Planning Green and Public Spaces in Lawrence Heights, Toronto: Considerations for Meaningful Community Engagement

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Abstract

The vitality of many green and public spaces is seemingly lackluster in appearance and deficient in spatial and social programming. Urban planning and design are influential of the spaces that communities make meaning in and respectively animate. Approaching planning through a community development perspective embraces community assets and the organizational capacity through which communities can actively participate in the making of their public realm. By deviating from conventional planning practices, planners can more thoughtfully address social and environmental injustices—acknowledging, respecting, and embracing diversity and difference through green and public space planning and design.

This research adopts a qualitative mixed-methods approach to understand how communities are involved in the shaping of their green and public spaces as well as the mechanisms in place that support this process. Primary and secondary data were collected through two knowledge exchanges, four semi-structured phone interviews, a walk-along with residents, personal site observations as well as a comprehensive review of pertinent policy frameworks, planning documents, media, and scholarly literature. Research findings revealed that people strive to make meaning in spaces. A socio-spatial study of Lawrence Heights demonstrates that green and public spaces foster social relations, human health and well-being, and are often at the intersection of community engagement and development (or lack thereof).

Keywords: Green space, public space, social relations, health, well-being, urban environmental design, planning, community development, engagement, equity, environmental justice.

Foreword

Being raised in a suburban town and living in an urban city for a period of my adult life exposed me to the stark similarities, differences, and challenges that urban and suburban dwellers face related to their natural and built environments. Upon entering the Master in Environmental Studies (MES), Planning program, I sought to further explore the human-nature relationship and how planning practices could respond to, or exacerbate, social and environmental injustices.

To qualify for recognition by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) and the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP), the MES, Planning program requires the completion of a planning-related experiential learning experience. My placement with the City of Toronto at the end of my first year in the MES program significantly informed my impending research interests. It led me to continue learning about green and public spaces through a planning and community development perspective. The interdisciplinary nature of the MES program has advanced my understanding of planning through an intersectional, theoretical, and practical lens.

This Major Research Paper demonstrates my comprehensive and critical understanding of the three learning components set out in my Plan of Study: community/social planning, green and public spaces, and community engagement and development. I achieved the learning objectives in my Plan of Study by investigating how planning, community engagement and development shape the places in which we live.

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1   Introduction

Lawrence Heights, a social housing neighbourhood in the City of Toronto, is currently undergoing revitalization to become a mixed-income neighbourhood with the introduction of private market housing. The revitalization of Lawrence Heights has been underway since 2015. Despite the harsh realities that existing residents face, the community has been instrumental in the planning and design of meaningful green and public spaces. Lawrence Heights residents have shown that when community capital thrives, greater capacity exists to shape community spaces that support social relations and well-being. My research investigates how urban planning and design practices demonstrate greater regard for the subjective and objective importance of green and public spaces and their respective programming through an intersectional and community development perspective.

Toronto's rapid urbanization has resulted in prevailing neighbourhoods, such as Lawrence Heights, undergoing major spatial and social transformations. The restructuring of urban landscapes and the institutionalization of power hierarchies continue to reproduce social and environmental inequities in built and natural environments (Pothukuchi, 2015). People are being displaced and excluded from sites and spaces undergoing (re)investment and (re)development, as new rules are imposed, and property values continue to increase and be unattainable for many.

Ever increasingly, monotonous neighbourhoods and community spaces are being produced while those that were once vibrant are being destroyed—those which people were connected to. The implementation of monotonous green and public spaces exposes a general failure to recognize that the spatial and social quality of these spaces directly correlates with social relations and community well-being. Green and public spaces "are critical pieces of the social infrastructure of our cities...[and] have a role to play in creating more inclusive, equitable places that are shaped by and for the people living there" (Park People, n.d., p. 4). My research reveals how communities make meaning in and respectively shape green and public spaces.

2 Background and Methodology

2.1 Background

My research topic is inspired by an experiential learning experience that took place with the City of Toronto during Summer 2019. I supported a Community Development Officer's work in Lawrence Heights, Toronto, a community currently undergoing revitalization. My experiential learning experience illuminated the undeniable value of social and community planning, community development, and community organizing—nonetheless in a truly admirable community.

I closely engaged with the *Shaping Our Community Together: Our Social Development & Action Plan for Lawrence Heights* (commonly referred to as the "Social Development Plan") over the course of the placement. The Social Development Plan was required by City Council "as part of the approval process" for revitalization and was adopted by City Council in 2012 (Smith, 2019). It was co-created by the City of Toronto, Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), the Social Development Plan Steering Committee, residents, and community groups in Lawrence Heights through collaborative consultations and engagements. The Social Development Plan is intended to guide revitalization and the transition to a mixed-income and mixed-use neighbourhood (Smith, 2019). The Social Development Plan is led and driven by tenants who helped outline key visions, actions, and strategies to "maximize social and economic opportunities…and build a socially inclusive community" (Smith, 2019). It focuses on six key themes, or priorities: green space, employment, community connections, community services, safety, and housing (Toronto, 2012a). Supporting these six areas is vital, as current residents are rightfully apprehensive about the transition to a socially mixed neighbourhood.

My main responsibility during the placement was to obtain input related to green space and community connections. I was involved in engagements with residents, city departments, agencies, committees, and resident groups through various settings. Engagements included community action committee meetings, interviews, community events and consultations, and door-to-door canvassing alongside Revite Nerds (see explanation in Chapter 6). The Social Development Plan (SDP) influenced my research approach as I appreciate that, unlike many other conventional planning strategies, the SDP prioritizes social planning, spatial *and* social programming, community development and engagement. In my paper, I use conventional planning and planners to refer to planning practices that are outside of social planning. My research deeply engages with, and investigates, the success of social development strategies like the SDP and how similar strategies empower communities to become more involved in planning processes that directly impact their daily lives.

The 2012 Social Development Plan also informs many other City documents, discussions, and initiatives. An example where this is exhibited is through the 2020 *Draft Social Development Plan Lawrence Heights 2012-2018 Progress Report, Lawrence-Allen 2019-2022 Action Plan* ("Progress Report and Action Plan") (see Appendices B, C, D). I helped produce this report to communicate input received through community engagements in Summer 2019. It distinguishes emerging issues and action items related to the six priority themes of the Social Development Plan. My deep engagement with the Progress Report and Action Plan advanced my research as it elucidated the physical and social components that residents value in their green and public spaces. It also allowed me to become familiar with gaps in spatial and social planning and understand where additional support and funding are required.

My personal experiences and upbringing have also contributed to my research topic. As a resident born and raised in Oakville, I have become accustomed to the ways in which the built and natural environments of suburban towns are organized. Like other suburban neighbourhoods, including Lawrence Heights, Oakville has been planned around the use of and dependence on automobiles. Oakville is Halton's largest municipality, comprising many distinct neighbourhoods that are home to approximately 193, 832 people, per the 2016 census (Community Development Halton, 2004; Statistics Canada, n.d.). I have observed the (re)development of fragments of neighbourhoods in Oakville and have witnessed how this process has unevenly distributed goods, services, and high-quality public and green spaces.

