpayers much more since it was sold for low density housing and acquiring land after the fact is much more costly (Moloney, 1995[b]). Much of the blame was tacked onto Metro Toronto and the City
of Toronto governments for not taking action, especially since the province was willing to chip in approximately $7 million in government grants for acquisition (Moloney, 1995[b]). John McKay, a 40-year beaches resident and member of the Greenwood Racetrack Citizens Committee, was saddened over the loss of a 50-60 acre waterfront park and disagreed with Mayor Hall’s statement that the area was already well served by parks (Moloney, 1995[b]). McKay argued that a High Park-sized green space in the Beaches would draw people from around the city into the east end (Moloney, 1995[b]).

Politicians would continue to work for more parkland than was being proposed by Muzzo and DeGasperis, working to achieve this by proposing the following two asks:

1. “Asking the Ontario Racing Commission to scotch the jockey club’s plans of a 4,645-square-metre off-track betting teletheatre on 2.2 hectares of the site”

2. “Pressing the province to demand a large buffer zone between the housing and the nearby Ashbridge’s Bay sewage treatment plant” (Moloney, 1995[b]).

Jakobek and Ellis were also working on getting the teletheatre’s license cancelled. Given that this was a condition for the sale of the land and would generate about 26% of the OJCs revenue, Mayor Hall argued that threatening to cancel the license could be used as a bargaining chip to acquire eight hectares of land from the future developers (Moloney, 1995[b]). In essence, if the city let the teletheatre’s license remain, the sale would go through and the developers would be able to proceed. If the developers did not forfeit eight hectares, the city could make things a bit more challenging moving forward.

Even the local residents opposed the teletheatre, so much so that they developed the “Coalition Against the Teletheatre” to fight back against the proposed “superstore gambling complex” (van Rijn, 1996). The coalition argued that the facility would disrupt the sense of community that they hoped to form, especially since the teletheatre would be located between a school and the newly-built residential community (van Rijn, 1996). The conflict was brought to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) in November 1996 by the coalition, as well as the East Beaches Residents’ Association (van Rijn, 1996). Apparently, the city and developers had called the citizens’ demands “vexatious” and “frivolous” and requested that the OMB dismiss the appeal, which further upset resident groups who felt they were being intimidated by council and stopped from exercising their right to a democratic process (van Rijn, 1996).
Mayor Barbara Hall was still known as being in opposition to the development of a park, arguing “we already own large areas of land that we don’t have the resources to develop. there’s publicly owned lands like the Don Valley, which are hundreds and hundreds of acres” (Moloney, 1995[b]). Despite financial constraints at city hall at the time, Jakobek remained optimistic: “hopefully, they’ll be able to sit down and realize a major park facility would complement their housing proposals, not hurt them. But for now, the fight’s on and we’re going to be vigilant” (Moloney, 1995[b]).

The presence of a teletheatre on the parcel remained a contentious issue that impeded the purchase of the property through to June 1995. If the OJC sold Greenwood to developers, city councillors said there was no way they would allow a teletheatre without the presence of live horse racing on-site, said Councillor Ellis (DeMara, 1995). OJC pushed forward, asking the ORC to lift their three-year moratorium so that the land could be sold to Muzzo and DeGasperis, and as a result, the transaction was set to happen within the week (DeMara, 1995). The OJC also asked the ORC to forgive the $7 million in provincial grants used for renovations in the 80s, but it is unclear what their verdict was (DeMara, 1995). Regardless of councillor opposition to the teletheatre, a lawyer involved with the project said that councillors cannot completely veto the teletheatre, since the ORC had regulatory control over the operation of these facilities in the province (DeMara, 1995). The land was officially sold to Muzzo and DeGasperis in June 1995 for $25 million (Small, 1995). Even after the site was sold, there was some opposition to the plan to transform a portion of it into a residential community. Arguments were made that Greenwood Racetrack was a tourist destination, provided jobs and tax revenue (Lakey, 1995). Community groups also voiced their opinion that “they would much rather live with a race track than thousands of new neighbours” and all local politicians at the time were said to be in support of continued live horse racing at Greenwood (Lakey, 1995). Despite this, Muzzo and DeGasperis seemed to be moving forward with their plans for housing at the former raceway.

By August, Jakobek (acting as the city’s budget chief) released a plan to use lease money paid by Toronto Island residents to buy parkland at Greenwood (Small, 1995). His argument was that it would make sense to use revenue from prime waterfront land to acquire additional prime waterfront land (Small, 1995). On August 15, the city “narrowly” approved the purchase of 12 hectares of land at $9 million from Muzzo and DeGasperis (Small, 1995). When combined with other nearby parkland, this acquisition would create about 16 hectares of parkland between the
lakeshore and Queen Street East, but would require an additional $5 million to redevelop into a public park (Small, 1995). Jakobek stated that because this development was considered a capital project, it was subject to a lengthy approval process and there was potential that the additional $5 million council be rejected or not developed for an additional five years (Small, 1995).

In early November 1995, Jakobek’s suggestion for a 12-hectare, $15 million park was rejected and a compromise of a 3.6-hectare, $4-5 million park was agreed upon by council (Moloney, 1995[c]). While Jakobek would have liked the park to be bigger, he understood the challenges of acquiring prime waterfront land, although the developers were required to contribute an additional 1.6 hectares of open spaces and two acres of land for a storm-water retention pond that would increase the park space (Moloney, 1995[c]).

While the plan for the park was generally well-received by residents, concerns remained over parking, schooling, density and traffic, especially arguing that the creation of a park has the potential to create parking problems - similar complaints to those about the racetrack itself (Small, 1995). The plan continued to be criticized by councillors who felt the allocation of funds to the east end was unjust, since the Beaches were quite “park rich” and their own wards were “park poor” (Small, 1995).

On November 27th, 1995, city council voted to allow two-thirds of the racetrack’s grandstand to be demolished, while the remaining portion would be enclosed and remain operational as a teletheatre until a new facility could be built on the property (Moloney, 1995[d]). Council also voted 12-3 to let the teletheatre operate despite continuous objections by councillor Ellis who did not think the facility fit in a residential area adjacent to a public park (Moloney, 1995[d]).

By the end of 1995, a political turf war had broken out between Metro Toronto and the City of Toronto. Metro Toronto was setting up a committee to evaluate the Greenwood Racetrack redevelopment, but Jakobek felt the committee was redundant, mirroring the city’s implementation group, which was established to do the same task at the city level (Small, 1995). Metro wanted to make decisions and formulate opinions on their own terms, said Councillor Christie, since it seemed that Jakobek was scheduling implementation meetings when it was nearly impossible for Metro politicians to attend meetings and the city seemed to be taking ownership over aspects within Metro’s jurisdiction, such as roads and the Ashbridge’s Bay sewage treatment facility (Small, 1995). The Beaches Citizens’ Working Group had also taken
ownership over evaluating and speaking up on issues that faced their community as the development moved forward (Small, 1995).

In May 1996, the plan for a 988-property development was approved by council, including the controversial teletheatre (Moloney, 1996). The staff of the teletheatre, located in what remained of the Greenwood grandstand, pleaded to council’s Land Use Committee to consider their jobs and livelihood when making decisions about the teletheatre (Moloney, 1996). The Land Use Committee voted 5-1 for the development, but opted to remain neutral on the teletheatre (Moloney, 1996). Residents began to speak out, citing conflict between residents and city council. Allan Burke of the East Beaches Community Associated claimed that residents’ concerns were being ignored and by refusing to take action to close the teletheatre, city council has “made a mockery” of the claim to account for Torontonians’ opinions before making decisions (Moloney, 1996).

Even if the new teletheatre was rejected by council, the OJC could continue to operate in the grandstands under a 20-year lease with the new developers (Moloney, 1996). The teletheatre was eventually approved, built and opened with little advertisement and fanfare but was successful nonetheless (Daly, 1997). It attracted attention from east end residents who were weary that the facility would attract prostitutes and drug dealers, as well as fear of a casino being built, though the zoning of the site would not permit it (Daly, 1997; Moloney, 1996).

It seems that the planning and construction of the park went on with much less media attention than debate about the future of Greenwood Raceway. The park, as well as the residential community, were built in the early 2000s and took several years to finish. When the first portion of the detached and semi-detached homes were designed, they were priced at $350,000 to $400,000 (Raymaker, 2006). The new residential neighbourhood, though not entirely complete was referred to as “Pleasantville” by local residents (Raymaker, 2006). The development was a completely new feel from the “then raunchy stretch of Queen Street East” and had a feel similar to that of greenfield suburban development, except special attention was paid towards making the houses a bit more unique than standard housing complexes (Raymaker, 2006). By 2006, only nine years after the houses had first been priced as blueprints, they were reselling for at least $950,000, if not more (Raymaker, 2006). Another set of homes (ten detached and ten townhouses) were finished in 2007 as part of Pemberton Group’s Boardwalk Residences project,
with prices ranging from $1.2 to $1.3 million (Raymaker, 2006). The final set of new housing development launched in 2007 and would be the last piece to complete the neighbourhood.

In 2000, prior to the park’s completion, Christopher Hume, a prominent Toronto urban issues columnist, describes his feelings towards the early stages of Woodbine Park. He said that the park was “not all it could be but infinitely better than what it was” (Hume, 2000). While the park was not yet complete, many areas of the space had begun to take shape and were set to be finished in the next year. He mentions that the development is the best thing to happen to the “neglected” area of the city. The actual reported cost for cleanup was apparently $14 million, but Hume considers this money to be well-spent. An admired garden, called the Centre 55 Community Garden, in the northwest corner of the park was planned and planted by neighbours, furthering feelings of ownership over the park.

Favoured elements of the park include the connection to water and the “circle of trees.” The park was designed to honour the marsh that was present at the site before human manipulation (Hume, 2000). As such, there are several naturalized (but human-made) ponds in the park, as well as a self-sufficient irrigation system. An art piece, designed by Laurie McGugan, exists in a more open area of the park. The circle of seven maple trees, including one bronze-cast sculpture, act as a “time piece” since the living trees will grow taller, while the bronze one will remain the original size. At the time of writing, Hume described elements of the park that were planned, but had not yet been realized: a bandshell, a rose garden, and several sports fields. While the bandshell and one small soccer field were created, many elements including the rose garden and other playing fields were never implemented at Woodbine Park (S. Bussin, personal communication, August 11, 2017).

Additionally, Hume notes that one of the reasons why Woodbine Park is successful is the fact, that due to small hills around the perimeter of the park, it feels quite peaceful and enclosed, yet not inaccessible (Hume, 2000). Apparently, this design feature was strategically implemented to mitigate noise for nearby residents (Gillespie, 1999). This component, in addition to the more naturalized elements of the park, create an oasis in Toronto’s east end; although this feeling is quickly disrupted by the theatre complex and parking lot on the park’s north side (Hume, 2000). Hume ends his commentary with this: “As it stands, Woodbine Park is very much the exception rather than the rule. It owes its existence more to bureaucrats than politicians. And with 2,000
acres on empty land stretching along the Toronto waterfront, this facility is a model of what could be done. And of what Toronto might become.”

Conflict at the park has been ongoing, mostly revolving around noise in the park. For example, in 2013, the city developed a pilot project to review street vending rules and gauge the public’s reaction to food trucks in public parks (Ballingall, 2013). Officials from the Ontario Food Truck Association and the city were baffled when food trucks on the perimeter of Woodbine Park were met with such bitterness because of fumes and noise from the generators (Ballingall, 2013). One local resident who lived immediately across from Woodbine Park said, “I’m extremely disappointed with the lack of planning that went into this. We look forward to our park returning to its peaceful place where people can relax and enjoy nature” (Ballingall, 2013). The noise resulting from events and festivals, both in frequency and intensity, has also caused residents to get upset, as it disrupts their sense of tranquility and nature that is the norm at Woodbine Park.

4.3 Wychwood Barns Park

The idea for Wychwood Barns Park began as a series of streetcar barns located in the centre of a predominantly residential community. The first barn was built in 1913 as a repair and storage facility for the Toronto Civic Railway (TCR, later the Toronto Transit Commission [TTC]). In 1916 and 1921, additional streetcar barns were built to accommodate the city’s growing transit network (Artscape, n.d.). The original 200-foot long shed grew to a 53,000 square foot complex with five barns, housing 50 streetcars indoors and an additional 110 on five surrounding acres (Artscape, n.d.). Up until the 1940s, Wychwood Barns was one of the most essential streetcar facilities in the city (Artscape, n.d.). The TTC acquired the space in 1954, a time when they were considering phasing out streetcars from Toronto’s transit network. As such, over time, the streetcar lines that used the Wychwood Barns were removed or eliminated and the barns became a storage facility instead of a repair centre (Artscape, n.d.). In 1978, the Wychwood Barns were officially decommissioned by the TTC and fell into disrepair (Artscape, n.d.).

Taddlewood Heritage Association (THA), a community group focused on local heritage preservation, had envisioned restoring the site back to the picturesque woodlands that pre-dated the streetcar barns, including “daylighting” a portion of the Taddle Creek that ran through the site (Berland and Hanke, 2003). According to Berland and Hanke (2003), “Taddlewood's case for a park rested on the areas' existing low density, park deficiency, and on meeting some of the
Toronto Environmental Task Force (2000) recommendations” (p. 76). Much like other park developments in Toronto neighbourhoods, residents argued that the area did not have enough green space, especially when compared to adjacent neighbourhoods.

The facility remained vacant and derelict in the middle of a residential community for a couple of decades, but in 1996, residents (including members of THA) caught wind that the barns were scheduled to be demolished and the land would be sold (Artscape, n.d.; Berland and Hanke, 2003). Residents became concerned about the future use of the site if it were to be sold to private developers, and also appreciated the barns for their heritage value (Artscape, n.d.). The property was turned over to the City of Toronto, by the TTC, in 1998 because they were unwilling to fund the renovation of the barns to bring them up to safe building standards. In addition, city council accepted the Toronto Historical Board’s recommendation that the site be listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties (Berland and Hanke, 2003). For a second time, in 1998, the city was taking the steps to have the barns demolished. Local City Councillor Joe Mihevc advocated for residents’ wishes and asked that a heritage study be completed. A local resident and heritage architect, Phillip Goldsmith, was contracted to complete the heritage study, the results of which indicated that the streetcar barns “were a significant example of early century industrial architecture” (Artscape, n.d.).

In the meantime, community momentum in the fight to save the streetcar barns was building. With the heritage study complete and in favour of the barns’ reuse, the city and the community needed to decide how they wanted to redevelop the site, especially because of known contamination and the awkward shape of the physical structures (Artscape, n.d.). The city planning department put forth three proposals in 2000, which contained differing amounts of parkland and housing and required demolishing the barns. However, local residents, with the support of Councillor Mihevc, argued that the new development should not include private housing, as proposed (Artscape, n.d.). An environmental assessment and architectural inspection were completed that determined that the barns were salvageable and could be repurposed, but the land on the surrounding property would need remediation (Artscape, n.d.).

Around 2001, Artscape, an organization that advocates for affordable art space and creative placemaking, was commissioned by Councillor Mihevc and local residents to execute a feasibility study that considered how the barns could be reused (Artscape, n.d.). The Artscape
feasibility study found that residents were divided on how the site should be used in the future. While one group wanted to create a space that supported artists and arts organizations, the other group favoured park space without the presence of the former streetcar barns. Once Artscape was brought on as the organization steering the project, there was an official body documenting the progression of the decision-making process, community consultation and design. As such, many aspects of the park’s development are well-documented, much more so than other park development projects in the city. In addition, the project began to garner media attention, especially because the fight to save the barn structures was highly contested.

Those in opposition to the barns’ redevelopment had concerns about parking, traffic, noise, the proposed affordable housing. Residents, primarily those from the private, gated community Wychwood Park detested the idea, and instead wanted it to remain a space where they could walk their dogs as they had done for years (Kuitenbrouwer, 2008). This was just the beginning of the conflict at Wychwood Barns. Debates about the barns would continue for several years and even became a primary topic for the Ward 21 municipal election. Community consultations and public meetings tended to be quite hostile and heated between groups with opposing visions. The case of Wychwood Barns has even been used as an example of community engagement and conflict – in anecdotes shared by residents and Councillor Mihevc, even on a panel about the challenges of equitable dialogue (see Lahey, 2009).

Most of the conflict arose out of residents’ differing conceptualizations of what a park should be. This conflict was so prominent, in fact, that an entire article was written and published by two York University faculty on varying conceptualizations of park space and the conflict that transpired in the early stages of the Wychwood Barns Park development (see Berland and Hanke, 2003). Apparently Councillor Joe Mihevc had campaigned for the 2000 election on the idea that the space would be redeveloped as 100% park (Scheuer, 2003). Shortly after, council had requested a review of the first barn, built in 1913, which was later designated as a historical building, prohibiting its demolition (Scheuer, 2003). This meant that, if all of the barns were to remain on-site, 23% of the park would be occupied by a physical structure, rather than traditional green space (Scheuer, 2003). In response, Neighbours for 100% Park (later called True Patriot Love) was formed to oppose the adaptive reuse of the barns. This group was described by journalists as endorsing NIMBYism (for “not in my backyard”), but instead Neighbours for 100% Park described themselves as PIMBYists (for “park in my backyard”).
Though the remainder of the site was always intended to be a park, this group was in opposition to the proposed barns redevelopment and associated community hub that was suggested to be a part of the park.

To advocate for the redevelopment of the barns and idea of the community hub, neighbours gathered to form Friends of a New Park. While media often portrayed these two groups as relatively equal in size and fervor, interviewees insisted that the opposition to the barns’ reuse were part of a small minority of people in the neighbourhood (S. Ginden and E. Cinello, personal communication, August 10, 2017). Berland and Hanke (2003) write: “the desire for a ‘park’ has catalyzed residents in a way that no other issues – transit, smog, homelessness, the proliferation of dollar stores on St. Clair…seem unable to do” (p. 74). Further, they argue that Neighbours for 100% Park “attempted to turn the genuine differences into social division and their children into aggrieved anti-Mihovecs who believed their rights to outdoor recreation were being robbed by a conspiracy of artists and a traitorous politician” (p. 78). Neighbours for 100% Park resorted to ugly tactics to oppose anyone who supported the idea of Wychwood Barns, some of which are described in the interview results. For example, they argued that Artscape’s plan for a green barn (including a community food centre) “means a food depot for poor people and that artists’ residences mean drugs and illicit behavior” (Berland and Hanke, 2003, p. 82). While Neighbours for 100% Park were an anonymous group, Friends of a New Park listed their names openly on the group’s website (Berland and Hanke, 2003). When a sign reading “Site of a New Park” was painted, it was painted over and later taken down (Berland and Hanke, 2003) in an overt expression of power and politics. For many, this level of contestation about whether or not a series of heritage buildings fit within ideas of “100% park” was unprecedented and astounding. Still, the opposition to the redevelopment of Wychwood Barns would continue for the years leading up to its completion.

The community consultation process surrounding Wychwood Barns was extensive, including two community meetings and a design charrette in 2001 (announced via email and 5,000 door-to-door flyers), newsletters, another meeting in early 2002, 15 hours of deputation at Midtown Community Council and a resident survey conducted in summer of 2002 (Scheuer, 2003). The survey confirmed Councillor Mihevc’s claims that the community was overwhelmingly in favour of keeping the barns: “Of the 933 respondents, 429 said keeping five barns was their first choice and 430 said keeping four barns was their second choice. Another 239 wanted none of the
options” (Scheuer, 2003). As a way to convince fellow neighbours of the need to save the barns, Friends of a New Park began giving tours of the derelict streetcar barns. When inside the space, residents were able to see how large the barns were and could begin to envision the possibilities for the space. Friends of a New Park played a significant role in developing community around the vacant site by creating a skating rink in the winter and a pizza oven in the summer, and began programming the space prior to its redevelopment.

With residents’ encouragement, Councillor Mihevc became one of the main supporters of the redevelopment project and took on a public role in advocating for Wychwood Barns at city council. However, he was criticized for apparently going back on his promise of 100% park that he promised in the 2000 election (Scheuer, 2003; Berland and Hanke, 2003). For Mihevc, the idea of what belongs in a park is not limited to simply grass and trees, but includes a range of amenities, including the proposed multi-use “green arts” community hub.

The final vision for Wychwood Barns was a collaborative effort between local residents, community groups, Councillor Mihevc and Artscape. The decision was made to create a combination of office space, artist studios and affordable live/work spaces, as well as space for the broader community. The project incorporates several elements including urban agriculture, heritage preservation and environmental sustainability to create a dynamic and multi-use neighbourhood hub. Joe Lobko and his colleagues at du Toit Allsopp Hillier (DTAH) Architects Limited were brought on board in the early stages of the project to begin planning the design of the building. A strong commitment to sustainability was made: the barns achieved a LEED Gold Canada certification in environmental design through the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System (Artscape History). The tenants and programming at the barns and the park continue to carry this legacy of environmental sustainability.

The City of Toronto issued a request for proposals (RFP) in 2004 and ultimately chose Artscape as the preferred partner for the project (Artscape, n.d.). The RFP was issued despite Artscape’s involvement since 2001. Artscape was also the only organization that recommended the site’s reuse as a community space based around arts and culture (Artscape, n.d.). After being officially chosen by the City of Toronto for the Wychwood Barns redevelopment, Artscape worked to obtain the community’s trust and support. First, Artscape issued a Request for Expressions of
Interest (REOI) to generate and assess interest in the project, the results of which brought in The Stop Community Food Centre as the anchor tenant and development partner (Artscape, n.d.). The fact that The Stop became a partner was said to increase other organizations’ willingness to commit as tenants once the space was redeveloped. Several calls for proposals were issued to identify arts and environmental organizations, as well as individual artists, who would later become future tenants.

Artscape describes the vision for Wychwood Barns: “[It] was not simply about re-using a building or co-locating a group of tenants within a re-purposed structure; it was also about building a community within and beyond the walls of the project. It was envisioned as a place that could help heal the differences in the community and become a meeting place for area residents” (Artscape, n.d.). Artscape employed several measures to make the community engagement process as meaningful and transparent as possible. For example, a five-person community advisory council (CAC; two of whom were interviewed for this research) was developed in 2001 to develop the vision for the project alongside Artscape. The purpose of the CAC was to “act as stewards of the consultation process, provide guidance on issues ranging from design to tenant selection and make ongoing recommendations” (Artscape, n.d.). Through open houses and design charrettes, the CAC helped fellow residents explore the potential of the space. A hope for this process was that those opposed to the project would become supporters of the vision to reuse the space. Unfortunately, those opposed to the project did not change their mind and continued to resist the redevelopment.

According to Artscape, there were two significant challenges the organization faced in the earlier stages of the project: “engaging with local residents to achieve consensus, and creating a feasible and environmentally friendly design that would save as much of the heritage buildings as possible” (Artscape, n.d.). Through Artscape’s engagement process, they consulted with residents and worked to address concerns expressed, especially by those opposed to the adaptive reuse of the barns and subsequent redevelopment as a community hub. Studies were conducted to consider the impact the space might have on traffic and noise, as these were some of the main concerns expressed. Artscape claims that through this engagement process, concerns about the affordable artist live/work spaces were also minimized.
Since the results of the consultations and resident surveys resulted in the compromise of a “three barn save,” efforts were made to creatively repurpose the other two barns. The second of five barns was designed as a “covered street,” which was a way to work around the mandated redevelopment of only three barns. The covered street functions as an open walkway through the barn and an affordable community space, often used for events, markets and other programming. The fifth barn, rather than being demolished entirely, had the roof removed and is often referred to as a “porch.” It functions as a transitional space between the barns and the park, and allows more fluid integration of programming between the two spaces. This barn contains native species gardens and culturally-appropriate food gardens, managed by the Stop Community Food Centre. The remaining three “true” adaptively reused barns were developed as (1) the studio barn: 26 live/work studios and 14 work studios, (2) the community barn: affordable office, rehearsal and meeting space for non-profit arts and environmental organizations, and (3) the Stop Community Food Centre’s Green Barn: “a year-round temperate greenhouse, sustainable food education centre, sheltered garden, outdoor bake oven and compost demonstration site” (Artscape, n.d.).

The designs for the redeveloped Wychwood Barns were completed by DTAH Architects, led by Joe Lobko. The main objective of the project was to incorporate sustainability, heritage preservation and community space under one roof. At the time, adaptive reuse of industrial or heritage buildings in Toronto was much less common (Artscape, n.d.; J. Lobko, personal communication, September 19, 2017) and so inspiration was drawn from international projects. Sustainable elements incorporated into the design of Wychwood Barns include: geothermal heating, storm water harvesting and reuse, and energy-efficient lighting and appliances (Artscape, n.d.).

Funding for the project came from a multitude of sources and was made possible once recognized organizations were committed as tenants in the space. Because of the diverse and multi-use nature of the barns and park space, Artscape was able to reach out to donors and funding sources with objectives ranging from sustainability initiatives, food security, affordable housing and more. In early stages of the fundraising process, Wychwood Barns was awarded $500,000 from the Metcalf Foundation for The Stop Community Food Centre’s proposal to use the open barn as a space to teach local residents, especially children, about food security and preparation. This initial contribution was considered to be a “kick in the pants grant” (C. Roscoe, personal communication, August 2, 2017) for its role in building momentum for other donors to
contribute to the project. Wychwood Barns was also given financial contributions from more formal funding sources. $1 million in Section 37 benefits were received from a nearby condominium development at Bathurst and St. Clair Avenue (Artscape, n.d.) The city agreed to direct these funds to the barns’ redevelopment, as well as remediate the contamination found on-site, which cut construction costs for Artscape significantly. The affordable housing component of the project was also instrumental in securing provincial and federal funds for the construction of these units (Artscape, n.d.). In total, nearly 20 major funders made substantial contributions to the redevelopment of the barns.

Another significant challenge that faced the redevelopment of Wychwood Barns was how Artscape would manage to fund the operation of the barns long-term. An arrangement between Artscape and the City of Toronto was made, whereby Artscape has leased the space for 50 years and is responsible for all aspects of operations, maintenance and capital repairs (Artscape, n.d.). Since Artscape’s mandate included affordability in housing, artist spaces and rentable community space, fees for non-profit and the community’s use of space at Wychwood Barns are not substantial. Apparently, when the Wychwood Barns Community Association was calling for board members, they were tasked with fundraising $75,000 in the first year of operation, which limited previously active community members’ involvement with the board (S. Ginden and E. Cinello, personal communication, August 10, 2017). The covered street barn, though intended primarily as a community space, is also programmed as a private event space, allowing Artscape to generate revenue through weddings, corporate events and fundraisers (Artscape, n.d.).

Though highly contested for several years of the development phase, Wychwood Barns is considered the “heart and soul of the community” (J. Mihevc, personal communication, September 18, 2017). The park functions as an extension of the indoor community space, and while rarely a topic of discussion in newspaper articles and other publications about Wychwood Barns, the green space is still a cherished aspect of the community. The weekly farmers’ market, as well as other events in the barns and park, attracts local residents, as well as people from beyond the immediate community. Wychwood Barns Park, though only a decade old, has developed into one of the city’s most well-known and well-loved arts facilities.
Chapter 5

5 Interview Results

This section presents the results from stakeholder interviews by theme. The discourses that emerged from interviewees were categorized into four major themes: engagement and activism; politics; conflict; and, social and housing change.

5.1 Engagement and Activism

The role that community engagement and activism played in each of the three park developments varied, but some commonalities included the ways in which engagement was both a bottom-up process and an iterative process, and the impact activist burnout has on the ability of community groups to maintain their presence in the park.

Residents engaged their fellow neighbours and worked to lobby municipal government through a bottom-up process, which was often framed as significant to moving park developments forward and building support for them. This bottom-up strategy was more prominent in discussions related to Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park, and less common for interviewees of Woodbine Park. Instead, Woodbine Park interviewees mention that there was little community engagement from residents both in the park development phase and in the ongoing operation of the park.

Engagement of residents, specifically by the local community group Friends of a New Park, was highlighted as being instrumental to the redevelopment of the Wychwood streetcar barns and development of Wychwood Barns Park. Residents involved in lobbying and advocacy work talked highly of the ways in which they engaged their fellow neighbours. Elizabeth and Schuster, both local residents who advocated for the redevelopment, identified that their active engagement in early stages of the project assisted in successfully envisioning what the space could be:

“With these flyers and information sessions we really solicited a lot of the community to just give ideas and opinions of what they’d like to see in the park. So we put all that stuff together and saw that there was an interest in the barns.” (Elizabeth)

…
“When we did Doors Open...we gave historic tours. Roscoe gave great tours, all of us had stuff, like I talked about when it was a workplace because I had done that research...and then we had lots of feedback options there, too, where people could, right while they were there looking around, say, ‘wouldn’t it be cool if…’ so we’d actually solicit that feedback to incorporate it into [our idea of] what the community wants.” (Schuster)

At Sorauren Park, residents successfully organized a petition to resist the proposed waste transfer station, and at their annual Strawberry Social, a popular local community-organized event, they had record attendance because of engagement related to the future park development:

“We did a petition collecting door to door signatures in 2009; together with the well-attended strawberry social that year, the RMRA [Roncesvalles-Macdonell Residents’ Association] generated powerful tools to convince the City of the opposition to a garbage depot at Sorauren and Wabash.” (Kathy)

Former Mayor and City Councillor David Miller acknowledges the role that neighbourhood engagement had in successfully building Sorauren Park. As a result of their work, residents’ voices were heard by city council and their need for a park and subsequent additions, including the fieldhouse, was recognized:

“Then in terms of lobbying, I understood the case completely, but it was very important for the residents to be speaking up and working together, and that’s the history of that park, you know it was essentially unused land that could’ve been a use that the community didn’t want, but then because residents organized and spoke up they got the park, because they organized and spoke up, their local councillor and my office in the city government as an institution found a way to create a fieldhouse, economically and reasonably.”

Compared to this high level of resident engagement both pre- and post-park development, Woodbine Park is described as being less active and engaged. Interviewees did not describe ways in which residents engaged their fellow neighbours, either in the park development process or in community groups active in the park. When asked why Woodbine Park might not function like many of Toronto’s neighbourhood parks and the community is not as attached to the space, Councillor McMahon, who is also the Chair of the Parks and Environment Committee, describes why Woodbine Park is a bit different, as well as her efforts to re-engage the community:

“There's no residential on the other side of it on Coxwell, it's kind of over to the side, out-of-the-way, and it is heavily used by organizers and not-for-profits...I've made a part of my mission to have a Friend of Parks for every park in my ward, because I really feel power to the people, they can transform their neighbourhood and we've done that successfully. Woodbine, we did have a little group, it was actually our Greening Ward 32 group, and they were doing some native gardens some of the locals who lived right there weren’t really keen because they thought it looked messy because native species kind of
do look weedy...So that kind of died off...we're looking for Friends of the Sakura to form. So maybe that's the initial step. I'm a total optimist so I think we can eventually get a group.”

Councillor McMahon mentions that they are getting a cherry blossom tunnel at Woodbine Park and she hopes by forming a Friends of the Sakura group, that a larger Friends of Woodbine Park group will re-emerge from those efforts to engage the local community.

Interviewees from each of the parks describe a form of activist burnout, whereby local residents either lose momentum in their community engagement process or are too exhausted from previous conflicts to continue to fight for another project. Those who were active in the lobbying efforts surrounding Wychwood Barns Park talked about the significant amount of time and effort required to keep the project moving. Cookie Roscoe, a local resident and activist, describes her feelings after a community meeting where it seemed the project had been killed:

“I had this sense of elation, I felt that the weight of the world had been lifted off my shoulders, I was so thrilled. In a way, I was deeply disappointed, but I knew that was only going to last a couple of days and I felt that I had done my best. No more could have possibly, physically been done. I had given up my entire life to the damn thing for two years at that point, three years or something and damn it, it was over. I had fought the good fight and I didn’t win but I’d left it all on the track. There wasn’t more that I’d left undone. Good for me! Move on, you know? And I was in that move on mindset and the next day when I found out the decision had only been deferred and not killed, I actually experienced quite a bit of heartache there because I knew that I was going to go back in and keep fighting. And I had another 5 or 7 years ahead of me of it.”

When the community association and board were developed to maintain community involvement at the barns post-redevelopment, those who worked tirelessly to have the project realized stated that they were too burnt out to continue to participate in the project:

“Yeah, none of us joined the community board! [laughter]” (Elizabeth)

“First of all, we were burnt out. Second of all, what ended up happening is, all the money went into making the park, making all these arrangements, handing it off to Artscape to run it and everything, and there’s no funding. There’s no actual funding to run it.” (Schuster)

These residents recounted how, in order to act as a board member, they were required by Artscape to raise $75,000 a year for the maintenance of the barns, and this was one of the factors contributing to their inability to continue to be engaged in their fullest capacity.
Doug Bennet from Sorauren Park describes how the “passing of the baton” to multiple generations of community activists seems to have helped the community group remain effective and active in the neighbourhood:

“We’re really into the third generation of the ‘Sorauren Park Warriors,’ I call them, people advocating for the park. The first generation really got the park opened in 1995 when Barbara Hall was mayor, after like 5 years of advocating so it was a big battle. And then the second generation was kind of the generation that I was a leader of. We got the fieldhouse built and the town square completed and now there’s a new generation of younger parents with kids where I was in the late 90s, early 2000s, bringing their kids into the park and they’re assuming leadership roles on our board of directors, which is probably one of the things I’m most proud of because a lot of these community groups they just fizzle out after the core three people get burned out.”

Schuster and Elizabeth of Wychwood Barns Park recognize that the conflict resulting from the opposing viewpoints towards the presence of the barns in the park contribute to their resistance to participating further:

“And you’re trying to accomplish something, and you can’t just have political fights every day, you just really do want to leave town if that’s what’s going to happen.” (Schuster)

“Or argue with people about stuff.” (Elizabeth)

“So we definitely learned that. We’re still doing this stuff, so obviously we would do it again.” (Schuster)

“Because community stuff can get very messy. All kinds of stuff, whenever you bring three people together, it gets messy right? So you have to be really willing to stick it out and put up with that stuff, which is fine, but I learned that lesson too. I’m not willing to just give out my energy.” (Elizabeth)

Sandra Bussin describes how Woodbine Park residents’ momentum tends to ebb and flow depending on if an issue was present in the neighbourhood:

“There are various pockets, and they come up on an issue, say there’s problems with the sewers and flooding, and then they just kind of dissipate. We had stuff about trying to create heritage conservation districts and you’d think from that, that group would continue to thrive and go on and do other things, not really. They seem to come up and then go down. Woodbine, this one, they were exhausting themselves, some group had come up with all these wonderful ideas and some other faction just didn’t like it and it literally would die, because it took so much effort.”

She acknowledges that there were some attempts by residents to come up with ideas for Woodbine Park, but when met with opposition, the momentum would fade. Despite being a relatively active and engaged community in general, these efforts tend to be centred around
issues in the neighbourhood, rather than organizing around providing programming and advocating for park-related benefits and services, as is seen at Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park.