Based on my observations, specifically in my hometown, plans and designs for green and public spaces tend to lack character and interest, or are not reflective of the local community. I find that I am constantly comparing my rather lacklustre experiences in Oakville's green and public spaces to vibrant and welcoming spaces elsewhere in North America, Europe and South East Asia. While my frustrations drew me to this research area more broadly, my experiences in Lawrence Heights prompted my interest in learning more about how proximate communities have been able to animate their green and public spaces. What is the difference between neighbourhoods? Can the successful planning, design, and community development practices of one neighbourhood be similarly carried out in others?

In my opinion, the design of many public and green spaces does not comprehensively and holistically account for social relations, human health and well-being in a manner that is comparable to communities like Lawrence Heights. This holds true despite the existing strategies and policy frameworks (see Appendix I) that address the importance of animated, healthy, and liveable communities. While the implementation of relevant strategies and policies did, at times, cause frustration among Lawrence Heights, there are still victories worth celebrating. Lawrence Heights embodies great energy, passion, and dedication towards their green and public spaces and community organizing.

In my role as a researcher, I acknowledge my position as a third-generation Italian-Canadian female and the privilege I come from. My "social location" as a researcher is important as it refers to my own race, class, gender, and geographic location as an individual, which contrasts those in Lawrence Heights who I spoke to while doing my research (Faria and Mollett, 2016). While I am not a resident of Lawrence Heights, I believe the community deserves to be highlighted, including how they have negotiated and navigated the revitalization process. I am cognizant of the critiques of research being conducted on communities and the real impact that research has. I have sought to not perpetuate this harm and have therefore applied a more asset-based and participatory research method. I believe people should always be treated with dignity and respect as opposed to being positioned as subjects.

Social location is important, as it intersects with people's disparate socio-spatial experiences in the world, in spaces. Spaces can be stigmatized, experienced, and understood differently based on ideas surrounding intersectionality. The marginalized, stigmatized, and racialized experiences I describe in my research are different from those of my own, which have been more about gender. I am mindful that my perception of people's lived experiences in green and public spaces and the lived experiences of those in the Lawrence Heights community who I have engaged with is shaped by my experiences and my understanding of my privileges, which may unfortunately produce biases or misinterpretations. Consequently, I was actively self-reflexive throughout my research and took up an intersectional perspective to better reflect upon how social location intersects with multiple interactions of discrimination and oppression, such as race, gender, age, class, and socio-economic status. My paper represents the result of my efforts and I have opted to focus in greater depth on the positive aspects and assets related to the green and public spaces in Lawrence Heights. Because I understand that intersectionality is experienced differently, and in light of the current discussions regarding the Black Lives Matter movement that arose as my paper was nearly complete, I realize that my positive framing may seem naïve or uncritical. However, the positive framing of my results reflects the positivity of many people in the community. I will not deny that it did become challenging at times for me as a researcher to deal with tensions surrounding social location. I acknowledge that having to deal with these tensions, rather than live with them each day, is a privilege in and of itself. As a planner, it is my goal to be self-reflexive and consciously think about how I can avoid exacerbating oppressions and (re)producing socio-spatial inequities and uneven power relations that contribute to social and environmental injustices; to this end, I dedicate my paper.

2.2 Research in the Midst of a Pandemic

As I conduct my research during the COVID-19 global pandemic, I reflect on the inherent and pressing importance of green and public spaces. This is especially true in urban areas with high density, which lack adequate green and public spaces to support the local population. There is a need to rethink the public realm in a way that is more conducive to human beings and urban ecologies, especially during an unprecedented time like now where we find more people spending time outdoors, predominantly within their local neighbourhood (The Canadian Press, 2020). The general population has become more aware and opinionated about the lack of adequate public and green spaces—ranging from parks, urban trails, bike lanes, and sidewalks. People continue to feel the burden linked to inadequate public and green spaces in urban areas and related anxieties associated with physical distancing, contracting COVID-19, and facing fines when using public and green spaces. In light of this timely awareness, there is a call to action required—advocating changes to policies and planning practices that will place greater emphasis on these spaces. Animating and providing added green and public spaces in urban areas has proven to be essential to human health and well-being. During a global pandemic especially, being able to safely use and enjoy green and public spaces can help people cope mentally, physically, and emotionally with anxieties, stresses, and ill-health.

2.3 Methodology

This research applies a qualitative mixed-methods approach. Qualitative research helps to understand, describe, interpret and theorize social interactions and individual experiences in natural settings, particularly those linked to green and public spaces (O'Brien et al., 2013). This research comprises primary and secondary data collected through a combination of two knowledge exchanges; four semi-structured phone interviews; a walk-along with residents; personal site observations; as well as a review of pertinent policy framework, planning documents, media, and scholarly literature. This research sought direct insight from community members—an ethnically and racially diverse group of people—enabling them to maintain power over the narration of their stories and lived experiences.

Primary data collection for my research predominantly focused on Lawrence Heights. I will preface that most residents who engaged in my research live in Lawrence Heights and have for many years, which might infer why some people have attributed greater meaning to the community's green and public spaces.

Prior to data collection, I was in contact with a long-time Lawrence Heights resident who I previously met during my placement with the City. They generously invited me to the LHION 2020 Planning Day in February, an event that celebrated the community's collective accomplishments and showcased their plans for 2020. While I learned a lot of useful information from this event, it was also an opportunity to connect with community members and invite them to my knowledge exchanges as well as re-connect with individuals I hoped to interview. Shortly thereafter, I facilitated the first knowledge exchange for my research. It was attended by four residents who were approximately 20 to 75 years of age. The second knowledge exchange was attended by approximately nine people ranging from approximately 35 to 75 years of age and was held at Unison Health & Community Services as part of a weekly program dedicated to seniors. A knowledge exchange is a process whereby people can co-produce, "generate, share and/or use knowledge through various methods appropriate to the context, purpose, and participants involved" (Fazey et al., 2014, p. 19). The knowledge exchanges for my research began with a visual presentation that explained my research topic and allowed me to share my knowledge of planning frameworks and processes. Residents were then given the space to share their knowledge, opinions, perspectives, and lived experiences related to my research topic, while drawing on Lawrence Heights. During the knowledge exchanges, I provided large printed maps of Lawrence Heights as well as trace paper and markers. This enabled participants to enrich the conversation by physically illustrating and identifying sites, green and public spaces. This also helped me visualize where important spaces are located. The knowledge exchanges revealed personal and collective goals and interests in the community and generated creative discussions (Roseland, 2012).

The walk-along with residents in March brought to life community spaces, introduced new perspectives, and offered a clearer depiction of the community's history, traumas, events, and site uses compared to my individual site observations and walks through the neighbourhood which were rather objective. It was important for me to create an opportunity for residents to lead me on a walk through the community, where they could show me the sites and spaces they felt needed to be seen or discussed. The walk-along was led by three residents, two of whom attended the first knowledge exchange. I felt the walk-along complemented previous discussions and revealed new spaces, challenges, as well as formal and informal ways of using these spaces. Knowledge exchanges, walking methodologies, and visual engagement techniques are examples of more successful approaches to community engagement, which are further discussed in Section 6.2.2.

Those who participated in phone interviews were selected based on their involvement and familiarity with Lawrence Heights and its revitalization. They included a long-time resident, an urban planner, a Toronto Community Housing representative, and another individual with several years of deep community

engagement. I felt it was important to engage with residents and local stakeholders throughout this research as it would reveal new perspectives on the meanings and experiences associated with public and green spaces. Participants offered insight regarding the challenges and successes related to planning processes and the role of community engagement and development in planning.