Interviewees from each of the parks describe how the community was engaged in the past, whether it be through local issues, event planning or social justice initiatives. In many ways, it seems that the level of resident engagement pre-park development assisted in residents’ ability to lobby for the park and the extent to which they did. Interviewees from Wychwood Barns Park spoke of their neighbourhood’s previous levels of engagement most frequently. They highlighted their neighbourhood’s efforts in sponsoring Syrian refugees and other social justice initiatives, as well as community-based events and festivals as being integral to the formation of lobbying surrounding the barns. This level of engagement seems to have been carried over into the efforts to redevelop the barns and perhaps simplified the engagement process compared to if residents did not already have connections to each other through informal social networks:

“That’s why it’s a birthing process because this is a very politically engaged, community engaged, [inaudible] community. And sometimes I say we eat our young, like we fight it out and if we feel passionately about it, we organize. So there was a pro-side [and] an anti-side.” (Councillor Mihevc)

“There’s always been a lot going on up here, combining cultural, events and projects with community development or just community stuff.” (Elizabeth)

Similarly, at Sorauren Park, the neighbourhood had networks of people who had influence or knew how to activate the local community. It seems that the Polish community and the annual festival celebrating Polish culture, was a focal point for community organization, in addition to other groups in the neighbourhood:

“Roncesvalles community is alive and well and has always been a cohesive and active village.” (Kathy)

“I think [part] of the success of this neighbourhood is the fact that there are so many neighbourhood organizations working on all kinds of things.” (Doug)

For former Councillor Sandra Bussin, groups of neighbours had been engaged in previous efforts in the neighbourhoods surrounding Woodbine Park, but this engagement level of engagement was perhaps specific to a core group of active residents:
“People were seen as fairly engaged in community activities, I think it always boils down to a particular group of people, it’s not the whole neighbourhood.”

“The impression to the general public is that this is a very active and engaged community of communities, so there’s that community, Beach Triangle, this community [around Woodbine Park], and this area goes up to the Danforth”

Despite the seemingly high level of activity, there was little community engagement related to the development of Woodbine Park. One reason contributing to this could be the fact that both Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park were identified as being developed in response to a need for park space in the neighbourhood. In comparison, Woodbine Park was built in what was considered a very “park rich” area of the city, causing some confusion about why the park was needed in the first place.

Interviewees discussed the role of a councillor in a park development project. They describe how their local councillor got involved and became leaders in the lobbying process, especially when presenting the project to city council. In the development of Wychwood Barns Park, Councillor Mihevc played a significant role, perhaps beyond what is expected of a municipal politician. An early community consultation initiative indicated to the councillor that there was strong community desire to keep the structures. The councillor’s commitment to one side of the debate was acknowledged by Elizabeth; he was admired for his commitment to what the majority of the community wanted:

“I think city councillors, that tend to just sit back and…not get too involved because it might get [them] in trouble. Joe Mihevc was right in there from the beginning, he took a lot of slack from that group, you know that was against it. And he came out a winner. He put his career on the line for that project, as well as for the right-of-way, because that was kind of happening simultaneously on St. Clair - that was a whole other issue! It really showed how you stick to something that is a good idea and that is reflective of what a community wants and it works!”

Schuster expands on this idea to add that other Toronto city councillors may have been unlikely or unwilling to take this risk, especially when it has the potential to damage their political career. They perceive that other councillors might protect their associations with developers, rather than truly reflecting their residents’ needs. For Sorauren Park, the partnership between community residents and the local councillor was identified as a factor that made the project successful:
“We did a concerted effort [sic] to city council by way of the community's support to get them to realize that this was not a good location for a public works yard and that what I wanted, because there was not enough of that kind of space in the community, I wanted a park at this location. So together with the community at that time we went forward, the city capitulated in the end and agreed that a park should be located at this location.”

(Former Councillor Chris Korwin-Kuczynski)

Similarly, David Miller recalls getting more involved than a mayor usually does in such a community-oriented park development project:

“I did get fairly involved, normally as mayor these kinds of local things you get less involved in. People had spoken to me directly, so I got more involved than a mayor normally would. Normally that the local councillors do their thing.”

In these circumstances, the development of Wychwood Barns Park and Sorauren Park were still in the community’s hands, but local politicians assisted in bridging the gap between community and city council. At Woodbine Park, former councillor Sandra Bussin describes how the park was pushed by another former city councillor, Tom Jakobek, despite the neighbourhood not having a park deficit; however, over time the park became a welcomed addition to the community:

“Once we started to see things happening…I think then the attitudes started to change. They actually saw there was a benefit here with this park. It was going to be nice and wasn’t just Jakobek’s park, it was going to be our park.”

Perhaps because Jakobek took on so much responsibility in having the park developed, there was not much of a need for Woodbine Park residents to become active in the process.

Interviewees refer to the ways in which the original park development is rarely the final or most ideal version. At Wychwood Barns Park, people involved worked to make suggestions to improve the original design. Similarly, an iterative engagement process was beneficial to desirable park outcomes. At Sorauren Park, interviewees talk about how a “baby steps” approach to development assisted in building new elements of the park and maintaining the Friends of Sorauren Park organization. For Woodbine Park, interviewees mention that many of the elements in the original design of the park were never built, but as some newer elements have been added over time, they have been quite successful in attracting people to the park.

At several points in our conversation, Councillor Mihevc of Wychwood Barns Park discusses the ways in which the vision for the barns evolved over time in conjunction with efforts to consult with the community:
“We eventually hit on what we hit on and we went for the dream, an evolving dream...We had community meetings, we had sculpting this and you had little participatory exercises, so we did what we thought would be the absolute best.”

“I would say it was a creative dynamic interplay between the community and the local councillor, that that’s how the idea got born...good conversations going on and you had to follow the moving ball, it wasn’t an ‘aha’ moment, it was several ‘aha’ moments. In my campaign literature, I will say had the vision for the Wychwood Barns. In the confessional, I would say it happened as a function of a community conversation.”

Joe Lobko says that even later, after both the barns and the park had been built, that there were ongoing conversations happening with the community to tweak aspects of the design or programming that had not functioned quite as the community wanted.

“It’s not like you do it, deliver it, it’s done. ‘Oh, they didn’t quite get that right, we need to…’ and if the community really engaged in it and the parks department, everybody is kind of pitching in, you know, this is that kind of park to me.”

Doug Bennet alludes to the events and programming they did to build community support for the renovation of the Sorauren Park Fieldhouse and the future development of the community centre. He mentions the role funding plays, not only in providing the necessary finances to complete a project, but also in building what he calls “sweat equity.” Doug mentions that a professor from Cambridge University came to study Sorauren Park in order to compare it to a park in Copenhagen that was also built adjacent to a rail line, but had been much less successful in terms of engagement and use:

“My conclusion was from what his description was, was that there wasn’t any neighbourhood sweat equity put into it. It was just kind of given to the people, here’s your beautiful designed park, now go enjoy it. They didn’t really have any sense of ownership over it and you know, when a little kid buys a freezie with his loonie because the loonie is going to go to the park, then that kid is invested in the park, even if it’s a loonie. It doesn’t matter how much it is. And the money that the friends groups typically raise, I always say it’s really not the big money, but it’s the most important money, because then the neighbourhood has invested in the park. To put it into the vernacular, ‘they give a shit.’”

Councillor Gord Perks expresses a similar idea, arguing that doing community engagement incrementally has been a successful model for Friends of Sorauren Park. By holding smaller, but more successful (meaning well-attended) events in the park, they have been able to work up to larger-scale events. These “small wins” have encouraged members of the local organization to stay engaged with park programming and continue to do so for over a decade.
At Woodbine Park, many of the original design elements of the park were not realized and are thought to contribute to the lack of community.

“I would've like to see it - the original design, I think that would've been really cool. It would've added more of a community vibe for that. But in another way, it’s really great because we don't have a lot of big festival parks.” (Councillor Mary-Margaret McMahon)

At a few points in our conversation, Sandra Bussin mentions elements of Woodbine Park that were never built, including a bronze statue of horses which would commemorate the legacy of the racetrack:

“There’s aspects of this park that never got finished. The rose garden never even got attempted. There was a beautiful presentation of what was supposed to happen here and we could do with some of that. And that never got done...It might bring in some more people, like those rose gardens, there’s a whole different set of people.”

At various points in our discussions, interviewees from Wychwood Barns Park and Woodbine Park discuss the ways the community engagement and consultation processes did not meet the needs of the neighbourhood or the project. Sandra Bussin of Woodbine Park, recalls that the community was not consulted much in the earlier stages of the larger park development. When she consulted with the community over a children’s playground and splash pad within the park, she found that people were more engaged and that section of the park remains quite active:

“I think it would have been helpful to have the community, as I did with this [kids playground and splash pad], part of the drawing board discussions and that would have brought in more support.”

“So more community engagement?”

“Yeah, and the engagement piece wasn’t as well handled as it should [have been].”

Sandra Bussin stresses the role community engagement has on park development projects, which did not really take place in the development of Woodbine Park:

“I think by involving people in the step-by-step process, it helps and the buy-in is greater. It’s a lot of extra energy but the final result and the level of satisfaction, and people feel that they built that park, they become the champions of that park. When it’s done more in isolation, there isn’t really that level of buy in.”

Given that the Woodbine Park development involved the local community significantly less than at Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park, it seems that there were no residents or groups of residents that took ownership over the space and, as Bussin says, became “champions of the park.”
5.2 Politics

The political circumstances surrounding the park developments were discussed as acting either as an obstacle or a benefit to progress. Interviewees mentioned councillors being resistant to supporting the projects, the parks becoming election issues and various other ways politics presented challenges to realizing these developments. At Wychwood Barns Park and Woodbine Park, the councillor in office at the time recalled being met with opposition from other city councillors, for reasons including being perceived as being on opposite sides of the political spectrum and other councillors perceiving their neighbourhood as having more of a need for the park funding. Despite being supported by the majority of the community, Councillor Mihevc was met with opposition at city council. Joe Lobko recounts how other councillors wanted to prioritize their neighbourhoods for park development over his.

“The councillor wins an election promising a park and every one of his colleagues said, ‘You stupid idiot, you think we’re going to give you a park? Not in this chamber of council’ He kept saying ‘I want a budget for a park’ and they all said ‘No. You give me a park first.’ It’s councillors fighting over park space and the parks department sat in the back of the room in all these meetings on their hands, refused to talk, just answered questions. So it was a community that wanted a park and they were being asked to talk about buildings, not the park that everybody wanted.”

Lobko also expresses some irritation with the city’s parks department for being passive and letting the arguments take place without intervention. Councillor Mihevc describes how the planning process, and getting the project approved by council was particularly challenging because he, like the residents, experienced opposition to the project:

“It went to council like 5 or 6 times, to start the planning process, to finish the planning process, to start the rezoning, to get the environmental assessment done, to negotiate the deal with Artscape. In fact, I remember David Miller, who was the mayor, says ‘how many times is this going to come to council?’ because there were people who had their ins. I tend to be kind of centre-left, so my crowd was with me, and then there was centre-right, and guess what? If you count centre left, there are about the same number of people as centre right. Every one of these was a war at council.”

Mihevc remembers how councillors perceived to be on the opposite side of the political spectrum tended to band together against each other on issues like this, causing the project to return to council repeatedly and further delaying the redevelopment of the streetcar barns.

Former Councillor Chris Korwin-Kuczynski wishes, in retrospect, that he would have stayed in office for another term, feeling that incumbent councillors betrayed his commitment to have the
community centre built at Sorauren Park. When asked what he would have done differently if he had the opportunity, he responds:

“Differently? I would have stayed another term and made sure that that recreation centre was built. That's the only thing that really peeved me off, that I did not finish a project there that I thought I finished, but that was betrayed after I left city council. They figured they could go back on their word and not build the project as was scheduled to be built. And I look forward to, in the near future, getting more involved in it to make sure it gets built by 2023.”

The decision-making process for Woodbine Park created a lot of conflict between councillors, but also between the former councillor Tom Jakobek and the press. Controversial events involving the councillor became part of media discussions and at times, Jakobek’s motifs were called into question:

“And I think [the lack of need for the park] reflects the weakness of the original decision, and that decision was heavily political. I don’t know if you’ve seen the minutes but there were huge fights at city council about that all sorts of press and nasty things being said about the local councillor in the area at the time.” (David Miller)

Sandra Bussin goes on to describe how support for the park, or an alternative vision of the land as 100% housing, was split between those perceived to represent different political parties:

“[Barbara Hall] wanted this to be housing, she and Tom Jakobek were fighting that one out. Of course, it’s very easy as an elected official to say I only want park…so it split between, NDP and Liberal were with the mayor and Tom had the more conservative elements. I think this was basically the saw that really pushed the housing into as tight [of a space] as possible and created this park.”

She also argues that this opposition between municipal politicians was apparently a strategic approach to gaining votes for their mayoral campaigns:

“At council every so often reports come forward and you have to take a position so then he was all park. [Jakobek] was considering and he eventually did run for mayor against Barbara Hall, so he was sort of positioning himself. ‘I’m not going to be in sync with her.’ They didn’t see eye to eye.”

There were several other elements of local politics that interviewees found challenging, including lack of clarity about responsibility, shifting of priorities post-amalgamation and slow moving political processes. At Wychwood Barns Park, Schuster describes how it can be difficult to know whose responsibility it is to be accountable for certain aspects of the development, and hints that even those in municipal government are not certain who is responsible for which roles:

“I think understanding levels of government and whose responsibility is what, what areas, and what your municipal representatives are actually accountable for is something that —
orders of government in general nobody really knows who is in charge of what, and it is a little confusing.”

There was concern in the development of Sorauren Park, because the argument was made that the neighbourhood had less need than other neighbourhoods in the city, that the development of the Sorauren Park Fieldhouse should not be prioritized or,

“…jump to the top of the list because the mayor used to be the local councillor, that’s not ethical or appropriate.” (David Miller)

Residents, however, were upset at the fact that the development of the Sorauren Park community centre had been pushed down on the city’s priority list because of the process of amalgamation.

“To make a long story short, it had been on the City of Toronto’s radar to develop into a community centre and the property was actually purchased in the year 2000 to be part of Sorauren Park, which had opened in 1995. Because of amalgamation in 1998, they kind of reshuffled the deck across the city in terms of priorities and where that community centre was number two in the old City of Toronto, it was like number seven in the new City of Toronto. And then things started to go really, really slowly.” (Doug)

Despite ongoing opposition at the community and council level, uncertainty about who would take ownership, and how the project would be funded and developed, Cookie Roscoe describes how quickly the Wychwood Barns Park process seemed to be moving at the time:

“I remember someone saying to me ‘how can you stand it, it's moving so slowly!’ but I was involved very much in the politics of it and I was staggered by that statement. To me, it was moving at this dizzying pace that was so exciting and dynamic and the players that were involved and everything, and I feel that way about it now, too.”

For Sandra Bussin, however, balancing resident concerns in the ward where Woodbine Park is located was a particularly challenging task:

“The job as a councillor here is very demanding. You’re dealing with the sewage treatment plants and you’re overwhelmed all the time with the demands that come. You never have the chance to truly focus on something. People think you are with both feet in there, but it’s not humanly possible unless you’re just that kind of person that just picks something.”

5.3 Conflict

Interviewees from each of the parks discussed how conflict was a part of their park developments, although the degree to which this took place was not even across all parks. Wychwood Barns Park had the highest level of conflict, mostly among opposing neighbourhood groups. Woodbine Park’s conflict revolved mostly around a former councillor’s involvement and
the park’s current use, and at Sorauren Park, conflict was almost non-existent. At Wychwood Barns Park, a high level of engagement, as highlighted by Councillor Mihevc, had the unintended outcome of producing conflict, which is one of the most significant themes emerging from interviews about Wychwood Barns Park. Interviewees describe how some of the “opposition” did not see the value in protecting a working-class heritage building. Schuster elaborates on the clash between residents with opposing visions for the space, saying there was not much compromise between the two groups:

“I think everyone wanted something to be done with it, but what evolved as far as I recall is completely, diametrically opposed visions of what should happen there and there was very little middle ground.”

Elizabeth goes on to describe how, once it was decided that it would be a park, and no form of commercial or residential development would take place, that the sole conversation became about whether or not the buildings should stay and whether they fit within peoples’ conception of what a park is:

“There were lots of people that advocated for the buildings themselves. Once everybody said, ‘okay, it’s going to be a park,’ then what we said is, ‘these are valuable assets and they can be incorporated into a park and the definition of park.’…There’s all kinds of people that lobbied for league play space for soccer fields, baseballs fields - all kinds of ideas, so what we were saying was there’s plenty of place to have a park that incorporates the barns into it, so don’t be tearing them down. That sort of became the battle site of whether or not this park should contain any buildings at all.”

A source of conflict specific to the development of Wychwood Barns Park was about whether having residential units within the former streetcar barns was an acceptable use of park space. Joe Lobko mentions that, for many, residential occupancy within a park space was quite a new idea and was met with resistance:

“Well one of the big topics of debate was the occupancy of the park. And in fact, in history, there’s a long history of occupancy of parks. By that I mean, some form of permanent residential occupancy, was the most contentious issue. Yes, there have been institutions in parks. Yes, there’s been a food place in a park. Yes, there’s been a greenhouse in a park, but for people to live in a park, and then to have a work studio in a park…and again, there has been some history about that and the compromise here was that in that plan, we ensured that all the residential units faced Benson Avenue, and it’s only the work units that face inward. Now, initially in the design, we wondered whether the same artist who lived here could work there, but these were intended to be live/work so that we maximize the artist exposure, so that’s how it evolved.”
The design of the residential units was carefully considered so as to minimize the potential for negative impacts on the park. The idea to have the residential units facing Benson Avenue, a residential street with houses facing the park, was presumably to make it less obvious that people were housed within the park. Interviewees did not mention any negative impacts associated with the artists’ live/work spaces, but rather mentioned that they contribute to increased perception of safety in the park, for example:

“One of the issues for the community...was they were terrified and appalled at the idea of having artists live here. They just expected them to be crazy and disruptive...they are people like anyone else. As with any group, you’ll get some people like that and others not...They’re available 24 hours a day and the benefit for the community in having people actually live on-site, so the live-work artists, they are vigilant about watching what’s going on...And they report things instantly to us...not just for safety, but it’s also just the quality of the space. They’re very aware, very protective of it, which I think is just a benefit to the whole community.” (Margo Welch)

However, for a lot of the local residents, many of whom were artists themselves, arts and artists were welcomed in a park space. They saw that their vision of the park had the potential to succeed and that the physical barn structure was essential to realizing that vision. Residents who were opposed to the barn project, were described as using unfair tactics to try to deter neighbours from supporting artists in the park:

“Remember the best thing—the people who didn’t want it, who lived within Wychwood Park wanted to preserve the character of their neighbourhood so they said horrible things about—they said, ‘oh, if you have artists here, they’re so tacky, they smoke dope,’ they just perpetuated everything, but one woman was trying to elicit sympathy for her position, she said, ‘the thing is it will attract so much traffic. You’re going to have a theatre company and people are going to be parking everywhere and when we have a dinner party, our valet park, where are they going to put their cars!?’ That was how clueless they were! This was actually said to a reporter of The Star - like you should feel sorry for us because our valet guys won’t have any place to park because of our guests...Although those people do show up for the farmers’ market now that it’s up, of course.” (Schuster)

Many of the interviewees shared their experiences of attending hostile community meetings that often ended in aggressive verbal confrontations. These types of encounters seemed to be commonplace in the conversations about Wychwood Park’s development. Joe Lobko, Cookie Roscoe, Elizabeth and Schuster all describe one specific night where there was a particularly large amount of disagreement and a young boy was put in the crossfire:

“It was not some final vote, but it was some vote in the progress of things…A lot of people wanted to talk and the meeting went until 4:30 in the morning. And the vote was not favourable to the progress of the project but at 12:30 in the morning, or just after
midnight, a young man was finally given an opportunity to speak. So [he was] 12 years old, was tired, was way beyond his normal sleep time. It might have even been a school night and starts to talk about why the building should come down to create a skateboard park and he makes some kind of factual error. I don’t know what it was. And someone verbally corrects him, in the audience, loudly, and his parents react to defend their son. And they put their son out there in a public forum with a lot of heat in the room. Angry words start getting exchanged and literally for like 10 minutes people were just screaming at each other. It was really ugly, sort of. But, also, it was just to represent the heat of passion on this topic, it was really remarkable.” (Joe Lobko)

At Woodbine Park, conflict was described most often in terms of the park’s current use, in addition to conflict with former councillor Jakobek described above. Former Councillor Sandra Bussin describes how conflict in the neighbourhood had the tendency to stop momentum on lobbying work:

“By then, a number of residents had moved in. There was a residents’ advisory group and they were doing a whole lot of things. They wanted to slow the traffic on Lakeshore, they wanted speed bumps, they wanted to slow the speed on Queen, which I could do with the wave of my wand...but let them. None of those things ever happened, because those residents started fighting with each other but this [park] did get done.”

Councillor McMahon describes the conflict she experiences over the presence of large-scale festivals in Woodbine Park:

“Some don't want any festivals and some want maybe a couple festivals, and others are away at their cottage and they still don't want the festivals. I have to do a little tough love explanation and just say you know it feels like your backyard but it's actually a festival park and it's Lake Ontario and we're going to have events. And then other residents want to organize events, it's very popular. We have waiting lists to get in there.”

In comparison to Wychwood Barns Park and Woodbine Park, interviewees from Sorauren Park describe the ways in which the decision-making process lacked significant conflict, especially between neighbours. David Miller, who was able to talk a bit about each of the park’s developments, felt uncertain as to why differences existed in the level of conflict that existed:

“I’m not quite sure why they were so bitterly and nastily contested those two, but they really were. Wychwood in particular was really ugly. I remember because as Mayor I had to keep fixing it, because motions had to keep coming to council about various parts of it and I had to use all my political capital to keep it to going through, because I believed in it and it was just ugly, ugly, ugly. And my sense of Woodbine which was 20 years earlier was the same thing. I just don’t, I really don’t know why, but I know they were.”

Today, both Wychwood Barns Park and Sorauren Park seem to be well accepted by the community, with interviewees citing few to no negative impacts. The only concerns raised are related to noise and parking issues, but these were said to be minimal. Woodbine Park has the
same minor nuisances, with the addition of resentment towards the park’s use as a festival space by some residents.

5.4 Social and Housing Change

The impact that the development of each of the parks had on the surrounding community was often discussed by interviewees, including how the demographics of people living near the park have shifted over time, increasing real estate prices and some interviewees explicitly referencing gentrification. The redevelopment of Wychwood Barns and the development of the park space around it is perceived to have an impact on the residential communities in the neighbourhood. Some aspects are perceived as beneficial, for example seen as “revitalization” or boosting real estate values, while the same trends were also expressed as potentially negative, such as housing becoming unaffordable for most people and even displacing original residents. Councillor Mihevc describes, in detail, the ways in which the neighbourhood has changed, specifically connecting to different working classes and the inability of new immigrants to live in the neighbourhood:

“My old house and all the neighbours there, no more construction workers. It’s not the 7 o’clock in the morning lunch pail crowd. My old house, it’s been sold a couple of times on Annette. Chiropractors and teachers have lived there. And next door, it has gone to urban professional types.”

Councillor Mihevc argues that the types of changes happening in this neighbourhood are not solely because of the development of Wychwood Barns Park, rather the result of a multitude of factors, including a right-of-way streetcar project for which consultation was happening alongside that of Wychwood Barns.

David Miller and Kathy Allan describe the types of residents who lived in the neighbourhood prior to the development of Sorauren Park:

“I would say that between Macdonell and Roncesvalles, 25 years ago we’re going back. If you’re talking about economic status mixed, middle-income and working-class people, quite a number of immigrants, particularly Eastern European ones.” (David Miller)

“Roncesvalles shop composition reflects the fact that we are practically adjacent to the Ontario Food Terminal. Food prices are amongst the lowest in the city with abundant green grocers. Other businesses along Roncy in the 90’s included hairdressers, hardware, grocery and delis with the majority serving bilingual Polish and English clientele.” (Kathy)
While at Wychwood Barns Park Councillor Mihevc describes the turnover of residents based on occupation, the process at Sorauren Park is described as being related to seniors moving out and a younger demographic moving in. Kathy describes how the neighbourhood around Sorauren Park was not family friendly, which is quite different from how the neighbourhood is described today:

“Roncesvalles was populated with a large majority of seniors in the 80’s and 90’s. There was not a baby stroller to be found on the street in Roncesvalles. From the mid-90s, the flavour of the neighbourhood was changing from seniors to today largely families with young children.”

The changes that are occurring around Sorauren Park, however, are not uniform across the neighbourhoods. The adjacent Parkdale neighbourhood (North Parkdale is located just south of Sorauren Park, but South Parkdale falls just out of the boundaries used for sociodemographic analysis) appears to be changing slower than the area known as Roncesvalles. For example, Doug Bennet says:

“Parkdale is changing, too. I’d say it’s changed less than Roncesvalles over the years, but it’s still an amazing mix of newer immigrants like the Tibetan community...You get more of a mix in Parkdale. Probably more of a broader income mix in Parkdale.”

Interviewees describe the changes happening around Woodbine Park in a similar fashion, although referring to changes a bit more ambiguously:

“Well it started out as somewhat of a working class neighbourhood. In the Beach Triangle many years ago, there were a lot of rooming houses and there were issues with prostitution and that started to turn over and there were fairly large houses and people started cleaning them up. It was part of the white washing that started to happen, that later happened a little further over in Leslieville.” (Sandra Bussin)

The idea that the development has pushed people out of the neighbourhood was only discussed directly at one point in the conversation with Councillor Mihevc. He mentions, not that certain demographics are pushed out over time, but that blue-collar workers are no longer buying homes in the area, and that, for example, the Syrian refugees that the neighbourhood worked collectively to sponsor, are unable to live in this neighbourhood and are forced to live on the periphery of the city. When asked if the development of the park has had any negative impacts on the surrounding community, Councillor Mihevc explicitly states that,

“It has pushed out, tended to push out, people of more modest means.”

Mihevc equates this process to what he calls the “Yorkvillization” that occurred in the 1960s:
“Do you know why Yorkville was a hippie place? [It] was because you could afford it and then it became kind of funky and then the arts were there. Then the artists got pushed out and then the developers came.”

Kathy Allan from Sorauren Park was able to identify more tangible ways the housing stock had changed over time:

“Many of the multi-unit residentialities in North Parkdale vanished and became single-family homes. Today I would estimate 95% of North Parkdale is owner-occupied single-family homes contrasted with 80% renter population in South Parkdale where 3,500 people are living below the poverty line.”

Councillor Gord Perks compares neighbourhood diversity to ecological diversity to describe how a continued loss of blue collar or industrial jobs in Toronto can present challenges:

“I’m quite militant about protecting our industrial lands, because one of the things that has fallen really out of balance is we don’t have sites for good working-class jobs in the City of Toronto and we don’t manufacture anything anymore and that makes us, again, more economically homogeneous, but it also makes us more economically vulnerable, right? An economic monoculture is as stupid as an ecological one.”

While I was unable to talk to residents or members of organizations from Woodbine Park, the two city councillors from that area gave their best explanation of changes happening in the neighbourhood; however, neither of them described a process of displacement being potentially connected to Woodbine Park.

Interviewees from Sorauren Park talked at length about how the changes occurring in their neighbourhood was related to the loss of the original immigrant populations. This is a process also acknowledged at Wychwood Barns Park, although to a lesser extent and described more subtly. Councillor Mihevc, refers to the neighbourhood as previously being an immigrant receiving area, but claims it is no longer affordable. Interviewees from Sorauren Park describe the loss of the immigrant population as being quite obvious and significant:

“You had younger people, middle-income people, some working-class people and sprinkled among that lots of tenants and a fairly significant Eastern European population. Today, I would say less so on the Eastern Europeans. The housing prices have been driven up in the neighbourhood, whether or not that’s correlated with the park would be difficult to prove, but certainly isn’t a positive amenity and you’re tending to see more middle- to upper-income people move into the neighbourhood than would have been there 25 years ago or 30 years ago when I was first involved in local politics in that community. And certainly adjacent to the park, I think if you did a census you’d see fewer first generation immigrants than you would have 25 years ago.” (David Miller)
Gord Perks describes that there have been increases in the diversity of incomes and social backgrounds, and an increase of amenities provided to the community, yet expresses concerns about housing prices in the neighbourhood:

“At that time, it was very much a neighbourhood in transition. Prior to that decision, that neighbourhood would’ve been considered part of Parkdale and it was mix of Polish immigrants and very low-income people. And there were very few community services and amenities provided by the city, directly in the neighbourhood. Now, it seems to me that it is the stroller capital of Canada in there. It’s very animated, there’s a much healthier mix of income and social backgrounds. I want to make sure we don’t go too far and price everybody out of the neighbourhood, and that’s actually worry that I’ve had lately. There’s this terrible dilemma you get into.”

Doug Bennet connects to a specific process of first generation immigrants aging or passing away, their children moving to Mississauga and Etobicoke, and selling the original family home:

“When I moved in the neighbourhood, there were certainly a lot more Polish families than there are now. They have literally grown up here and gone to the schools here…the kids have moved to Mississauga and the parents have stayed behind and they are literally dying off. I’ve been to several funerals of Polish neighbours, it’s sad. And in fact, one of my Polish neighbours, the for-sale sign went up on their house today, two doors down, because the kids who live in Mississauga are selling off the parental homestead.”

This process of aging and relocation of second generation immigrants seems to be one of the ways in which single family homes are turned over to younger families, often being renovated along the way.

The councillors from Woodbine Park both mention how the Beaches neighbourhood has been designated as the “whitest” neighbourhoods in the City of Toronto, but that the area is slowly becoming more diverse. When asked about how the socio-demographics of the neighbourhood have changed over time, Sandra Bussin comments:

“More affluent, more money...From [Statistics Canada] it was still one of the most British ancestry areas in the entire city and I think it was ahead of Rosedale. I’m just now seeing some change. And there is a tendency, if you grew up here, then your children buy here. That’s starting to change. I think we don’t have that many condos, so where you’re going to see more mobility and more mix of people is going to be in the condos, but it is starting to happen.”

Similarly, Councillor McMahon describes the lack of diversity and slow changes happening in the neighbourhood:

“Well, it’s higher socioeconomic level for sure. The downside to the Beach is it was, I think, was assigned the whitest community in the city a few years ago. There is extreme lack of diversity. Elsewhere in my ward at Main and Danforth we have four towers with a
lot of permanent residents, a few immigrants, probably at least 50 languages spoken, but I
know my kids went to the local high school, my daughter for just a little bit and then
transferred, but it's very white and affluent... I think it's changing a tad, not at the speed
rate that we would like it to and it should be for one of the most multicultural cities in the
world.”

Unlike interviewees from Sorauren Park who describe the types of changes as being rather overt
and noticeable, the socio-demographic changes happening around Woodbine Park are much
more subtle. While the neighbourhoods surrounding Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park
were originally quite ethnically diverse and low-income, those around Woodbine Park were
rather affluent and white.

Interviewees from each of the parks talk about changes in real estate values in quite similar
ways. Those from Wychwood Barns Park and Woodbine Park seem to describe increased real
estate values as positive benefits in the neighbourhood, while interviewees from Sorauren Park
connect to notions of housing unaffordability. Many of the interviewees also discuss the
perceived inevitability of these changes in their neighbourhood. When asked if the character of
the neighbourhood has changed since the development of the park, Margo Welch, the Managing
Director of Artscape Wychwood Barns responds:

“...My sense is, and I’m just [assuming] – yes. It affects the whole personality of the
neighbourhood. It certainly affects, in a positive way, real estate values. And just sort of
businesses, it brings people to the area, so I think it has a very positive effect and I think
there’s research to support that.”

Elizabeth and Schuster begin to connect the changes happening in their neighbourhood to similar
changes happening across the city, also referencing rising real estate values:

“Now a lot of the houses that face it have been renovated and their housing values,
including people that were totally against it then made a killing after.”  (Schuster)

“You know the area experienced a big real estate boom, which you know, is just part of
the city’s real estate boom, but also I think the barns helped kind of put it on the map.”
(Elizabeth)

Similarly, Councillor Mihevc described the similarities in neighbourhood changes compared
with the rest of Toronto, including the attractiveness of the neighbourhood, the perceived
inevitability of this process, and an ambiguous process of “change” akin to what is happening
across Toronto.
The increases in property values seen at Sorauren Park were also connected to processes happening across the city, but interviewees seem to be more concerned about the significance of changes and connect changes more directly to the development of the park:

“Property values are skyrocketing across the City of Toronto. Sorauren Park is now a valuable community asset and part of the attraction for single families moving into Roncesvalles Village.” (Kathy)

“Frederick Olmstead, he knew that and part of his argument for Central Park wasn’t just to have nice green space, it was very quantitative. It was very hard-ass. It was ‘we’re going to raise property values and that is going to increase tax revenue to the City of New York and here’s my formula. And he was totally right. There’s downsides to that, if you follow the High Line story, because things can ramp out of control and it can make a place unaffordable.” (Doug)

However, Doug Bennet remains skeptical about the role Sorauren Park has played in changing his neighbourhood:

“Local real estate prices have skyrocketed. And they have in this neighbourhood too, but that’s a Toronto-wide phenomenon, I would never say the success of Sorauren Park is why the prices have gone up and it’s become unaffordable.”

Councillor Gord Perks specifically connects the development of Sorauren Park to increasing costs of living, housing diversity, and the lack of services in low-income neighbourhoods. Unlike the conversation with Elizabeth and Schuster from Wychwood Barns Park, Councillor Perks does not seem to consider this process inevitable and does not provide suggestions of how to resist changes in low-income neighbourhoods.

At Woodbine Park, Councillor McMahon describes how the homes closest to the park seem to have the highest property values. She identifies several benefits to being located near a park, including economic benefits to local businesses:

“Well, people especially on Northern Dancer will tell you it increased property values hugely. Their houses on Northern Dancer are worth a lot more than the ones not facing the park. I think the locals enjoy going out for a walk and whatnot or just looking out their windows at the beautiful green space and the businesses probably like it because people pick up a snack and then go across and eat it. So economically, I think parks are beneficial. The dogs love it. The kids love it. I just think there’s no downside to a park.”

While the neighbourhoods surrounding the three parks are considered to be changing, few people connect those types of changes specifically to the process of “gentrification.” At Wychwood Barns Park, Cookie Roscoe is the only one to state that the neighbourhood has gentrified, in part because of the barns:
“I would say it was definitely way less gentrified - whether that's completely a result of
the barns, I would find quite dubious. I think that intensification is travelling north from
the heart of the city and a certain amount of it couldn't have been avoided no matter what.
The barns have definitely raised the character of the neighbourhood and the visibility as
well. It has put us on the map… I don't see it as diverse anymore, the houses around here -
since I bought have quintupled in value, but I think they have all over Toronto”

Cookie, along with Elizabeth in the previous section, uses the phrasing “it has put the
neighbourhood on the map,” perhaps indicating that the neighbourhood went largely unnoticed
until the development of the barns and park. Schuster discusses how Nick Saul, the Executive
Director of The Stop Community Food Centre at the time, had concerns about the barns acting as
a gentrifying force in the neighbourhood:

“[Nick] said, ‘This is going to be a lot of responsibility for us in operating the
greenhouses, a lot of things we would like to do, but we don’t really know if we want to
locate ourselves in the neighbourhood that doesn’t really house our constituency and we
don’t want to be gentrifiers.’ He just had really mixed feelings about [it]… they don’t
want to be some fancy middle-class farmers’ market that just walks away from what their
whole purpose was.”