While I initially sought to solely investigate how planning could animate green and public spaces, as a result of my continued engagement with the community I became more interested in how community engagement and development can shape these spaces and relevant planning efforts. I investigated how planning and design objectives and principles are at the intersection of engagement, meaning, and lived experience of a place, which can collectively influence how planning, design, and engagement processes should be carried out.

The following section provides a brief history of Lawrence Heights and an introduction to the current revitalization process. Chapter 3 then delves into how scholars conceptually think about the importance of green and public spaces and people's lived experience of place. It provides an analysis of scholarship, planning practice and evidence based on my observations in Lawrence Heights. Chapter 4 explores how planning and design influence green and public spaces, with a focus on urban environmental design approaches that I believe are essential for human and environmental well-being. Chapter 5 and 6 discuss how communities are, or should be, involved in the planning of their communities and the production of space. Both chapters illuminate how community engagement and development are critical to the success of communities and offer key insights from Lawrence Heights that suggest how planning can be executed or improved. Throughout each chapter of my report, social relations, human health, and well-being are underlying considerations and guiding goals. It is my hope that this report inspires readers to consider how planning can move from a professional and conventional practice, to one that is more holistic, comprehensive, and forward-thinking; one that embraces community development and engagement. Holistic planning presents a greater opportunity to integrate community development as it encourages communities to identify and strengthen community assets that will promote resilience (Burayidi, 2000). Comprehensive planning similarly assists with identifying social, economic, and physical community needs required to foster community development (Burayidi, 2000; Shiffman and Motley, 1990).

In my paper, I use conventional planning to refer to land-use planning practices that are outside of social planning. Despite the extensive discussions on community engagement in academia, I believe there is a gap between planning theory and practice which has resulted in planning that fails to thoughtfully and fully engage with the public. I link this failure to 'conventional' planning practices. In Section 6.2, I argue that community engagement should not be perceived merely as a check-box task to complete as part of

planning practices. Community engagement of the kind that I was involved in with Lawrence Heights remains mostly part of the current scholarly debates rather than the norm in planning, although practicing planners must be aware of these debates. For instance, Healey (2010b) and Innes and Booher (2008, p. 821) point out that democratic governance, collective action, and collaborative processes with authentic in-person dialogue are necessary in order "to deal with the complexity of cities". They build community knowledge and resilience by facilitating an understanding of numerous perspectives and desires (Innes and Booher, 2008). Aligning with these debates, my research encourages forward-thinking, contemporary planning practices where planners actively strive to involve, collaborate with, and empower communities to inform planning policies and decisions (see Appendix H). It is no longer about simply informing the public; planners must do more and put theory regarding community engagement into practice.

Unfortunately, I did not have the capacity to conduct an in-depth review of the scholarly literature on the debates about community engagement, as I initially set out in my paper to predominantly understand planning for green and public spaces. Nonetheless, my paper contributes to the scholarly debates and planning community in academia, which is responsible for helping shape future systems and reimagine community engagement practices in planning (Healey, 1999).

2.4   Lawrence Heights

Lawrence Heights is a classic example of 1950s social housing design located in central Toronto, Ontario. The residential neighbourhood is bounded by Lawrence Avenue to the south, Yorkdale Avenue to the north, Varna Drive to the east, and Dufferin Street to the west. From a city planning perspective, Lawrence Heights is part of the broader mixed-income, mixed-use Lawrence-Allen community (Toronto,

Figure 1: 87 Bredonhill Court, where TCH units once stood. (Photo Credit: Rinaldi, July 2019)

2011c). Lawrence Heights is currently undergoing Toronto Community Housing Corporation's (TCHC) largest revitalization project to date, with more land and housing than its predecessors, Regent Park and Alexandra Park (TCH, n.d.). Lawrence Heights revitalization is a multi-phase 20-year project anticipated to be completed in 2035 (Kurek, 2019). In October 2015, demolition for Phase 1 commenced (see Figure 1) (TCH, n.d.).

The City of Toronto and Toronto Community Housing Corporation initiated the Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Study (Gladki et al., 2015). This study was developed between 2008 and 2011 through

engagements and consultations with stakeholders, service providers, community groups, and residents of Lawrence Heights and surrounding neighbourhoods (Gladki et al., 2015). Engagements informed planning frameworks and a detailed three-phase initiative intended to guide the Lawrence Heights revitalization (Gladki et al., 2015). Many planning studies and supporting documents have been produced through revitalization, including the Transportation Master Plan ("TMP"), Community Services and Facilities ("CS&F") Strategy, Urban Design Guidelines, Infrastructure Master Plan and Financial Strategy, the Social Development Plan, the Heritage Impact Statement and Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment, and the Lawrence Heights Heritage Interpretation Plan ("Heritage Interpretation Plan") (Gladki et al., 2015).

To understand the context of planning in Lawrence Heights, a few details are worth noting. In 2005, the number of shootings in the City was the highest in a decade. A participant recalled that it was considered to be "the year of the gun". In 2019, I recall Lawrence Heights experiencing a spike in shootings. The neighbourhood has historically been subject to systemic inequities including "perceived and actual cycles of isolation, poverty, and [territorial] stigmatization" (Toronto, 2012a, p. 12). The original construction of the social housing neighbourhood in the 1950s was perceived as a "potential threat to a traditional way of life" (Rose, 1972, p. 70). Subsequently, the "headline[s] about [crime and] gun violence have come to shape Lawrence Heights' dominant narrative" (Huynh, 2020). This narrative has exacerbated stigmas, biases, negative connotations and attitudes towards the neighbourhood—leaving residents feeling ghettoized (Bhandari, 2020). By the 1970s, the term "Jungle" was commonly used to describe the community's social disorder (Bhandari, 2020). The term was and is coupled with drugs, poverty, and gun violence (Bhandari, 2020).

Consequently, Lawrence Heights became one of Toronto's thirteen Priority Neighbourhoods through the Neighbourhood Action Plan in 2005 (Toronto, n.d.). In 2014 it was named one of Toronto's thirty-one Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA) per the Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy (TSNS) 2020. As per the Urban HEART @ Toronto tool, NIAs are determined based on a set of "15 benchmarks of healthy communities in five areas: economic opportunities, social development, participating in decision making, healthy lives and physical surroundings" (Doolittle, 2014). Neighbourhoods that fall short of these benchmarks then become NIAs. The NIA and Priority Neighbourhood classifications improve the conditions of neighbourhoods by encouraging public and private resources to be redirected in order to increase investment in community infrastructure and services (Toronto, n.d.; Gladki et al., 2015).

However, there are advantages and disadvantages to these classifications. Two social planning neighbourhoods, Englemount-Lawrence and Yorkdale-Glen Park, have been categorized by the City into

one neighbourhood. Within these two social planning neighbourhoods are Lotherton, Neptune, and Lawrence Heights proper, which were merged to establish one Priority Neighbourhood—Lawrence Heights. Being grouped as one neighbourhood and characterized as an NIA or Priority Neighbourhood exacerbates stigmas, oppressions, and the real and perceived challenges faced by the community. A deeper understanding of the history, criticisms, and debates regarding the establishment of Priority Neighbourhoods and NIAs would be interesting, but it is beyond the limited scope of this report.

Lawrence Heights is diverse both culturally and demographically and therefore data collection unique to each of the three neighbourhoods has proven difficult because they have been classified as one (Huynh, 2020). Lawrence Heights (the social planning neighbourhood) comprises a high proportion of newcomers and first-generation immigrant residents representing many ethnicities including East and West African, Jamaican, Jewish, Caribbean, West Asian, and Latin American (Gladki et al., 2015, p. 18). There is a high percentage of very young (0–14 years) and very old (80+ years) people compared to the City of Toronto (Toronto, 2010; Statistics Canada, 2019). There are many single-parent households as well as lower levels of income, employment, and post-secondary education (Toronto, 2010). Many people in Lawrence Heights self-identify as visible minorities (Toronto, 2010). Many residents have lived in Lawrence Heights for multiple years—upwards of 10 years for some, countering the assumption that social housing is a temporary situation.

During and prior to revitalization, the residents, grassroots groups and local stakeholders in Lotherton, Neptune and Lawrence Heights proper have increasingly united to form a closer network of support. This has transpired into collective community efforts, groups, events, and gatherings. For example, the Lawrence Heights Inter-Organization Network (LHION) and the Social Development Plan have brought the Englemount-Lawrence and Yorkdale-Glen Park social planning neighbourhoods into dialogue; building leadership capacity, fostering skills development, bridging gaps, supporting services, rebuilding relationships and responding to past tensions. My research uses "Lawrence Heights" to refer to Lawrence Heights proper, Neptune, and Lotherton to best align with the community's collective vision. This is not to deny that the three distinct neighbourhoods still have their own unique identities, challenges, accomplishments, and needs.

In terms of the built environment, Lawrence Heights is a 100-acre site (approximately twelve housing units per acre) constructed in the mid-1950s and was considered the "first large-scale public housing project located outside of the former City of Toronto boundaries" (Bhandari, 2020). The farmland was sold by the Mulholland family in the 1940s to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (Sewell, 1994). Lawrence Heights was one of four housing projects built on land assembled and developed by the

Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation (Barndt et al., 2013). Lawrence Heights includes 1,208 Toronto Community Housing units that are exclusively rent-geared-to-income (RGI) and is home to over 3,500 tenants (Gladki et al., 2015). It comprises a mix of low-rise walk-up apartment buildings, row houses, and detached homes (Bhandari, 2020).

Lawrence Heights was deliberately designed to be a model neighbourhood upon its development. It exhibited design principles that aligned with Garden City planning ideologies of the mid-20th century (Gladki et al., 2015). Ebenezer Howard's Garden City Movement was developed as an alternative, town-scale utopian response to the public health concerns of overcrowded and industrialized cities (Bohl and Schwanke, 2002; Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999; Howard et al., 2003). The Garden City Movement incorporates the benefits of both the countryside and the urban town to create healthier living environments (Bohl and Schwanke, 2002; Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999; Howard et al., 2003). Lawrence Heights, therefore, has far more open space compared to many other neighbourhoods built during other periods in Toronto. There are approximately 48 kilometres of publicly accessible green space in Lawrence Heights (Toronto, 2018b).

Green space design in Lawrence Heights was also influenced by the urban park movement. The parks movement was slowly introduced through the English aristocracy's development of some of the world's first public parks in London, England (Byrne and Wolch, 2013). Similar to Lawrence Heights, these parks (or green spaces) were integrated with enclosed residential squares, where the "buildings [are] related to open spaces rather than street frontage" (Byrne and Wolch, 2013; Toronto, 2011c, p. 2). Analogous to Garden City principles, park design resulted in super-blocks with "interior enclaves" (Jacobs, 1992, p. 79). Integrating urban green spaces with the built environment was integral, as they were perceived as "lungs of the city", alleviating social concerns related to crime and poverty and fostering improvements in "public health, social prosperity, social coherence, and democratic equality" (Eisenman, 2013, p. 290; Wolch et al., 2005, p. 7). In 1865 Olmsted, Vaux and Company promoted connected parkway systems in neighbourhoods to advance urbanism and modernity while broadening the ecological and social benefits of urban parks (Eisenman, 2013).

Though well-intentioned, the success of Lawrence Heights as a model neighbourhood is highly debated today because of the spatial organization that has been produced. Its location along the outskirts of Toronto enabled the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to "experiment with an alternative to the traditional grid of public streets and park and open space patterns that prevailed in Toronto at the time" (Gladki et al., 2015, p. 3). The four key design principles that influenced the spatial composition of Lawrence Heights include: "a continuous system of parks and playgrounds; central

location for community facilities; clear hierarchy of roads; and clear prioritization of various modes of transportation" (Gladki et al., 2015, p. 3). Lawrence Heights is different from other social housing neighbourhoods in Toronto, such as Alexandra Park and Regent Park, in that it is low-density and "tucked away at the fringes of suburbia…fenced in from the surrounding subdivisions" (Huynh, 2020). Its "purposeful architecture", "mid-block open space network", alternative "looping road systems" and cul-de-sacs have produced a socially, economically, and physically disconnected and inaccessible neighbourhood by design (Sewell, 1993, p. 105; Bhandari, 2020). Compounding this isolation is the 1960s construction of the bisecting north-south Spadina Expressway, now known as the Allen Road (Micallef, 2020). Consequently, navigation remains a challenge—which is commonly expressed by taxi drivers—and contributes to its distinction as "the Jungle" (Bhandari, 2020).

Exacerbating these urban design challenges was the federal disinvestment in social housing that occurred in the 1970s which led to the deterioration of physical infrastructure, including its housing stock (Gladki et al., 2015). Through revitalization, the 1,208 existing social housing units will be entirely rebuilt and more than 4,000 new private market units will be added (TCHC, n.d.; TCH, 2006). The new neighbourhood will still be park-centred, incorporating new public parks and open space, a school and a community centre, plus new retail spaces (Toronto, 2011a; TCHC, n.d.). Road infrastructure is being redesigned to better integrate Lawrence Heights with the rest of the City (Toronto, 2011a).

Bhandari (2020) notes that the master-planned community "aspires to orchestrate a mixed-income society, where a new luxury lifestyle will co-exist side-by-side with social housing". There are many facets to this contested statement; readers should be cognizant of the intersecting challenges embedded in this assumption related to social mixing. As August (2014, p. 1165) argues, "[s]ocially mixed redevelopment is often presented as the better option in a false choice (Slater, 2006) between a gentrified condo community and continued neglect and deterioration of public housing". Further, TCHC and the City have communicated that there will be zero displacements because of revitalization—but I believe this claim, and those on social mixing, to be up for debate.

Residents in Lawrence Heights have expressed concerns similar to those revealed with Toronto's Don Mount Court, Canada's first and recently completed socially mixed social housing redevelopment. There were four predominant challenges revealed in the redeveloped Don Mount Court: "(1) unequal power relations in shaping local priorities; (2) the power to brand the community and define its aesthetic characteristics; (3) the power to define and use public space; and (4) power over modes of surveillance and exclusion" (August, 2014, p. 1160). Based on my knowledge, Regent Park has also undergone a major revitalization with similar concerns. Many of these challenges are, in one way or another,

considered throughout my research. I believe contemporary planning practices can adopt community engagement and development practices to address these challenges.

I encourage readers to be mindful of the history of Lawrence Heights throughout my paper, as the lived experiences of residents in social housing and their contributions have shaped the community's green and public spaces.