At Sorauren Park, the term gentrification was used more often to describe the types of changes in
the neighbourhood. When asked if the park development has had any negative impacts on the
surrounding community, David Miller said:

“If it’s contributed to sort of the gentrification, yes, but I think that’s probably more a
general housing trend, because you certainly see it in neighbourhoods in that area as well.
So no, I think it’s very positive and I don’t think it was the right place for city works yard
myself, either.”

Councillor Gord Perks was resistant to use the term gentrification to describe what was
happening in his ward. Throughout our conversation, he mentioned a lot of the indicators of
gentrification, but did not use the term. As a result, I prompted him by using the term:

“Well there’s this thing that we don’t know how to protect – economic diversity. When
we put in amenities that improve property values, we just don’t do that as a city.”

“You’re hinting at gentrification…”

“Yeah. I think gentrification is a loaded word.”

“Would you say the park has contributed to or helped to push forward that process?”

“Yes, it has, yeah. I think that’s not inevitable, and I think that’s a challenge that we
as a city should have as we build amenity.”
His reluctance to use these words were perhaps related to gentrification’s negative connotation and the resistance he has experienced from community members who believed the greening efforts he was doing as a councillor in South Parkdale were efforts to gentrify the neighbourhood.

At Woodbine Park, neither of the interviewees referred to explicitly to gentrification or many of the indicators of gentrification. Since Councillor McMahon did not refer to these processes, I prompted her by asking if gentrification was ever raised as an issue surrounding Woodbine Park:

“Hmmm, I don't know. It's raised with development and changes in the ward all over and in the city, because we want - mixed neighbourhoods are one of the best things about the city and we want to retain them, and we want a place for everyone so it’s concern. I live up by the Danny and there's still a little bit of grit, and we want to keep our grit. Absolutely, we don't want to lose that. Historically in The Beach, we used to be blue collar, hippies and anything goes, so some of the locals have been around that long are shocked at the change, but in my time it was always like that so I don't notice any difference, but it is a concern all over the city.”

Councillor McMahon identifies changes in the presence of working class residents in The Beaches, though she has not observed these changes herself, and instead has heard of concern by other residents. However, Councillor McMahon seems to be referring to changes happening prior to the development of the park, rather than changes in the neighbourhood post-park development.
Chapter 6

6 Survey Results

6.1 General Attitudes Towards the Parks

This section details the responses related to general attitudes about the three parks through questions related to neighbourhood benefits, sense of community, negative impacts and perceptions of safety.

6.1.1 Neighbourhood Benefits

When asked about park benefits to the neighbourhood, most respondents checked all five pre-identified answers across all three parks. The responses given in the “other” section were useful in understanding the more unique and park-specific benefits perceived by residents. These benefits are listed in Table 6.1, ordered from most common to least common responses, with benefits given by only one respondent not included, unless relevant to neighbourhood change and gentrification.

Table 6.1. Responses Given for Neighbourhood Benefits of Parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sorauren Park</th>
<th>Woodbine Park</th>
<th>Wychwood Barns Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• farmers’ market</td>
<td>• festivals and events</td>
<td>• farmers’ market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• nice view of the skyline and CN tower</td>
<td>• nature</td>
<td>• neighbourhood gathering space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• community events</td>
<td>• playground/splash pad</td>
<td>• community garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sports</td>
<td>• space for children</td>
<td>• events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• space for children</td>
<td>• neighbours meet each other</td>
<td>• space for events and programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• indoor space for events and programming.</td>
<td>• increased property values</td>
<td>• neighbours meet each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• native species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• space for children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two respondents indicated negative impacts related to disruption to community from events and festivals.

One respondent mentioned increased property values, another said the space is a “symbol of neighbourhood gentrification.”

The most commonly perceived benefits to residents are the main programming at each of the parks: the weekly farmers’ markets in Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park, and the regularly scheduled (weekly in the warmer months) events and festivals at Woodbine Park.
Aside from these, respondents tended to include the more common ways they interact with the park (i.e. sports, playground, neighbourhood gathering space). A few responses from Woodbine Park and Wychwood Barns Park mention increases in property values surrounding the park as a benefit to the neighbourhood, and one respondent from Wychwood Barns Park takes this further to suggest that the park is a “symbol of neighbourhood gentrification.” It seems that respondents are indicating that these, in fact, are beneficial aspects of park development on the surrounding neighbourhood, but two responses from Woodbine Park indicated aspects (festivals and events) that do not benefit the community or act as a disamenity.

6.1.2 Sense of Community

Participants were asked: Has Sorauren/Woodbine/Wychwood Barns Park contributed to a sense of community in the neighbourhood? In general, most respondents believed that the park did (92-100%), with the exception of five respondents from Woodbine Park and two from Wychwood Barns Park. The open-ended follow-up question asks: If yes, in what ways do you feel an increased sense of community? The most common responses about ways in which the parks contribute to a sense of community are listed in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2. Responses Given for Ways Parks Build Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sorauren Park</th>
<th>Woodbine Park</th>
<th>Wychwood Barns Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gathering place</td>
<td>gathering place</td>
<td>gathering place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>events</td>
<td>events</td>
<td>meet neighbours at the dog park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farmers’ market</td>
<td>meet neighbours</td>
<td>meet neighbours at the dog park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meet neighbours</td>
<td>shared recreation opportunities including activities specifically for children</td>
<td>kids play space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meet neighbours at dog park</td>
<td></td>
<td>event space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shared recreation opportunities including activities specifically for children</td>
<td>meeting because of interactions with dogs/dog owners</td>
<td>sense of community through experiencing events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sense of pride and ownership over park space</td>
<td></td>
<td>the park is a focal point of the community and a source of community pride.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses from all parks are similar to answers given for questions about neighbourhood benefits, but rather than only describe the activities they do in the parks, respondents begin to acknowledge how they interact with others in the park. The most common response at all three
parks was that the park acts as a gathering space, and most respondents used this terminology (gathering place or gathering space) to describe both planned and impromptu interactions with neighbours in the park. Because Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park have smaller-scale events and weekly farmers’ markets, respondents often described how they have met other residents at these neighbourhood-scale events, whereas Woodbine Park residents are more likely to meet each other while walking through the park, at the soccer field or occasionally at the larger-scale events.

6.1.3 Negative Impacts

To compare with the question about neighbourhood benefits, survey participants were also asked about negative impacts from the park on their neighbourhood. Comments on the common types of negative impacts are listed for each park in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3. Perceptions of Negative Impacts Related to Parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sorauren Park</th>
<th>Woodbine Park</th>
<th>Wychwood Barns Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Negative Impact</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional Negative Impact</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent Negative Impact</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of responses simply said “no,” “absolutely not,” or described how the park has benefitted them and the neighbourhood more broadly. At Sorauren Park, only two respondents indicated that there could be occasional negative impacts as a result of park activities, focusing on limited parking during park events.

Woodbine Park respondents were most likely to indicate occasional and frequent negative impacts resulting from the park, with all of the negative responses linked to impacts of the festivals and events in the park. Respondents described issues related to noise, parking, traffic, crowds, litter, security and crime; for example:

“Yes. Festivals every single weekend from May to September. The noise is unbearable. Neighbours have moved because of it and we are considering it. The traffic in the summer is dangerous, esp. during festivals.”

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Respondents from Woodbine Park who indicated that there were no negative impacts often expressed how they enjoyed the festivals and events that took place there, as well as the recreational opportunities provided by the park.

At Wychwood Barns Park, 31.6% of respondents described occasional negative associations with the park, but unlike Woodbine Park, none of them indicated frequent negative impacts. Responses described issues related to parking and traffic from the weekly market and occasional events. Three people indicated that they are aware of neighbours being annoyed at noise from the dog park, but that it did not bother them personally. For example:

“I know some people don't like dogs barking but that's not my concern.”

6.1.4 Safety

When asked about their sense of safety in the parks, most residents from each park felt safe at all times, while nearly everyone felt safe during the day (68-76%) and 100% of respondents felt safe during the day in Sorauren Park and Woodbine Park.

At Wychwood Barns Park, one respondent expressed their concerns about dogs in the park and their fear of getting bit or otherwise harmed and, as a result, stated that they did not feel safe in the park at all. All others indicated that they felt safe during the day (21%) or at all times (77%).

When asked why they feel unsafe, there was some variation by park (Table 6.4). At Sorauren Park, feeling unsafe near the train tracks at night is a problem specific to the geography of that park and neighbourhood; however, the choice to keep that portion of the park unlit at night was deliberate. The rationale was that, if it was lit at night, people would think it is a safe place to be and would spend time there, when it was likely to be an unsafe space regardless of lighting conditions at night (K. Allan, personal communication, January 3, 2018). At Woodbine Park, the desire for more police presence was an interesting idea and perhaps corresponds with another respondent’s fear that there are more criminals in the park at night. At Wychwood Barns Park, it seems that the presence of the barns and other structures in the park are perceived to be hiding spots for people with negative intentions. An additional respondent says, “The time to get through that open air ‘tunnel’ is just too long to feel safe,” which indicates that they feel they may be trapped inside the covered barn if they were to encounter another individual there.
Table 6.4. Responses Given as Reasons for Feeling Unsafe in the Park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sorauren Park</th>
<th>Woodbine Park</th>
<th>Wychwood Barns Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• not enough lighting, especially by train tracks</td>
<td>• not enough lighting</td>
<td>• not enough lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the park is isolated; fear of parks at night is not specific to Sorauren</td>
<td>• there are isolated parts of the park</td>
<td>• the park is empty at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park (i.e. why would you go to a park at night?)</td>
<td>• fear of parks at night is not specific to Woodbine Park</td>
<td>• fear of parks at night is not specific to Wychwood Barns Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the park is empty at night</td>
<td>• there are individuals drinking or using drugs in the park at night</td>
<td>• there are individuals drinking or using drugs in the park at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• feels unsafe to be a woman in the park alone at night</td>
<td>• presence of people experiencing homelessness</td>
<td>• presence of people experiencing homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• there are often teenagers drinking and partying</td>
<td>• feels unsafe to be a woman or senior in the park at night</td>
<td>• presence of people experiencing homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• lack of police presence or monitoring</td>
<td>• there are hiding spots in the park where people could sneak up on you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2 Neighbourhood Character

Survey participants were asked to describe the character of their neighbourhood and were given prompts to consider including feelings of safety and friendliness. Figure 6.1 shows the ten most common responses describing neighbourhood character.

Figure 6.1. Ten Most Common Themes Describing Neighbourhood Character Surrounding Parks.
6.2.1 Neighbourhood Bond and Family Friendliness

Although discussing a neighbourhood bond or feeling of connection among neighbours was not one of the prompts for this question, it was the most common theme across all three parks. At Sorauren Park, the types of neighbourhood bonds included any response that connected to strong feelings of community beyond stating that the neighbourhood was “friendly.” Respondents often mentioned that they know their neighbours very well, and many allude to the role the park and school communities have had in forming and maintaining relationships with neighbours. A few respondents connect to the idea that the businesses along Roncesvalles Avenue contribute to their feelings of connection to the community. Other responses describe long-standing events that have kept the community connected, as well as ways in which neighbours look out for one another (i.e. shovelling snow, watching homes while others are away), for example:

“It's a safe, friendly and inclusive neighbourhood. I know many of my neighbours, we socialize together. We look after each other's houses and have keys. Neighbours shovel each other’s walks and sidewalks. It is good for older people, young families, as well as singles. It is an inclusive and fairly diverse place.”

At Woodbine Park and Wychwood Barns Park, responses given were similar to those at Sorauren Park, referencing friendliness, how they know their neighbours, and feeling connected to their neighbourhood. For example, a Wychwood Barns Park resident said:

“Our street has a 20-year history of street party. The turnout is about 90% of families. Most of us know most of our neighbours by name and face (but maybe not all of the kids). Other streets also have street parties. We look after homes and pets for neighbours on vacation.”

The second most common type of response across all three parks describes the neighbourhoods as family friendly, family-oriented or describes the presence of families in the community. For example, a Sorauren Park resident wrote:

“Very family oriented! Lots of children!! Very friendly, full of dogs and babies.”

At Woodbine Park, when respondents describe the neighbourhood as being family friendly, responses seem much less emotional and connected to the community than those from Sorauren Park:

“Friendly, strong sense of community. Nice place to raise a family.”
6.3 Neighbourhood Socio-Demographics

When asked to describe the socio-demographics of their neighbourhood, respondents generally followed the prompts in the question associated with income and ethnic diversity. Many respondents also chose to identify the age composition of their neighbourhood, mention specific immigrant groups’ presence in the neighbourhood, as well as identify changes they perceive to be occurring. Figure 6.2 illustrates the most common responses related to residents’ perceptions of socio-demographics.

![Common Responses Related to Socio-Demographics](image)

Figure 6.2. Distribution of Responses Related to Neighbourhood Socio-Demographics

6.3.1 Diversity

Diversity was described in a variety of ways at each of the parks; however, most responses fell into the following categories: the neighbourhood is mostly white, the neighbourhood is less diverse, or the neighbourhood is more diverse (presumably making comparisons to other neighbourhoods in the city). Responses from Sorauren Park were more likely to indicate that the neighbourhood is mostly white and less diverse, while responses from Woodbine Park were slightly more likely to refer to the neighbourhood as mostly white.
The ways in which neighbourhoods were described as “mostly white” or “less diverse” include:

“High income, not too diverse although that seems to be changing.” [Sorauren Park]

“This area is not the most diverse and is mostly a mixed middle class and lower income, mostly white and English-speaking. Some homeless, but less visible than downtown.” [Woodbine Park]

Similarly, there were respondents from each of the parks that described the neighbourhood as “more diverse,” although Wychwood Barns Park respondents favoured this description. Examples from Wychwood Barns Park include:

“Our neighbourhood consists of all incomes and races, for the most part living cohesively side by side.”

“The community has a broad mix, both socio-economically and racially.”

6.3.2 Income: References to Wealth and Income Disparity

Residents from Woodbine Park were most likely to consider the neighbourhood to be relatively wealthy, followed by Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park with similar response rates. A common response classified the neighbourhood as “upper middle-class” or “middle to upper middle-class,” which I chose to categorize alongside responses that included the words “affluent,” “wealthy,” and “rich,” because individuals or households perceived to be upper-middle class are likely earning an annual income of over $100,000 and are quite wealthy when compared with Toronto’s median income. As such, a distinction was necessary between responses that called the neighbourhood “middle-class” and those that used the term “upper-middle class.” Responses from all three parks were quite similar, including:

“Upper middle class. Well educated.” [Sorauren Park]

“Culturally diverse. Economic monoculture. The houses in the new development are all the same age (less than 20 years), so they are all expensive, meaning all residents can afford a home of $1.5-2.5 million.” [Woodbine Park]

“My immediate neighbourhood is quite upper class. It is somewhat diverse in terms of ethnicity and sexual orientation. The broader area is much more diverse in terms of class and race.” [Wychwood Barns Park]

Each park had relatively similar amounts of responses indicating some sort of income diversity, although the ways in which this theme was described varied. In some examples, income diversity seemed to be a positive attribute of the neighbourhood, while at other times it seemed to hold a
negative connotation. Some respondents described this phenomenon as “income disparity,” alluding to a widening gap between low and high-income earners in the neighbourhood.

Sorauren Park and Woodbine Park residents simply identified the neighbourhood as income diverse using a variety of terms to describe this including “multi-income,” “diverse incomes,” and “mixed incomes.”

Wychwood Barns Park respondents used similar terminology to describe income diversity, but a few went further to identify a growing income inequality.

“I think there is a good mix from street to street. From apartment dwellers like myself using the local laundry for 25 years to higher income homeowners and condo dwellers I do fear the idea of ever having to look for a new place in this neighbourhood as, like many parts of the city - it would be too pricey.”

“Some socio-economic disparity: very expensive restaurants, but many low-income housing areas; many spoken languages; noticeable homeless population - congregate at the church at Rushton and St. Clair.”

6.3.3 Presence of Homelessness

Descriptions of homeless populations surrounding each of the parks were not significant. While respondents from Woodbine Park were most likely to mention that there were “few homeless” or “a few homeless individuals” in the neighbourhood (presumably meaning not many compared to other neighbourhoods). Interestingly, respondents from Wychwood Barns Park were most likely to describe the neighbourhood as having both “no homeless” or “many homeless,” perhaps suggesting that there are neighbourhood-scale variations in the visibility of homeless populations. For example, some respondents from Wychwood Barns Park identified streets, intersections or places where they were most likely to see individuals experiencing homelessness:

“There are a couple homeless people around Bathurst and St. Clair.” [few homeless]

6.3.4 Age Composition

A common narrative surrounding Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park about young (often wealthier) families moving into the neighbourhood and replacing the older generation or original (often first-generation immigrant) residents emerged in response to the neighbourhood socio-demographics question. The Woodbine Park neighbourhood is still described as young and family-friendly, but responses do not mention the presence of an older generation of residents.
The probable reasons for this difference are: (1) a portion of the Woodbine Park neighbourhood was built only a few years prior to the development of the park and did not have an “original population,” and (2) parts of the Woodbine Park neighbourhood have always been considered a “white” neighbourhood, whereas the neighbourhoods surrounding the other two parks were considered “immigrant receiving areas” and thus had a distinct and visible original population. While some responses simply identify the presence of young families and older populations, others describe how older populations are being replaced by young families. For example:

“Area is clearly occupied by new families with higher income levels and long-time residents, so the income brackets are likely mixed. There seems to be a lack in ethnic diversity (very white). Only significant cultural presence I'm aware of is the Polish community (Roncesvalles). Mostly hear English being spoken with occasional French.” [Sorauren Park]

### 6.4 Neighbourhood Change and Gentrification

This section describes the various references made to indicators of neighbourhood change and gentrification across several questions, including the neighbourhood change and socio-demographic questions mentioned above.