3   The Importance of Green and Public Spaces

This chapter provides a conceptual analysis of the value and importance of green and public spaces, as is revealed through scholarship and my experience in Lawrence Heights. My research is motivated by my belief that humans see, feel, and experience meaning in green and public spaces. I view green and public spaces as socially constructed and material places that can enhance social relations, improve human health and well-being, and strengthen human-nature relationships (Eisenman, 2013; Shillington, 2008). I am interested in further investigating the spatial and social qualities, programming, planning, and designs that enhance the fundamental importance of green and public spaces. This chapter presents a conceptual foundation for my report.

Green and public spaces are integral to every community's public realm. They are socially, economically, politically, and culturally embedded in the urban fabric (Sauter and Huettenmoser, 2008). A high-quality public realm contains civic buildings, public art and land that is publicly-owned and accessible. The latter includes streets, public squares, open spaces, transportation systems, sidewalks, landscaped streetscapes, community gardens and parks (Toronto, 2011c, 2019; Eisenman, 2013). The public realm is "'…the skeleton around which everything else grows'", encouraging civic life and functioning as safe and attractive environments that further define development and connect land uses (Garvin, 2011, p. 46, as quoted in Eisenman, 2013, p. 303; Toronto, 2019). A community's green and public spaces contribute to liveability as "[t]he success of a neighbourhood relies not only on the quality of its physical spaces and buildings, but also on the opportunities it provides for the people who live there" (Toronto, 2010a, p. 63).

3.1   Defining Green and Public Spaces: A Brief Overview

In this section, I define green and public spaces to establish a clear understanding of my topic. Taking my cue from architect Jan Gehl, I first describe how and why people use green and public spaces to better understand their importance and associated challenges (Francis et al., 2012).

Urban green space varies in "size, vegetation cover, species richness, environmental quality, proximity to public transport, facilities, and services" as well as "availability of organized recreation" (Wolch et al., 2014, p. 234; Jennings et al., 2017, p. 69). Urban green spaces, such as riparian zones and gardens, are important for urban ecology (Wolch et al., 2014). Public green space includes parks, reserves, streams, sporting fields, streams and riverbanks, greenways and trails, forests, green roofs, community gardens, street trees, nature conservation areas as well as spaces that are often overlooked such as green walls, alleyways and cemeteries (Byrne et al., 2014, p. 234). Private backyards, corporate campuses, and common outdoor areas of apartment buildings are not part of my research because they are private green spaces—however, the latter will be touched on (Byrne et al., 2014). In Lawrence Heights and elsewhere in the City of Toronto, condominiums with Privately-Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces (POPS) are becoming more prominent. My research focuses on green spaces and public spaces.

In Lawrence Heights, the Social Development Plan regards green spaces and physical infrastructure as community gardens, "parks, boulevards, sidewalk right of ways, landscaping, and green roofs" as well as "connections such as roads, bike and walking paths; street furniture such as bulletin boards, transit shelters, benches lights, and garage/recycling receptacles; and park amenities that include play structures, picnic tables, and shelters" (Toronto, 2012a, p. 38). I apply this method of thinking to my research, as I believe physical infrastructure is, and should often be, integrated with all green spaces to be conducive to users.

Public spaces are settings for public life, people, and culture; settings for social and physical activities (Gehl Studio and Toronto, 2018). They are "accessible to all groups, providing freedom of action, temporary claim and ownership" (Francis et al., 2012, p. 402). In the first knowledge exchange, a resident wrote a great description of public space: "(tricky!): open-access, physically safe and intact, user-friendly, unbounded by rules (privatization), home, outside".

My research adopts scholarly language, including 'animate' and 'activate', to define my goals for high-quality green and public spaces. Residents describe the attributes of 'animate' and 'activate' in the context of green and public spaces using the following words: grassroots, pro-action, not being lazy, collective action, funding to make our initiatives alive and ongoing, reclaiming space, to bring something to life.

Awareness of the definitions that the community co-created relating to green and public spaces has generated a baseline for my discussions with participants, whereby I continued to embrace their characterization of green and public spaces and physical infrastructure. In my opinion, it is mutually

beneficial to first acquaint ourselves with the perspectives of local communities in order to effectively plan and design meaningful spaces.

3.2   Socio-Natures and Biophilia: The Human-Nature Relationship

Scholarship on socio-natures and biophilia depict green and public spaces as fundamental. Socio-natures refers to the intimate intersection and fundamental relationship between nature and humans, both of which influence and (re)produce one another (Shillington, 2008). Nature "includes physical features that are not of human origin [and] often overlaps terms such as the natural environment" (Jennings et al., 2017, p. 71). Socio-natures is a term that contributes to the concept of biophilia. Sociobiologist and myrmecologist E.O. Wilson describes biophilia as "the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms. Innate means hereditary and hence part of ultimate human nature" (Beatley and Newman, 2013, p. 3329). Humans desire and depend on nature. Resident Ashna articulated that "we as humans are not separate from nature, we are a part of it and rely on it…the nature-is-sublime perspective".

3.3   Aesthetic and Affective Experiences

To preface this section, I begin with the idea of aesthetic experiences, which relate to visual judgements and responses. Affective experiences refer to feelings and emotions which intrinsically encompass "characteristic experiential, facial, and neurophysiological components" (Ulrich, 1983, p. 87). While emotions embody universal experiential qualities, the "cognitive accompaniments" of emotions will often differ between people (Ulrich, 1983, p. 88). Planning and design professionals should carefully consider how aesthetic and affective experiences can inform planning practices and produce green and public spaces that resonate with people. I encourage readers to integrate ideas in this section with considerations provided in Chapter 4 on urban environmental design.

Users shape the socio-spatial qualities of spaces as they sit and move through them, disparately ascribing symbolic meaning and emotional attachment (Beebeejaun, 2017). This builds feelings of belonging and place attachment. Place attachment refers to "positively experienced bonds, sometimes occurring without awareness, that are developed over time from the behavioural, affective and cognitive ties between individuals and or groups and the socio-physical environment" (Cattell et al., 2008, p. 556). A resident demonstrated this upon recollecting feeling in awe and at peace when they become "enveloped by the whole beauty of the space". They continued, "It just takes all that stress out of you". An intrinsic relationship between the environment and human consciousness is thus revealed through urban

symbolism, imagery, environmental place meaning, sense of community, and belonging—reinforcing concepts related to socio-natures and biophilia (Talen, 2000). Expanding on this, Lynch (1960, p. 1) found that people's mental images of cities are "soaked in memories and meanings". Meaning can be understood perceptually/cognitively, emotionally, and tangibly (Virden and Walker, 1999). Residents confirmed this upon recollecting the cherished outdoor adventures during their formative years— expressing shared feelings of nostalgia and happiness (Cattell et al., 2008). A resident explained how these memories and meanings linger in different forms throughout their life: "It's two sides of the same coin. What I talk about probably as an adult is serenity and peace and privacy. As a kid I would see that as fascination, as joy, as just total fun. It's the same thing but at two different ages". Engaging with participants substantiated my belief that people undeniably make lasting meaning in green and public spaces.