#### 6.4.1 References to Change in Neighbourhood Character

Although survey participants were only asked to provide a static description of their neighbourhood’s character as it exists today, a few respondents from Woodbine Park and Wychwood Barns Park chose to describe the changes that are happening in the neighbourhood, many of which are markers for gentrification processes.

There was a surprising amount of references to change in the Woodbine Park neighbourhood; however, there were no references to gentrification and descriptions of change tended to be positive, rather than critical of the types of changes happening:

“A positive neighbourhood in transition for the better. Friendly, I know my neighbours within my block.”

“Our area Queen E between Coxwell and Greenwood is still transitioning. We need more commercial store fronts on Queen E to improve foot traffic. Overall: safe, friendly, upbeat.”

Compared to Woodbine Park, responses at Wychwood Barns Park seem to perceive the types of changes happening in the neighbourhood as less positive:
“It has gone from an ethnically diverse working class ‘hood to a thirty something 2-3 kids with both parents working to pay off the mortgage. As the longest (years) homeowners, we know many people and recognize many others.”

“The neighbourhood has changed a lot, from very working class, European immigrants to young professionals with families moving in recent past.”

The specific use of the term “gentrification” to describe what is happening in their neighbourhood is particularly interesting. While comments about change are more frequent at Woodbine Park and Wychwood Barns Park, references to gentrification are made only at Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park. When the term gentrification is used at Sorauren Park, respondents do not clearly describe what that means to them, for example:

“Family focused, friendly and liberal, quickly gentrifying”

“Very gentrified, mostly white, full of rich parents”

At Wychwood Barns Park, responses are slightly more specific:

“Neighbourhood is largely friendly with very active neighbours, but is very much in transition, gentrifying quickly.”

“A terrific neighbourhood. Gentrification is changing the tone particularly in a less friendly environment.”

The use of the terms “yuppie” and “bourgeois” are also unique to responses from Sorauren Park and seem to indicate feelings of class division within the neighbourhood:

“Very safe, fairly yuppie neighbourhood. People are friendly and welcoming.”

“Friendly, increasingly bourgeois”

At Wychwood Barns Park, one resident suggests that the increasing housing prices is actually forcing residents out of the neighbourhood (displacement):

“Growing! Friendly enough, but getting more expensive, which is forcing some of the local residents out.”

Some of the responses given for gentrification-related indicators, especially at Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park, raise greater concerns with the changes happening in the neighbourhood and the respondents seem to be aware of social justice issues connected to housing prices and neighbourhood change. While some of these comments seem to express concern, they only come
from a handful of respondents. For example, the respondent from Wychwood Barns Park who discusses potential for displacement also referenced increasing housing prices and poverty in the neighbourhood. It seems that there are a few residents who are acutely aware of neighbourhood changes, while these may go largely unnoticed by other residents.

Only one respondent from Sorauren Park acknowledges neighbourhood change when asked about character. They seem to be referring to changes in the perception of safety (becoming safer in the past 10-15 years) although this is somewhat unclear.

6.4.2 References to Neighbourhood Change in Socio-Demographics

Like with neighbourhood character, in responses to the question about the socio-demographics of their neighbourhood, several respondents from each park described aspects of neighbourhood change, indicators of gentrification, or used the term gentrification to describe changes in socio-demographics in their neighbourhood. Respondents were actually more likely to allude to neighbourhood change when responding to the question about socio-demographics than they were to reference change in the question about neighbourhood character. Figure 6.3 shows the percentage of respondents who mentioned the themes at each park.

![Common Responses Related to Neighbourhood Change](image)

Figure 6.3. Distribution of Responses Related to Markers of Gentrification
Respondents from each of the parks were likely to say that their neighbourhood is changing. At times, they would describe how the neighbourhood is changing using other themes. For example, a common narrative is: “the demographics of the neighbourhood are changing because housing prices are increasing.” As such, there are many types of changes captured under the “changing” code.

Residents from Sorauren Park were most likely to allude to some sort of change in their neighbourhood; mostly indicating the loss of the original Polish population and the increasing housing prices:

“Sadly, like all of Toronto, it is becoming more and more higher socio-economic and less immigrants live in the area, as well as lower income families.”

At Woodbine Park, residents often described higher income residents moving into the neighbourhood, and changes tend to be described as positive:

“Mix[ed] income levels - the hood is transitioning, and younger, higher income people are moving in. Lower income housing is concentrated in some areas, which is contributing to some crime and overall cleanliness of the community.”

Residents from Wychwood Barns Park described all of the themes mentioned for Sorauren and Woodbine Parks: loss of original populations, increasing housing values and increasing incomes:

“Generally, quite varied, however with the older generations moving out, high house prices, those moving in are generally very affluent and are changing the landscape (gentrifying). Moving towards more of an English-speaking population. Previous population was (and still is to some extent) Italian, Portuguese and Greek. There could be more programs in place to support the homeless populations.”

A few Sorauren Park residents discussed the increasing housing prices, and how this changes the type of people that can live in the neighbourhood:

“People in the neighbourhood are affluent and must be to live in the area. Prices of homes in the area are unaffordable for most. Most people appear to be middle-age or older, with both parents working at high-paying jobs. Most people are white and speak English as their first language. There are a few homeless individuals who stand on Roncesvalles outside of stores and ask for money.

Respondents from Woodbine Park and Wychwood Barns Park described how housing prices were increasing but did not directly link to any significant or negative impacts associated with this change.
At Wychwood Barns Park, residents often refer to the presence of social services in the neighbourhood, which is significantly less common at the other two parks. The neighbourhood has several homeless shelters, halfway houses and other social justice organizations that are prominent and well-known, and in general are perceived positively by local residents.

“Rising incomes/fewer immigrants because of house prices and rents/homeless community and marginally housed is still present partly because of individuals like Na-Me-Res and Wychwood Open Door support.”

A couple of similar references are made at Sorauren Park and Woodbine Park, but respondents do not consistently refer to the same organizations or services.

Respondents from Sorauren Park often described the loss of the Polish population that was prominent in the Roncesvalles-Parkdale neighbourhood.

“I have been here for almost 20 years and it is not as Polish as it was. More young families. Housing prices are crazy.”

“Income - lots of changes over past 27 years. Houses so expensive you assume high incomes to afford the homes Primarily Polish residents have died or moved to Mississauga Primarily white population - but more variety of backgrounds as 2nd generation Canadians moving in as close to Parkdale area, we do see people with mental health issues + homeless people asking for money outside Pony stores + apartments for low income.”

This theme is much less common at Wychwood Barns Park, but two respondents describe the loss of the original immigrant populations, mainly identifying Portuguese and Italians as the groups who are leaving, often being replaced by younger families. For example:


In response to the question about socio-demographics, each of the parks had similar numbers of responses that used the term “gentrification” to describe changes in their neighbourhood. Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park each had four responses using the term, while Woodbine Park had three; although with varying survey response rate, the percent of responses is highest at Wychwood Barns Park, and similar at Sorauren Park and Woodbine Park. When discussing gentrification, respondents are much more specific about the types of changes they
associate with gentrification than they were in the neighbourhood character question. Examples of this type of response include:

“This neighbourhood seems to be undergoing a process of gentrification: older Polish households are slowly giving place to a younger, more affluent demographic, predominately Caucasian.” [Sorauren Park]

At Woodbine Park and Wychwood Barns Park, a few comments are made that hint towards residents being displaced from the neighbourhood:

“It is more expensive, lots of stores, can't afford to stay!! :(" [Woodbine Park]

Finally, at Sorauren Park, 12% of responses included some reference to variations in socio-demographics between the Roncesvalles and Parkdale neighbourhoods. This type of response was not given at the other two parks, especially referencing specific names of neighbourhoods.

“Change in house prices have made it a very white neighbourhood - this is not good but unavoidable. Parkdale is fine, but density of Jameson and lower income locks area into poverty. I wish both Roncy [Roncesvalles] and Parkdale were more mixed and less locked into their own class structures.”

6.4.3 Perception of Changes Over Time

Survey participants were asked if the character or socio-demographics of the neighbourhood had changed since the park was created. Most respondents said “yes” or “not sure” at Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park, while few said “yes” at Woodbine Park (Figure 6.4).
There were several respondents at each park who wrote comments to justify their answers. They did this either in the margins of the question, or respondents would answer “no” to the question and proceed to explain themselves in the follow-up question. In most cases, the comments would indicate that they moved into the neighbourhood after the park was built so they do not feel like they have enough knowledge to say yes or no. A few responses at Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park began to indicate ways in which the neighbourhood was changing (i.e. more families and kids in the neighbourhood). One respondent from Wychwood Barns Park, answered no to the question, but expanded to explain that the St. Clair Streetcar Right-of-Way project was more significant in creating neighbourhood change:

“Would say yes, but unsure of timeline. Even bigger factor was the creation of St. Clair streetcar dedicated lane. That put 200 business out of business and according to neighbours dramatically changed character of the area. Also, housing market has meant that what was a middle-class neighbourhood is almost entirely now populated by dual income working professionals. Volvos everywhere. Recommend reading the want ads on the Facebook group. All for housekeepers and nannies.”
In the open-ended follow-up question, a variety of types of changes were listed (Table 6.5), echoing many themes that emerged in earlier questions. Themes indicated by at least 10% of respondents are highlighted for emphasis.

Table 6.5. Responses About Ways Park Neighbourhoods are Changing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sorauren Park (%)</th>
<th>Woodbine Park (%)</th>
<th>Wychwood Barns Park (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>34.09</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Original Residents</td>
<td>29.55</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealthier</td>
<td>27.27</td>
<td>17.65</td>
<td>13.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Prices Up</td>
<td>20.45</td>
<td>11.76</td>
<td>30.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentrification</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>11.76</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park is Not Cause</td>
<td>11.36</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Community</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safer</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Affordable Housing</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger Residents</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Homogenous</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Desirable</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer Working Class</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Place</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Space</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17.65</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Storefronts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displacement</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Much like the previous questions, respondents from each park often discuss increased housing prices, wealthier young families as a newer demographic, as well as some references to loss of original populations (mainly Sorauren Park) and references to gentrification. Respondents also highlight some of the beneficial changes, including increased friendliness and community, increased safety and the provision of event space in their neighbourhood. Interestingly, at
Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park, a few residents indicated that they did not believe the development of the park was the reason (or only reason) for the more negative changes like increased housing prices. A quantitative explanation of these changes appears in the next chapter.
Chapter 7

7 Quantitative Data Analysis

This section presents the quantitative data related to socio-demographics and housing for each park’s census tracts in relation to the Census Metropolitan Average (CMA). Comparisons are not drawn between parks because of discrepancies in timeframes being analyzed.

7.1 Neighbourhood Socio-Demographics

Presence of Immigrant Populations

The CMA average for percent of immigrant populations experienced a slow increase over time. In 1986 at Sorauren Park, each of the census tracts were above CMA average and remained above average for a decade (see Figure 7.1). By 2001, three out of four (the fifth CT was not yet created) were at or below average and have continued to decline until 2016. CT 47.02 (Parkdale) remained relatively static, but declined between 2011 and 2016, falling just below the CMA average. Thus, while Sorauren Park CTs had relatively large immigrant populations in the 1990s, populations in all but one CT became less prominent over time.

Figure 7.1. Percent of Population Reporting as Immigrants in Census Tracts Around Sorauren Park
The Woodbine Park census tracts have all remained below CMA average in terms of the level of immigrants versus Canadian-born residents (Figure 7.2). The CT with the highest immigrant population in 1996 has actually declined steadily over time and moved from being identical to the CMA average to falling over 15% below average in 2016. Two census tracts remained quite static over time, while the CT with new residential development (CT 20) has a slightly higher immigrant population between 2011 and 2016.

Figure 7.2. Percent of Population Reporting as Immigrants in Census Tracts Around Woodbine Park

At Wychwood Barns Park (Figure 7.3), each of the census tracts fell at or just below CMA average in 2001, but have slowly declined over time, while the CMA average has increased slightly. There is no significant difference between CTs; all three are declining at a similar rate.
Visible Minorities

Across the CMA there has been a steady increase in visible minorities, with just over half of the CMA population identifying as such in 2016. At Sorauren Park (Figure 7.4), the percentage of the population that identifies as a visible minority did not change significantly over time for most census tracts. Between 1996 and 2001, CT 47 was split into CT 47.01 (later split again into CT 47.03 and CT 47.04) and CT 47.02. These two census tracts had very different levels of visible minorities. Thus, CT 47.02 (closer to Parkdale) has a high percent of visible minorities in 2006, but drops and remains close to the CMA average by 2011. The low and stable percent of visible minorities likely reflects the dominance of Polish immigrants, rather than visible minorities in the area. Thus, changes in percent of immigrant populations are not related to percent visible minorities.
Both interviewees from Woodbine Park describe how the neighbourhood surrounding the park has been referred to as the “whitest” neighbourhood in the city. The data presented in Figure 7.5 confirms that the neighbourhood is quite “white” (relatively low percentage of visible minorities), but the percent of visible minorities appears to be increasing alongside the CMA average in three out of four CTs. Much like the percent of the population that identify as immigrants, the census tract that falls above the CMA average in 1996 is declining and becoming more similar to the other census tracts in the neighbourhood.

At Wychwood Barns Park (Figure 7.6), all three census tracts are relatively stable in terms of percent of population that identifies as a visible minority, in contrast to the increase in CMA average. In general, the Wychwood Barns Park neighbourhood has historically been “whiter” than the rest of the CMA and continues to have a low prevalence of visible minorities.
Figure 7.5. Percent of Population Reporting as Visible Minorities in Census Tracts Around Woodbine Park

Figure 7.6. Percent of Population Reporting as Visible Minorities in Census Tracts Around Wychwood Barns Park
Educational Attainment

Unlike many of the variables examined, the percentage of population with a post-secondary education generally follows the CMA average for each of the three parks. At Sorauren Park (Figure 7.7), the residents in each of the CTs have similar rates of post-secondary education as the CMA average, although the CTs are slowly increasing further above the CMA average over time.

![Sorauren Park: Education](image)

Figure 7.7. Educational Attainment in Census Tracts Around Sorauren Park

At Woodbine Park (Figure 7.8), education levels start at about five percent above or below the CMA average. One census tract fell below average in the first few census years evaluated, but was equal to the CMA average in 2011 and surpassed it in 2016. Unlike Sorauren Park, levels of post-secondary education do not seem to be straying further from the CMA average, but instead are getting slightly closer to the average over time.
Figure 7.8. Educational Attainment in Census Tracts Around Woodbine Park

Figure 7.9. Educational Attainment in Census Tracts Around Wychwood Barns Park
The change in percentage of the population with a post-secondary education at Wychwood Barns Park (Figure 7.9) does not appear substantially different than the CMA average. While all CTs are above CMA average for the time period examined, they are following trends seen more broadly in the CMA.

For each of the parks, there is no clear connection between the changes happening in each neighbourhood and the development of the park. The socio-demographic variables examined do not shift dramatically post-park development, rather follow a general trajectory that usually begins before the park is developed; however, many of the figures above indicate that census tracts within these neighbourhoods are changing faster than the CMA average as a whole.

**Income**

Average income across the CMA has steadily risen over time. The average individual income in census tracts surrounding the parks changed most substantially over time at Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park, although subtle increases have occurred around Woodbine Park. At Sorauren Park (Figure 7.10), from 1985 until 2005, all CTs fell below CMA average. By 2010, four out of five CTs had surpassed the CMA average and continue to increase. Although these four census tracts are following general trends in the CMA, average income increased more quickly between census years beginning in 1995 (the year the park was built). CT 47.02 (Parkdale) is the only census tract that does not see a considerable increase in average individual income, compared to rates of change seen in the CMA and nearby CTs. Change in average individual income increases beginning in 1995, the year the park was built. As such, income begins to increase substantially over time, quickly surpassing the CMA average.
At Woodbine Park (Figure 7.11), there is an income disparity between CT 20 (new residential development) and the other three census tracts. In 1995, those three census tracts were at the CMA average (CT 25), approximately $10,000 above or below average (CT 24 and CT 26, respectively). These CTs began increasing faster than CMA average beginning in 2005 (first census year post-park development).

In the early 2000s, the first residents moved into the new community (CT 20) and their average income was substantially higher than residents in adjacent CTs. The average individual income in that census tract has continued to climb over the 15-year time frame, to the point where it is over $80,000 higher than the CMA average in 2015.
Figure 7.11. Average Individual Income in Census Tracts Around Woodbine Park

Figure 7.12. Average Individual Income in Census Tracts Around Wychwood Barns Park
At Wychwood Barns Park (Figure 7.12), CT 114 and CT 165 fluctuate around the CMA average from 2000 until 2010, but by 2015 average individual income escalates by about $12,000 to $15,000 above the average. Income in CT 116 increases substantially between 2000 and 2005 (by $15,000), prior to park creation, but then increases more slowly, at a similar rate as the CMA average from 2005 to 2015.

7.2 Housing Data

Housing Tenure

Over time the percent of renters has slightly declined across the CMA. Although each census tract, with the exception of the new residential development adjacent to Woodbine Park, has levels of renter households exceeding the CMA average, the percent of renter households in each census tract surrounding the park does not seem to be a significant indicator of change in relation to park creation. The patterns of change seen in Sorauren Park CTs for renters is quite similar to percent of visible minorities (Figure 7.13), with splits in CTs associated with the most dramatic “change.”

Figure 7.13. Percent of Population Renting Their Dwelling in Census Tracts Around Sorauren Park
At Woodbine Park (Figure 7.14), CTs are following trends in the CMA average quite closely, except for the new CT 20. Given that the residential development in CT 20 is primarily single-family homes and condominiums, it is not surprising that these are primarily owner-occupied. Although, there is a notable increase in renters is seen between 2011 and 2016 for all CTs.