To ensure people are not deprived of rich aesthetic and affective experiences, resident Ashna stressed the need for people to be able to express themselves and be adventurous, as opposed to becoming "too influenced by how people portray [public spaces and] green spaces like the woods". "Oh, it's dangerous", Ashna echoed others. There was a shared sentiment amongst residents that children are unable to fully explore their imagination outdoors anymore due to social and physical barriers (e.g. fear, household rules, community designs). "It's a culture thing too, especially for me because I'm a woman. The way my mom was raised—she was too overprotective of me and I would just rebel", Ashna explained. The "culture and social structure within which the person operates" influences their distinct experience and use of green and public spaces (Virden and Walker, 1999, p. 220). Thus, socio-cultural dimensions, including gendered experiences, influence one's aesthetic and affective experiences.

Furthermore, socio-cultural, socio-ecological, and ethno-racial relations are constructed and preserved through learned meanings, ideas, and characteristics that ultimately form urban cultures (Ulrich, 1983). These ideas are disseminated through language and amongst people with shared backgrounds, beliefs, interests, and experiences—shaping what people believe constitutes an aesthetically pleasing space, as 'nature' is a "set of ideas for which many cultures have no name" (Virden and Walker, 1999; Spirn, 2019, p. 109). Developing shared meanings and ideas that evoke familiarity and a sense of security amongst religious and ethnic groups can subsequently foster space claiming (Beebeejaun, 2017). Space claiming is often attributed to the notion that subcultures require their own centres, or spaces, that promote their public life (Alexander, 1977). People will often make meaning in spaces based on their personal and/or shared recollections and sentiments of other places that are more distant (Cattell et al., 2008).

However, Lawrence Heights and many other communities experience aesthetic injustice, making it difficult for people to use, claim, and animate spaces. Attesting to this, Kaydeen recalled seeing many gardens suddenly dug up and removed, questioning why some gardens are kept while others are not. Based on her experiences, Kaydeen recollected the alleged thoughts of planners: "'Their garden is aesthetically pleasing to us so we'll let them keep that' and 'this garden doesn't look nice, so we're just going to cut that one down without asking or having conversations with residents'…and then you start to wonder, you know?". Kaydeen was critical of who is given the authority to decide which green spaces to keep or destroy, and how these decisions are influenced by subjective beliefs and socio-cultural ideologies that determine what is aesthetically pleasing. Cultural and aesthetic biases deter people's acceptance towards urban landscapes that are greener and more natural with native vegetation, or comparatively, towards precisely landscaped and mowed lawns (Beatley and Newman, 2013).

I think that affective and aesthetic experiences have been construed based on the fact that the cultural landscape of built environments has predominantly reflected racial ideologies and prejudiced "Anglo-Celtic landscape aesthetics" (Byrne and Wolch, 2009, p. 752). Byrne and Wolch (2009, p. 747) argue that parks were "founded upon middle- and upper-class sensibilities and eugenicist ideologies about pristine wilderness". By the time public parks became more accessible to the wider population, park officials began enforcing "strict behavioral rules and dress codes to inculcate cultural norms of the elite within working-class and immigrant visitors" (Byrne and Wolch, 2009, p. 747). Hence, aesthetic and affective experiences vary widely among individuals and communities. This contributes to the later discussion in Section 4.1.6 on environmental (in)justice.

Expanding on these thoughts regarding cultural and aesthetic biases, I reflect on different opinions regarding what is deemed aesthetically pleasing. De Vries et al. (2013, p. 28) believe that the perceived aesthetics of green and public spaces is dependent on "maintenance, orderly arrangement", overall impression, related experiences, subjective and objective qualities. Green and public spaces that are

Figure 2: Children playing in unprogrammed TCH green space. (Source: Toronto, 2012a)

"perceived as esthetically pleasing (minor traffic, sidewalks, trees, retail shops)" are more likely to incite physical activity (Wolch et al., 2014, p. 235). Those that are aesthetically pleasing and of visibly higher quality are thought to attract greater and more regular passive use, instead of active use (de Vries et al., 2013; Wolch et al., 2014). Comparatively, Ulrich (1983, p. 120) proposes that green spaces do not have to be elaborate, as many North Americans and Europeans prefer

"unspectacular natural scenes over the vast majority of urban views". Contrasting this point, a resident

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described green space as "grass areas; which are easy to maintain, but boring. Better green spaces should have variety so that they are more interesting". A resident wrote in a knowledge exchange that green spaces "can be any size and shape and can be very different". In reference to a piece of vacant land flanked by retail buildings along Queen Street, Margaret, a current resident, believed you can have "really tiny [vacant] spaces that are just magical". When residents excitedly reminisced about their outdoor adventures as children, a resident advocated having "little spots for adventures, where you could just discover" and "use your imagination". Another resident said that open spaces "need to have the right dimensions so you don't feel inside the city. You should feel out of it…allowing you to escape from the noise and busyness of the city". Adding to this discussion, residents expressed that they associate the following feelings and emotions with green spaces: serenity, joyful, reverie, oxygen, oasis, de-stress, calming, relaxing, fresh air and pure, health, physical activity, an opportunity to rest, respecting the land, Dish With One Spoon, places local people can be proud of. I draw attention to these perspectives and feelings as they exhibit that everyone holds different aesthetic and affective experiences and preferences, which are valuable to be aware of.

Aesthetic and affective experiences largely contribute to how people make meaning in green and public spaces. Long-time resident Kaydeen confirmed that the urban public realm incorporates community spaces which "have really impacted how people feel about being in those spaces at particular times of the day". Affective and aesthetic experiences offer insight on how an individual or community's experience can inform planning. However, it is imperative to have a deep understanding of the intersection between planning, environmental (in)justices, and socio-cultural, socio-ecological, and ethno-racial relations. I think that in Lawrence Heights, the community's rich aesthetic and affective experiences are why we are more clearly seeing heightened social and civic participation in their green and public spaces.

3.4   The Psychological and Physiological Impact of Green and Public Spaces

My research acknowledges the linkage between social relations, human health and well-being and the influence of physical and social environments—in this case, green and public spaces. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) that endorsed the concept of health in 1948, health refers to "a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (Barr and Mucha, 2009, p. 39). Well-being focuses on the promotion and protection of health and refers to "'positive health', or 'a state of physical mental and social well-being'" (WHO, 1948, p. 100, as cited in Cattell et al., 2008, p. 545).

With a coordinated effort, planning and public health can jointly respond to decisions related to land uses and the built environment that will improve community well-being (Corburn, 2012). Since the late 19th century, the two fields have been associated to respond to and manage urban ills, such as miasma and contagion, that are linked to rapid industrialization and urbanization (Barr and Mucha, 2009; Corburn, 2012). The 19th century parks movement was one of the first major responses to the inadequate living conditions in urban built environments; striving to improve social bonds, mental and physical health (Eisenman, 2013). However, urbanization continues to affect the environment and human health. There have been lower levels of physical activity and an "increase in many chronic and non-communicable conditions such as obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes" (Jennings et al., 2017, p. 80). Residents like Margaret Jarvis (2008) are also aware of this issue and continue to propose solutions. In a written statement with recommendations to the City, Jarvis stated that "parkland is a socially productive use of land" which provides space "where people of all ages can be active, promoting better health and thereby reducing future health care costs". This is a vital point that planners and city officials often overlook. Thoughtful, interdisciplinary and forward-thinking planning can reduce other burdens, costs, and challenges—including those related to other fields such as healthcare.