![Woodbine Park: Renter Households](image)

Figure 7.14. Percent of Population Renting Their Dwelling in Census Tracts Around Woodbine Park

At Wychwood Barns Park (Figure 7.15), there are no significant differences in housing tenure between CTs around the park. Each CT follows changes in the CMA average, with the exception of one CT that experiences a slight decline in renter households between 2011 and 2016. It is unclear if this is a trend or a short-term fluctuation.
Figure 7.15. Percent of Population Renting Their Dwelling in Census Tracts Around Wychwood Barns Park

**Housing Values**

At Sorauren Park (Figure 7.16) dwelling values are increasing faster than the CMA average. All census tracts fell below CMA average in 1986, a few CTs surpassed the average in 2006, and by 2011, all CTs were equal to or greater than CMA average. In 2016, three CTs continued to rise above CMA average, while two fell below average. Between 2011 and 2016, CT 47.01 was split into CT 47.03 and CT 47.04 to accommodate an increase in population density when former factories (as well as a newly built condominium) were converted into lofts adjacent to the park beginning around 2007. As such, CT 47.03 has lower dwelling values because it encompasses these lofts and condominium units, whereas CT 47.04 and the other CTs in the neighbourhood primarily contain single-family homes.
At Woodbine Park (Figure 7.17), CT 20 (contains the new residential development built alongside the park) and CT 24 have had dwelling values higher than the CMA average since 1996. These two CTs’ dwelling values have been increasing slightly faster than the CMA average and were $200,000 to $300,000 above average in 2016. CT 25 and CT 26 fell below average in 1996. CT 25 and CT 26 seem to be increasing slightly faster than the CMA average, but CT 20 and CT 24 are experiencing more significant changes in dwelling values over time, although these changes are most notable between 2011 and 2016, as is the case for three out of five CTs at Sorauren Park.
Unlike Sorauren Park and Woodbine Park, dwelling values in census tracts around Wychwood Barns Park have always exceeded the CMA average (Figure 7.18). Like CTs at the other two parks, CT 165 and CT 114 have experienced the most significant increases in dwelling values between 2011 and 2016. CT 116’s increases were more significant between 2001 and 2006, but continue to exceed the CMA average by approximately $300,000. Although these changes in dwelling values occur in the census years following park development, they are unlikely to be correlated solely with the development of Wychwood Barns Park, but instead follow general trends seen across the city, since CTs at Sorauren Park and Woodbine Park, as well as the CMA average, experience increases in housing values from 2001 until 2016.
Building Permits

For Sorauren Park (Figure 7.19), although there is no building permit data available prior to 2001, the numbers of building permits issued annually fluctuate around the CMA average until 2014 when they skyrocket in three out of five census tracts. At the beginning of the dataset in 2001, all CTs fall below CMA average, so it is unlikely that they had increased significantly following the development of the park in 1995. Like dwelling values, building permit values increase significantly after 2014 (2016 census year for dwelling values). This increase is likely connected to changes in Toronto’s housing market overall, as no significant changes are seen six to 18 years following the development of Sorauren Park; however, the presence of the park likely makes the Roncesvalles-Parkdale neighbourhood a desirable place for more recent reinvestment in housing stock.
At Woodbine Park (Figure 7.20), CT 20 (new residential development) experiences spikes in building permits issued annually from the CT’s development in 2001 until 2007, after which it plummets, falling below CMA average by 2010. This is a result of the single-family homes that were built alongside the park, as well as condominiums that were built throughout the early 2000s. CT 25 does not appear to have much new development or redevelopment, as it follows the CMA average for most of the dataset; however, CT 24 and CT 26 have both been increasing dramatically since 2006, when values for all CTs and the CMA temporarily dropped.

At Wychwood Barns Park (Figure 7.21), there appears to be a steady increase in the number of building permits issued annually in all three census tracts. After 2006, when numbers are nearly zero in the CMA and individual CTs, the number of building permits has increased beyond the CMA average and continues to do so, indicating a rise in new buildings and renovations around Wychwood Barns Park.
Figure 7.20. Number of Building Permits Issued Annually in Census Tracts Around Woodbine Park

Figure 7.21. Number of Building Permits Issued Annually in Census Tracts Around Wychwood Barns Park
This chapter has presented the results of the quantitative comparison of census tract changes associated with population, housing and park development. While the data does not always demonstrate significant changes post-park development, many of the census tracts are changing faster than the CMA average for variables examined. Much like interview and survey participants’ perceptions of change, the data presented here suggest that the changes seen in these neighbourhoods are following broader trends experienced across the City of Toronto, rather than changing in a trajectory that is divergent from the city as a whole.
Chapter 8

8 Discussion

Each of the parks show variation in stakeholder and residents’ perception of neighbourhood change and gentrification, yet the housing and socio-demographic variables do not always show clear and marked changes post-park development. Despite this, I draw a few conclusions about the ways in which the park developments and associated neighbourhood change is perceived by stakeholders and residents. In addition, I discuss how the politics of parkland development in Toronto, both broadly and in these case studies, are influential in creating a system conducive to gentrification, yet not as pronounced as other North American cities.

8.1 Perceptions of Neighbourhood Change and Gentrification

Did the conversion of the case studies to parkland cause green gentrification? The answer is complex and multi-faceted. Stakeholders’ and residents’ perceptions of neighbourhood change points to larger trends in park use, park preferences and shifting socio-demographics, both at the neighbourhood scale and city-wide.

In general, quantitative data related to socio-demographics and housing show mild to moderate changes over time, in relationship to city-wide trends, and their connection to the park development is not clear. Changes do not always begin immediately or shortly after park development, and in some cases, changes seem to have been occurring prior to the park’s development. There are some scenarios, especially at Sorauren Park, where the rates of change appear to increase post-park development. However, there is difficulty in drawing comparisons between the three parks which have different amounts of data available for analysis.

While displacement as the result of park development and associated neighbourhood change was never systematic, overt or part of a city-led revitalization scheme, subtle processes making the neighbourhood less affordable have made it unlikely that lower-income earners would become new residents. Every time a low-income resident moves out of the neighbourhood, this presents an opportunity for the landowner to raise the rent and quickly find a new tenant or sell the property in the newly more desirable neighbourhood.
Residents and stakeholders from Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park both describe the loss of original residents in the neighbourhood surrounding the parks. This narrative was more prominent at Sorauren Park. The prominence of this narrative might be because the neighbourhood featured a single ethnic group (Polish), whereas residents from Wychwood Barns Park often listed several ethnicities of residents who have moved out of the neighbourhood or are part of the aging pre-park population, including Italian, Portuguese, and Greek residents. Despite having deep roots in the community, the Polish population around Sorauren Park appears to be diminishing over time. Much of the Polish residents are aging and dying or moving into long-term care. Rising house prices has restricted (because of financial barriers, primarily) the types of people who can move into the Sorauren Park, Wychwood Barns Park, and even Woodbine Park neighbourhoods. While discussion of displacement was minimal and often implicit in residents’ comments, there seems to be a growing concern about the affordability of the neighbourhoods surrounding each of the parks.

At Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park, when asked to describe ways in which they perceive the neighbourhood to be changing, there was a perception that there are more families (especially young and wealthy families) moving into the neighbourhood than before. Real estate agents consistently use the proximity to parks as a draw for future homebuyers. This was especially prevalent in the media searches for Sorauren Park, where condominiums and factory loft conversions were advertised repeatedly in news articles. The family friendly programming illustrates the way Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park may be a factor in attracting young wealthy families to the neighbourhood. Sorauren Park has a very active youth sports league, as well as events that target families, such as outdoor movie nights with family friendly selections and pizza nights in the park. Charles G. Williams Parkette, which is immediately adjacent to Sorauren Park, is a space geared towards young children with a splash pad and playground. Artscape Wychwood Barns has tenants that include a nursery, children’s theatre and a children’s art studio. In the development process, funding was received from The Metcalf Foundation specifically because of The Stop Community Food Centre’s emphasis on educating children about food cultivation. The park space itself contains a splash pad and playground that is well-used by local residents, as well as visitors to the barns who come from other neighbourhoods in the city. At Woodbine Park, festivals and events are often family friendly, but generally reach a wider demographic than the other two parks. For example, while Woofstock (a festival geared
towards dog-owners) and the Beaches International Jazz Festival are geared towards an audience of all ages, they do not typically focus specifically on attracting children and families to Woodbine Park.

Despite their perception that their neighbourhood is changing, there was also a theme within the interviews and surveys that the parks were not the only factor contributing to the change. That gentrification is not specific to the neighbourhoods, but rather a part of city-wide processes was a common narrative. Certainly, Toronto’s booming housing market makes it difficult to isolate change to specific neighbourhoods, yet the presence of and proximity to parks in neighbourhoods is commonly used as a way to attract homebuyers and property developers.

While the quantitative data lacks clear and correlative trends, it became evident that the qualitative responses (both surveys and interviews) showed more substantial changes in each neighbourhood. Neighbourhood change and gentrification, whether connected to park developments or not, appear to be felt more significantly on-the-ground by residents and stakeholders than they are reflected in the quantitative data. Though there were subtle dissimilarities between parks in the types of changes expressed in quantitative data, residents across all parks seem to perceive changes in shifting neighbourhood socio-demographics and housing prices more significantly than other markers for gentrification. For example, the most common ways in which residents perceive the neighbourhood to be changing include: more families, loss of original residents, wealthier residents moving in, housing prices increasing, and so on. While residents occasionally identified other markers for gentrification, including changing storefronts and housing renovations, they were less common in the responses.

Processes at Woodbine Park have not been compounded with the loss of an original immigrant population. In fact, both interviewees from Woodbine Park shared an anecdote about how the neighbourhood, presumably referring specifically to the “Beaches Triangle” community, was known as the “whitest” neighbourhood in the City of Toronto. Of course, there are immigrant populations and visible minorities around Woodbine Park, but there is not one or even a few prominent ethnic communities. The size of immigrant and visible minority populations around Woodbine Park is actually increasing in some census tracts, unlike many neighbourhoods in the city, but remains well below CMA average.
Ultimately, each of the park neighbourhoods are experiencing neighbourhood change and gentrification, but to varying degree. I argue that Sorauren Park has fully transitioned, Wychwood Barns Park is in transition or resisting transition, and Woodbine Park has the potential to transition.

At Sorauren Park, certain socio-demographic variables have changed quite significantly from pre-park development until present. A comment made by some of the interviewees is that the affordable housing that existed in the 1980s and 1990s have since disappeared. For example, rooming houses were very common, especially in the portion of the neighbourhood known as North Parkdale, but these have almost entirely disappeared from the study area. In addition, Sorauren Park functions as a community hub and the programming has made the neighbourhood attractive for wealthy, young families. Both the Roncesvalles and Parkdale neighbourhoods have received media attention for the impacts gentrification is having on their communities; Roncesvalles in the somewhat recent past, but Parkdale’s fight against gentrification is very visible and ongoing at the time of writing.

Wychwood Barns Park, on the other hand, experiences a moderate level of perceived changes in the neighbourhood, but has similar levels as Sorauren Park in terms of other indicators of change. However, survey participants and interviewees often discussed the presence of homeless shelters, halfway houses and other types of community housing in their neighbourhood. These types of responses occurred quite infrequently at Sorauren Park and Woodbine Park, and rarely was the same organization, building or service referred to by two residents. In comparison, Wychwood Barns Park residents identified places like Na-Ma-Res, a Native men’s residence, as well as referred to halfway houses, homeless shelters and other social support services that existed in their neighbourhood. While some respondents admitted that the presence of individuals experiencing homelessness, mental health issues or addiction are somewhat uncomfortable, most stated that these individuals keep to themselves and do not pose a problem in the neighbourhood. Should the neighbourhood loose this “grit” as Councillor McMahon (Woodbine Park) calls it, then it is likely that this neighbourhood will continue to transition. However, Wychwood Barns Park is still quite new and these changes tend to take some time.

Woodbine Park, while certainly changing and absolutely an admired component of the neighbourhood, does not function the same way as Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park for
a few reasons. First, Woodbine Park is not a community space, in part because of the size of the park and the fact that it is not entirely surrounded by residential roads on all sides. In this way, Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park are very embedded in their communities. Second, aside from the bandshell, Woodbine Park does not have any buildings that are available for community use. The other two parks have space that can be rented out (short-term at Sorauren Park and long-term at Wychwood Barns Park) for community organizations and neighbourhood-scale events like farmers’ markets, movie nights, meetings, et cetera. Building off of this, Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park maintain, at least in part, their industrial aesthetic, which can be desirable to certain demographics who appreciate the intersection between history, nature and the arts. Lastly, the programming that exists at Woodbine Park, described above, is not appreciated by all members of the community. Forty percent of residents indicated that the park occasionally or frequently impacts the surrounding neighbourhood, almost always citing the presence of large-scale events and festivals, and associated noise, traffic, crowds and litter, as the main culprits. In this way, for many residents, Woodbine Park continues to act as a locally-undesirable land use and perhaps contributes to the area’s limited change. The neighbourhood around Woodbine Park is experiencing some change in terms of socio-demographics and housing data, and has retained some affordable housing, including a couple Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) buildings adjacent to the park. While the neighbourhood is likely to change alongside city-wide trends, Woodbine Park does not seem to experience the same type of accelerated changes seen at Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park.

8.2 Politics of Vacant Land to Park Development

The case studies examined in this research were developed using different avenues to park creation. Both Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park were developed primarily as a result of resident engagement and activism, whereas Woodbine Park was a project encouraged by the local city councillor at the time, although there was some level of resident engagement.

The motivations for the greening of each site were not necessarily part of a city-wide agenda for sustainability, green space provisioning or other environmental or social benefits. Sorauren Park was redeveloped because the neighbourhood was in strong opposition to an unsuitable proposed land use and was in need of a local green space for active recreation, leisure and community programming. The development of Wychwood Barns Park grew out of the realization that the
city owned the lands that had sat vacant in their neighbourhood for over a decade and the perception by some residents that the industrial legacy of the streetcar barns was valuable and worth protecting. The motivations for the development of Woodbine Park are less clear, but did not stem out of a need for parks or environmental services in the neighbourhood.

Although the intention did not seem directly connected to economic development or employment, both Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park provide economic opportunities; Sorauren through the weekly farmers’ market and Wychwood through the various organizations and artists that are housed within the barns, their weekly market, and the private and public events that take place within the barns. Compared to projects like Greenpoint, Brooklyn (Curran and Hamilton, 2012), Calumet in Chicago and Duamish in Seattle (McKendry and Janos, 2015) there was not a larger political agenda attached to these projects. Work to provide social and environmental benefits occurred much more haphazardly and ad-hoc. The city’s approach to greening these spaces appears more reactionary and in response to community activism, rather than taking a leadership role in urban greening efforts. This is also quite different than new park development proposals in Toronto like Raildeck Park, which is a massive and innovative attempt to create parkland in the airspace above a rail corridor. Raildeck Park addresses the need for parkland in the city’s densely populated downtown core, but unlike the case studies in this research, Raildeck Park is highly visible. It would also certainly improve the City of Toronto’s reputation and ability to attract tourism and capital investment, but whether it would function as a neighbourhood park is unclear. Moreover, while the downtown core is lacking park space, it is not comprised of the typical low-income neighbourhoods that are vulnerable to green gentrification.

There was not widespread resistance to the projects examined in this thesis, perhaps because these case studies were not part of city-led revitalization or greening schemes. At Sorauren Park, it was expressed that the neighbourhood unanimously agreed that the space should be a park. At Wychwood Barns Park, a small portion of the community disagreed with the vision to preserve a blue-collar industrial building, and instead preferred to have a park space without the community hub. In the cases of Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park, the fight for the redevelopment was led by residents, with councillors and community organizations acting as leaders and representatives of the projects. Woodbine Park residents, at one point, were uncertain whether the land should be redeveloped or should remain a race track, as it had been for over a hundred
years, but ultimately local residents and those in the city as a whole had only a minor role in Woodbine Park’s conversion.

Each park used different approaches to greening and the use of “naturalized” spaces in their development. The case studies examined are not considered to be a “just green enough” approach to park development, yet each ensured that on-site contamination was removed and green space was added. While the “just green enough” approach has the potential to resist or slow gentrification in large-scale greening or park development projects, it seems that this alone is not enough to protect affordable housing and prevent the displacement of a neighbourhood’s original residents. By relying on reducing the “greenness” of a park development, the “just green enough” approach undermines the ability of a park to provide environmental benefits to residents who need them most. Certainly, municipalities must share the responsibility for resisting neighbourhood change by enacting housing policies and creating affordable housing opportunities. For example, where greening efforts are coupled with residential development, local governments could ensure that a proportion of newly-built residential units are affordable and that the neighbourhood’s original residents, especially any who have been displaced by the park or residential development, are given first priority for these units.

Because these greening efforts at Sorauren Park and Wychwood Barns Park were meant to target underserved or park-poor neighbourhoods in order to increase equity in access to park space, there did not seem to be any concerns about their development. Also, because Toronto has not seen a project like New York City’s High Line or the Atlanta BeltLine, residents in lower-income or marginalized neighbourhoods are perhaps less aware of the potential for gentrification and neighbourhood change as a result of park developments compared to other cities.