From European monastic communities to hospice courtyards of the 15th century, many institutions, communities, and planners have purposefully incorporated flowerbeds, trees, man-made ponds, gardens and extensive outdoor spaces that embrace therapeutic designs (Bronicheski and Gilbert, 2016). There are numerous restorative and therapeutic attributes that natural visual amenities and views of green (and public) space have on people, including residents, employees, and hospital patients (Rapuano, 1964). Human health benefits include mental restoration; improved "cognitive and affective functioning"; reduced mental fatigue; stress recovery; decreased levels of depression, anger, tension, and confusion; and higher levels of happiness, peacefulness, joy, pride, and sense of identity (Jennings et al., 2017, p. 73; Berman et al., 2017, p. 303; Beatley and Newman, 2013). Affective and aesthetic experiences unmistakably influence subjective and objective health and well-being.

Green and public spaces ease the stresses of day-to-day life including personal and family-related stresses within the home (Beatley and Newman, 2013). They are vital settings that serve as places of respite. Resident Ashna shared that green spaces are:

> A getaway from the chaos of home…[or] anything in general. Being in this space that's just completely dominated by nature… nothing is bothering you. You're in a very pristine place and you're just sitting there, listening to yourself think for once.

Distinct subjective experiences linked to green and public spaces "can reveal the contexts in which [people's] well-being is experienced" (Cattell et al., 2008, p. 546). People will inversely use these spaces as needed to support their psychological and physiological health; one person might use green and public spaces to rest while others use them to exercise. As discussed in greater detail in the following section, green and public spaces are used to preserve and foster social connections in Lawrence Heights. According to Putnam (2000, p. 326), "social connectedness is one of the most powerful determinants of our well-being". Cities with deficient green spaces are ill equipped to alleviate melancholy and provide its citizens and visitors with the emotional comfort they require (Cattell et al., 2008; Beatley and Newman, 2013). Scientific evidence proves that there are measurable psychological and physiological human health benefits empirically linked to green and public spaces. Biomarkers are indicators that quantify the health benefits associated with access to green space[1]. Planners are in a unique position to assist the field of public health in creating healing cities by encouraging more social, restorative, and therapeutic programming as opposed to those that are economic and commercial (Cattell et al., 2008).

3.5   Fostering Community Connections

Based on my research, I believe creating spaces to foster community connections is quite important. In this section, I suggest that green and public spaces can bring neighbours and strangers together. Green and public spaces are settings for everyday formal and informal encounters whether they be by chance, momentary, casual, or intentional (Cattell et al., 2008; Gehl and Svarre, 2013). These "fleeting and more meaningful encounters in public spaces [are] beneficial, [as] they could provide relief from daily routines, sustenance for people's sense of community, and alleviate tensions at home or in a neighbourhood" (Cattell et al., 2008, p. 552). The level to which these encounters are inhibited or facilitated can also indicate the spatial and social quality of spaces.

Scholarship suggests that nature deficit disorder is increasing as social capital, sense of community, and social life are said to be weakening in many Western societies (Beatley and Newman, 2013; Talen, 2000; Francis et al., 2012). Contributing to this are modern and autonomous lifestyles that are influenced by reduced family networks, technological dependence and advancements (e.g. social media), as well as suburbanization that has increased commute times and distances (Francis et al., 2012).

[1] By measuring participants' salivary cortisol levels and through "neurophysiological investigations", researchers found that participants who engaged in 'forest-watching' and were exposed to outdoor environments and green spaces exhibited lower stress levels and more stabilized prefrontal cortex activity compared to those who 'urban-watched' (Antonelli et al., 2019, p. 1130). Health benefits were associated with "immune system function[s], for cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, and for depression, anxiety, attention deficit hyper-activity disorder" (Antonelli et al., 2019, p. 1117).

There has been a "quest for community" and "third places" to cope with the consequences of suburban sprawl (Bohl and Schwanke, 2002, p. 11). Green and public spaces are examples of third places that offer opportunities to build 'community' (Chaskin, 2013). 'Community' commonly refers to a place of belonging and identity as well as a social system which depends on the development of social, functional, cultural, and circumstantial connections (Chaskin, 2013). I believe green and public spaces have the potential to provide connection to both nature and community. Green and public spaces are extensions of the home (first place) and the workplace (second place), providing social, public, and communal places for communities (Baum and Palmer, 2002).

Green and public spaces are neighbourhood assets that foster "'city moments' where strangers enjoy a shared experience", reducing social segregation, isolation and melancholy by encouraging diversity and socialization (indicator in Appendix E) (Whyte, 1980, as cited in Anderson et al., 2017, p. 686). Supporting this statement, a resident noted that "whether you're from the east side or the west side, the rich side and the not so rich side", green and public spaces "just allow you to be amongst people". "Difference is encountered and negotiated" in these spaces and embraced as part of the neighbourhood's urban fabric, promoting community resilience (Cattell et al., 2008, p. 544).

Community connections are one of the six key priority themes in the Social Development Plan (see Appendix A). Community connections are "the ideas, activities, and practices that bring community members together. These connections form the bonds that strengthen [their] community and keep [them] resilient against the many challenges that [they] face" (Toronto, 2012a, p. 25). Social relations enrich networks of trust, social capital, social ties, place identity, social cohesion as well as a sense of attachment, place, belonging and community (Chaskin, 2013). Green and public spaces have been vital to preserving community connections in Lawrence Heights, whether it be through public art projects, community gardens, events, festivals, as well as formal and informal social relations that take place within them. Part of community connections is highlighting the cultural and biological history of the local community. Feeling connected to your community contributes to subjective feelings of happiness, health, and well-being (Markovich et al., 2018, p. 85). Backing this correlation and my research argument, a resident described community as a "group of people contributing to the well-being of space".

How community connections (or social relations) are formed will differ based on "distinctive cultures, languages, and kinship networks" (Garcia et al., 2019, p. 54). I question if the level to which people feel socially connected to their community is also uneven as a result of their connectedness (or lack thereof) to community history, length of time living in the community, as well as subjective and relative distance to green and public 'third places'.

The Social Development Plan strives to "bind the neighbourhood and community together" through the improvement, maintenance, and development of local common spaces (Toronto, 2012a, p. iii). In the absence of having balconies and/or "indoor spaces where people can congregate or spaces that are accessible", a resident explained that "outdoor spaces become very meaningful". For example, they are places for inter-ethnic interaction to occur between residents that may have otherwise not transpired in more formal settings (Cattell et al., 2008). People deliberately use green and public spaces when social interaction is the underlying goal.

The planned 'Commons' in the new Lawrence Heights is an attempt to create a central hub and community meeting place for everyone, a TCHC representative noted. Section 2.1.2 of the Lawrence-Allen Secondary Plan outlines that the Community Commons is a social and physical connection point which will improve the pedestrian realm and resident access to community services and facilities, schools, local retailers and outdoor recreational programming (Toronto, Staff Report, June 2010; Toronto, 2011b). Section 6.1.2 provides action items related to community hubs.

This chapter drew on scholarship and my research in Lawrence Heights to explore the meaning that individuals and communities ascribe to their green and public spaces based on their affective and aesthetic experiences. I have exhibited that the importance of socio-natures and biophilia to communities is supported by public health literature on the psychological and physiological benefits of green and public spaces. I have shown how green and public spaces bring communities together in formal and informal ways. The idea of community connections, as co-developed by the City of Toronto and Lawrence Heights, is inclusive of the ideas in this chapter and is a good place to start thinking about how community connections should guide planning.