Since the City of Toronto does not have a vacant land “problem” like declining cities in the United States (e.g. Detroit and Philadelphia), there has been no systematic approach to vacant land redevelopment. Instead, vacant land redevelopment, whether for commercial, residential or even public use, has been primarily market-led. As such, vacant land greening as a specific land use change happens quite randomly and in neighbourhoods that have the capacity to mobilize and save the site from being transformed into a new locally undesirable land use. For example, stakeholder interviews revealed that in each of the case studies (although a lesser extent at Woodbine Park), residents had pre-existing community groups, formal and informal networks,
and prior resident engagement, which likely played a role in the neighbourhood’s ability to advocate for their land use preferences. At Sorauren Park, the Wabash Building Society (later Friends of Sorauren Park) was formed out of the Roncesvalles-Macdonell Residents’ Association; and at Wychwood Barns Park, Friends of a New Park developed from the Taddlewood Heritage Association. Residents’ relationships with fellow residents, understanding of the city’s political process, education and professional experience are perhaps contributing factors to their ability to become activists and “champions of the park.” The fact that networks and expertise already existed within the communities suggests (1) the importance of neighbourhood capacity to advocate for vacant land to parkland conversion, and (2) gentrification processes may already have been happening there.

It is worth noting that community members who were engaged in the park development process and those who are active in the parks’ current programming are characteristic of the typical gentrifier, meaning they are predominately white, educated professionals with the ability to allocate time and resources to organizing and lobbying for park developments. This portion of the community that takes on the bulk of advocacy and park programming efforts does not represent the diverse composition of residents who live in the neighbourhood. In community-led greening initiatives, community representation must be called into question to best understand whose interests are being considered and vocalized when both creating and programming a park space.

When speaking with Andrea Bake (City of Toronto Parks Planner), she mentioned that green gentrification was certainly a concern that the department had. Finding opportunities for parkland development in underserved neighbourhood is their primary challenge. First, the city parks department faces challenges in accessing the 50% of Section 42 funds that are allocated towards city-wide park acquisitions, park development and upgrades, since these require a park development project to meet criteria for classification as a city-wide park. For example, a proposed park development must be a certain size and have certain amenities to be considered a city-wide park. However, because capital investment is occurring primarily in the city’s downtown core, underserved neighbourhoods are seldom able to acquire land through parkland dedication or cash-in-lieu. Thus, the city has “handcuffed themselves” and made it challenging to develop parkland in certain areas of the city.
Furthermore, the case studies reveal that the system is much more complex than obtaining council’s approval and using funding sources. These parks did not simply get built by the city through Section 42 parkland dedications, cash-in-lieu or Section 37 benefits. Each park had to go through more challenging pathways to creation. Sorauren Park was developed out of a “baby steps” approach – a strategy used to navigate both the city’s lack of available funds, as well as political reluctance to providing improvements to the original park design.

Similarly, Wychwood Barns Park (though mostly directed to the community hub in the park) was made possible by a significant fundraising campaign, in-kind contributions and cash donations from major charities and organizations. Woodbine Park was made possible through the negotiation with residential property developers to redevelop a portion of the land as parkland, on top of what was required through city policy at the time. Despite the city’s several pathways to parkland acquisition and funding, in practice, parkland development is a complex process often requiring successful community activism and engagement, navigation of the city’s political process and a certain level of neighbourhood social capital.

The City of Toronto is put in a position where, on the one hand, they are being pushed to expand the city’s current parkland network in order to provide social, environmental and economic opportunities to residents. Toronto is moving to a more systematic approach, where an updated parkland strategy is set to be released in early 2019. The city’s goal of increasing equity in the distribution of parks is an admirable objective, especially moving forward in the updated Parkland Strategy. However, Toronto is facing an affordable housing crisis which makes the city’s efforts to expand parkland, and the possibility of subsequent green gentrification, potentially problematic. While there are several neighbourhoods that are underserved by the city’s park system and have a higher amount of vacant land available for redevelopment, they are unlikely to be targeted by the city in the updated Parkland Strategy. Instead, neighbourhoods meeting criteria for access (based on proximity to parks of varying sizes, quality of parks and neighbourhood socio-demographics) will be targeted for park development in order to increase equity in Toronto’s park system.

8.3 Limitations

This thesis provides some insight into the City of Toronto’s park development process as it took place for three vacant land to park transformations. Though these case studies provide an in-
depth look into myriad factors related to green gentrification and park development, there are a few limitations to this study. First, this analysis would benefit from additional case studies that represent a wider variety of park developments, including those of a different size (e.g. parkettes) or those that are more overtly city-led park developments (e.g. The Bentway or the future Raildeck Park). Further, it would be interesting to see how park developments that are a part of the city’s equity-oriented parkland acquisition strategy fit within these narratives, and whether neighbourhoods in more distant areas of the city are more vulnerable to green gentrification based on prior socio-demographic composition.

The applicability of this study to the City of Toronto is also limited by the locations of the three case studies within the old city boundaries. Because these case studies take place in neighbourhoods with similar styles, the results are unlikely to be replicated in North York, Etobicoke or Scarborough. Given that each of these park developments took place at different times in the city’s history, it is also difficult to make comparisons in quantitative data. For example, the economic situation in Toronto in the late 1990s (following Sorauren Park’s development) is quite different from that of the late 2000s and early 2010s (following Wychwood Barns Park’s development).

8.4 Future Directions

This research contributes to a growing body of literature surrounding green gentrification and provides one of the first accounts of this phenomena in the Toronto context, especially as it relates to park developments. Given the limitations above and the fact that green gentrification is a new and emerging concept, there are still gaps that need to be addressed. For example, a literature review of green gentrification studies that compiles and compares the effects of different types of “greening” projects (e.g. park developments, bike lanes, public transit). It would be useful for municipalities to be able to understand which types of greening projects are more likely to accelerate processes of neighbourhood change and gentrification. Building on this, analyses of changes in variables across many cities would be useful in identifying the neighbourhood composition that is most vulnerable to green gentrification. For example, in this study, it appears that census tracts with higher immigrant and visible minority populations are potentially more vulnerable to change over time following park development. Is this finding consistent across several green gentrification studies? Given the relatively new status of green
gentrification literature, a synthesis of studies to-date would provide a useful jumping-off point for further research.

8.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The City of Toronto’s park system contributes to the city’s rich urban culture and provides numerous social, economic and environmental benefits. The City of Toronto must continue to provide new parkland opportunities, especially with an increasing population, but faces challenges associated with the equitable distribution of parks in the city. Though the updated Parkland Strategy will work to address inequities in Toronto’s park system, it does not seem like there is attention being paid to the potential for negative impacts as a result of park development, such as green gentrification, in neighbourhoods that might be most vulnerable to change. While the impacts of vacant land to park development are subtle in the quantitative data analysis, the qualitative component of this thesis reveals the complex politics that contribute to successful park outcomes and the potential for these parks to accelerate perceptions of change in the surrounding neighbourhoods.

The presence of a highly-animated and community-oriented park space appears to be connected with increased rates of perceived change in the case study neighbourhoods. When parks are developed that incorporate community-based programming, events and facilities, it is worth taking extra care to ensure that these benefits are accrued to the residents who need them most and fought for their implementation. This means that policies and programs, whether at the neighbourhood-scale or city-wide, be enacted that protect affordable housing (including market-rate rentals, community housing, homeless shelters, halfway houses, etc.).

While areas of high vacancy and low parkland do not usually coincide with the City of Toronto’s perceptions of the neighbourhoods most in-need (NIAs), close attention should be paid to ensure that park development does not create state-led opportunities for gentrification and displacement. The city should consult extensively with the community, make the potential for change explicit and well-understood, and work on a compromise for the neighbourhood that will minimize negative impacts. Though few successful examples exist, drawing on a “just green enough” approach to parkland development will assist in resisting gentrifying processes in vulnerable and park deficient neighbourhoods.
Finally, the city experiences difficulty in accessing Section 42 funds in neighbourhoods where less growth is occurring. A solution to this could be to allocate a small percentage of funds from development in the city’s highest growth neighbourhoods and re-direct them into a “park equity fund” that works to create parks in underserved areas of the city, ideally following the “just green enough” paradigm for park development.

Though Toronto is well-known for its extensive park system, there are many areas of the city that have room to grow. This thesis demonstrates that, in general, park developments that transform a vacant lot or neighbourhood disamenity into a vibrant community space are treasured by the neighbourhood, yet residents perceive there to be challenges when it comes to changing socio-demographics and housing values. Despite this, there was not a single resident or stakeholder who suggested that the park should not have been built because of its potential to accelerate gentrification. As such, preventative measures to resist neighbourhood change and gentrification, including policies, programs and a “just green enough” approach to park development, may assist in increasing equity in Toronto’s distribution of parks, while mitigating the potential for more negative aspects of change.
References


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Appendices

Appendix A: Mapping Methods

Given the relative lack of available (and sizeable) vacant lots in Toronto, and the subsequent need to acquire land for parkland development opportunities, a component of this research used geospatial techniques to compare neighbourhood-scale differences in the quantity of current parks and future parkland opportunities (vacant land). Data for this analysis was acquired from the City of Toronto’s Open Data Catalogue (parks and vacant land data, Neighbourhood Improvement Area boundaries) and Statistics Canada (population size of census tracts in 2016). In the City of Toronto’s dataset called “Address Points,” each address in the city is classified by land use, including “low density residential,” “municipal park,” and “vacant location,” with over 60 classification types in total. Address points designated as “vacant land” were isolated and exported into a separate dataset. Each address point is assigned a GEO_ID, which is a “city-defined, unique identifier for Property Address” (City of Toronto, 2018), which was linked with the corresponding land parcel from the city’s “Property Boundaries” dataset. As a result, each property classified as a vacant location was represented by a polygon, rather than a point feature.

The vacant land shapefile and the vector dataset for parks (readily available through the Open Data Catalogue) were converted to raster, with a cell size of one metre. Using census tract boundaries, a “zonal statistics as table” analysis was performed. Only “sum” was selected as an output variable, producing a count of pixels representing vacant land and parks in each census tract. The population of each census tract from the 2016 census (Statistics Canada) was joined to the vacant land and park datasets, and a new column was generated that represents vacant land and parks as function of population size. Values representing vacant land and park quantities were expressed using quantile classification with three equal groups on the census tract level, thus representing low, moderate and high amounts of vacant land and parks in each census tract.

Since the City of Toronto’s upcoming Parkland Strategy has a clear emphasis on increasing equitable access to parkland in the city and a need to acquire new land, areas with lower quantities of parkland (lowest quantile) and a high number of vacant lots (highest quantile) were identified as potential targets for vacant land to park redevelopment. These census tracts were isolated and re-exported into two shapefiles representing low-park and high-opportunity (vacant
land) census tracts. A “clip” function was performed to extract the census tracts that overlapped from the two high/low datasets, producing a dataset with census tracts that meet both conditions of high vacancy and low parkland. Finally, these census tracts were mapped alongside the City of Toronto’s Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs), which are neighbourhoods identified as requiring improvements in social, economic and physical conditions (City of Toronto, n.d.[e]). Because of the potential for green gentrification as a result of park development in low-income or otherwise marginalized neighbourhoods, the neighbourhoods identified as vulnerable (NIAs) and meeting targets for both low park and high opportunity were used to make recommendations regarding impacts of park development and neighbourhood change.

There are, however, limitations to using the City of Toronto’s vacant location classification in the Address Points dataset. The dataset is created and “considered accurate” for the purposes of emergency management (personal communication, Toronto Open Data, May 15, 2017). Because the use of this data is not geared towards vacant land management, sites identified as a “vacant location” may not actually be available for redevelopment. In addition, the classification is “set at time of address assignment, and not necessarily updated when construction occurs on a property” (personal communication, Toronto Open Data, May 15, 2017). As such, there are scenarios where a site was considered vacant in this dataset, but is now occupied by a structure and actively used. Despite these limitations, I have used these data to produce a general representation of where vacant land is most likely to occur across the City of Toronto.
Appendix B: Interview Guide

A. Introduction
1. Could you describe your involvement in the development of the park?
2. Were you involved because of your profession or personal interest?

B. Pre-Transformation
1. Could you describe what the land where the park is today looked like prior to its transformation?
2. What was the public’s opinion of the space prior to transformation?
3. Were there any existing plans in place to develop/redevelop the space?

C. Transformation
1. Who initiated the idea to transform the space into a park? What were their motivations/rationale for doing so?
2. Who (individuals, organizations, etc.) was responsible for the advocacy/lobbying work to transform the space?
3. Could you describe the project timeline, from idea to completion?
4. Were extensive lobbying required to convince the city/land owner to develop the space as a park? How did these efforts take place?
5. Were there any competing visions for the space? How were these mitigated?
6. Were there any concerns over the idea to transform the space into a park?
7. Are you aware of how the project was funded? Who paid for land acquisition, remediation and redevelopment?

D. The Neighbourhood
1. Could you describe the character of the neighbourhood, prior to the development of the park?
2. How would you describe the character of the neighbourhood today?
3. Has the socio-demographics of the neighbourhood changed over time? For example, income, ethnicity, spoken language, homeless populations, etc.
4. What types of attitudes exist towards sustainability initiatives in your neighbourhood? Are there active organizations working on environmental activism, social justice, or greening initiatives?

E. The Park Today
1. How would you describe the use of the park? (i.e. neighbourhood gathering space, active recreation, passive recreation)
2. What kind of people use the park? For what specific purposes?
3. Has the park contributed to a sense of community in the neighbourhood? In what ways?
4. Would you consider the park to be an inclusive space? Do you think all groups feel welcome here?
5. Who manages and maintains the spaces within the park, either formally or informally?
6. How has the park positively impacted the neighbourhood, or even the city as a whole? Think about social, economic and ecological benefits, among others.
7. In your opinion, has the development of the park had any negative impacts on the surrounding neighbourhood?

F. Moving Forward
1. If more vacant was available for redevelopment in your neighbourhood, would you recommend another park development or something different? Why or why not?
2. If you could be involved in developing the park again, what would you recommend to be done differently?
3. Are there any key players, factors or important information you would like to add?
Appendix C: Resident Survey

[Sorauren Park Survey used as an example]

Please answer the following questions about Sorauren Park:

A. PARK USE
This section asks questions about how you use Sorauren Park.

1. How often do you visit Sorauren Park? (Check one)
   Every day
   Weekly
   Monthly
   Rarely
   I have never been there

2. What types of activities do you visit Sorauren Park for? (Check all that apply)
   Active recreation (playing sports, running, etc.)
   Passive recreation (picnics, reading on a bench, etc.)
   Dog walking
   Transportation (walking/biking through the park on the way to school, work, etc.)
   Other. Please describe:

3. When you visit Sorauren Park, what types of activities or people do you see using the space?

4. Do you feel safe in Sorauren Park? (Check one)
   (A) Yes, at all times of the day.
   (B) Feels safe during the day. I avoid the park at night.
   (C) No, I don’t feel safe.
4b. If you answered B or C to the question above, please describe why you feel unsafe (optional):

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5. In which of the following ways does Sorauren Park benefit the neighbourhood? (Check all that apply)
   - Space for active recreation
   - Green space and vegetation (i.e. trees and gardens)
   - Space for passive recreation and relaxation
   - Event space for the community
   - Space for dogs
   - Other. Please describe:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5b. Does Sorauren Park negatively impact the surrounding neighbourhood? Please describe.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

6. Has Sorauren Park contributed to a sense of community in the neighbourhood? (Check one)
   - Yes
   - No

6b. If yes, in what ways do you feel an increased sense of community?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
7. What is your opinion on the use of Sorauren Park as a private event space? For example, space in the park being rented out for weddings.

8. What is your opinion on the use of Sorauren Park as a large-scale event space? For example, space in the park being rented out for music or cultural festivals.

9. Are you aware of any informal management or stewardship within Sorauren Park? For example, neighbours tending to gardens or creating an ice rink in the winter.

B. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD
This section asks you about your local neighbourhood and community that surrounds Sorauren Park.

10. How would you describe the character of your neighbourhood? Think about things like safety, friendliness, how well you know your neighbours, etc.

11. How would you describe the socio-demographics of your neighbourhood? Think about things like income, ethnicity, spoken languages, homeless populations, etc.
12. Would you say the character or socio-demographics of your neighbourhood have changed since Sorauren Park was created?
   Yes
   No
   Not sure

12b. If yes, how has your neighbourhood changed?

13. Are you aware of any active community groups that relate to Sorauren Park?
   For example, “Friends of Christie Pits” is an organization active in Christie Pits Park.
   Yes
   No

13b. If yes, please list the groups:

14. How active are these groups in Sorauren Park? (Check one)
   Very active
   Somewhat active
   Not active
   Not sure

15. How often do you receive communication from these groups? (Check one)
   Daily
   Weekly
   Monthly
   Occasionally
   Never
16. If you were to receive communications from these groups in the future, what method would you prefer? (Check one)
   Email
   Facebook
   Mail flyers
   Word of mouth
   Other: ______________

D. DEMOGRAPHICS
This section asks about you and your household demographics. Please do not include your name or address in this section. This information will be kept anonymous.

17. How long have you lived in the neighbourhood?
   Less than 1 year
   1-5 years
   5-10 years
   10+ years

18. What type of dwelling do you live in?
   Single-detached house/Semi-detached house/Row house
   Condominium
   Apartment
   Other: __________________________

19. What is your age?
   18-24
   25-34
   35-44
   45-54
   55-64
   65+
20. Do you have any children?
   Yes
   No

20b. In what age group(s) are your child(ren)? (Check all that apply)
   0-5
   6-10
   10-17
   18+

21. Do you have a dog(s) that you bring to the park?
   Yes
   No

E. CONCLUSION
In this section, please include any additional information you would like to provide the researchers.

22. If you could change something about Sorauren Park, what would it be?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

23. Is there anything else you would like the researchers to know about Sorauren Park?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

24. Would you like to participate in a full interview with the researchers?
   No
   Yes. My preferred method of contact is: __________________________

25. Would you like to receive a summary of the results from this survey?
   If yes, please include your email address: __________________________

Thank you for your participation in this survey. Please return the completed survey to the researchers in the paid envelope provided in your package. If you have any further questions or comments, please contact the researcher.