4   The Role of Planning and Design in Shaping Green and Public Spaces

Planning practice is a set of processes, tools, guidelines, and policies that guide decisions related to land use and development. Planners offer expertise to improve social and environmental inequalities at different spatial scales. For this reason, an intersectional approach is vital, with interdisciplinary collaboration to be promoted at all levels—from the community to government departments. Green and public spaces are the products of these decisions and are deeply embedded in real and constructed social and historical processes (Beebeejaun, 2017). The goals and objectives of interdisciplinary efforts should respond to systemic inequities to achieve "greater rights to the city and socio-spatial justice for minoritized people" (Irazàbel and Huerta, 2016, p. 725, as cited in Beebeejaun, 2017, p. 324). Through any planning and design process, we must preserve and have regard for "the quality of the natural

environment; the importance of historical features of the community; the needs and concerns of women; and the increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of the population" (Hodge and Gordon, 2014, p. 148).

While Chapter 3 focused on the importance of green and public spaces more conceptually and the meaningful ways in which these spaces bring communities together, Chapter 4 will describe how planning and design addresses these considerations. In this chapter, I draw upon the literature and feel that much of the discussion exhibits a more conventional and professional approach to planning. However, I also highlight areas where contemporary and community-based planning efforts can be adopted. Urban environmental design is a core component to this chapter, with emphasis on seven areas which I believe are necessary for planners to be knowledgeable of, or rather, incorporate into their work. Based on my review of literature and experiences in Lawrence Heights, these urban environmental design considerations are continuously deliberated in the context of community health, safety and well-being linked to green and public spaces.

4.1   Urban Environmental Design

Urban environmental design is a conscious attempt to reintegrate and interconnect nature and the city through landscapes and infrastructure (Eisenman, 2013). Urban environmental design is an umbrella term that encompasses design approaches concerned with urban ecology, biophilia, safety, affect, natural aesthetics and environmental justice, amongst many others. Good design can improve access, functionality, and use for humans and urban ecologies. While the 'environment' is commonly understood as "a place where people live, work, learn, and play" (Anguelovski, 2013, p. 162), the Institute of Medicine argues that "the 'environment' should be understood as the interplay between ecological (biological), physical (natural and built), social, political, aesthetic, and economic environments" (Corburn, 2012, p. 541).

Urban environmental design deliberately strives to address challenges imposed by previous failed planning efforts and to alleviate various pressures, especially those related to human-dominated land uses which have disturbed and fragmented habitats (Kowarik and von der Lippe, 2018). Urban environmental design through urban ecological approaches looks closely at how urban ecology and its ecological integrity can be restored and enhanced as well as produce socio-ecological benefits, including improved human health and well-being (Jennings et al., 2017).

Urban environmental design significantly influences the quality of green and public spaces, which is "perceived to be a measure of the quality of urban life" (Cattell et al., 2018, p. 544). As stated by CABE (2008):

> The quality of buildings and spaces has a strong influence on the quality of people's lives. Decisions about the design, planning and management of places can enhance or restrict a sense of belonging. They can increase or reduce feelings of security, stretch or limit boundaries, promote or reduce mobility, and improve or damage health. They can remove real and imagined barriers between communities and foster understanding and generosity of spirit.

In the subsequent sections, I discuss the urban environmental design approaches that take up the ideas in Chapter 3 regarding the benefit and importance of green and public spaces. Through my review of the literature, I came to understand that good design is discussed in many different ways, depending upon the goals and ideologies of designers. I have identified a list of design approaches, which I believe provide a comprehensive perspective on how practitioners design green and public spaces. These include: biophilic design, ecological design, design for community well-being, regard for sensory information, design for real and perceived safety, environmental justice, and finally, connectivity, mobility and accessibility.

4.1.1   Biophilic Design

Planners, urban environmental designers, and architects have embraced biophilia as an approach to improving the urban public realm (Beatley and Newman, 2013). Biophilic designs include green and natural elements that effectively consider the building, site, city, and regional scales that are being designed for and within (refer to Table 1) (Beatley and Newman, 2013). Biophilic designs promote and embrace the interrelated and dynamic human-nature relationship—that is, socio-natures. Design and planning efforts can produce pleasant urban environments through biophilic designs. These contain natural elements and conditions which inspire or improve people's relationship with nature (Beatley and Newman, 2013). Creative planning processes that embrace biophilic designs will enhance aesthetic and affective experiences as well as heighten community character, sense of pride, and attachment (Beatley and Newman, 2013).

Through my experiences in Lawrence Heights, I could see that many residents are closely connected to and dependent on nature. They are knowledgeable and passionate about protecting and enriching species diversity and their natural environment (Gladki et al., 2015). A resident confirmed this, saying that "[t]rees actually help control [the] animal population, people don't realize that". While some studies state

that disadvantaged communities may be less biodiverse in terms of plant species and vegetation richness or abundance, they fail to acknowledge the capacity, resiliency and biophilic attributes of said communities (Jennings et al., 2017).

Table 1: Biophilic Design Approaches (Beatley and Newman, 2013)

Scales	Biophilic Design Approaches
Building	Rooftop garden; green roof; green walls; green courtyards; buildings that mimic the shapes/ forms of nature
Block	Clustered housing around green areas; native species yards and spaces; green streets; urban trees
Street	Low impact development (LID); edible landscaping
Neighbourhood	Urban forests; ecology parks; community gardens; neighbourhood parks/ pocket parks
Community	Green schools; city tree canopy; community forest/ orchards; greening utility corridors
Region	Regional greenspace systems; greening major transport corridors

Many individuals experience the psychological and physiological health benefits of biophilic designs integrated with living and working environments. This includes designs that effectively incorporate greenery and natural elements, such as natural sunlight and fresh air (Beatley and Newman, 2013). Kuo and Sullivan (2001) discovered that when social housing exhibits more greenery and nature, there are lower levels of crime, violence, and aggression. Aligning with the biophilic city concept, "[u]rban environments that are greener, more *nature-full*, will attract greater interest by residents and help to strengthen emotional bonds to place and community, in turn increasing urban resilience" (Beatley and Newman, 2013, p. 3335). This is especially true of green and public spaces that communities perceive as "special and distinct" (Beatley and Newman, 2013, p. 3335). An example of where this has occurred in Lawrence Heights is the orchard along the Lotherton Pathway, where seventy-five fruit trees were planted. The biophilic design at the community scale (see Table 1) illuminates the human-nature relationship and the local community's awareness of the ecosystem services provided by green and public spaces. Vegetated streetscapes, such as an orchard, enhance environmental justice in urban peripheries as they provide more access to greenery for those who lack access to traditional green spaces like parks (Eisenman, 2013). They are also an avenue for local food production, whereby communities can respond to food insecurities.

Biophilic and ecological design approaches are similar in that they vary by size, shape, greenness, appearance, functionality, use and respective socialization, urban health and well-being benefits. Some planners will prefer one size and application method, for instance, while others might opt for another. Notwithstanding, I believe biophilic attributes in our built and natural environments can restore urban ecologies as well as produce more attractive places that promote restorative healing for humans, from improved cognitive functioning to stress reduction (Ulrich, 1993).

4.1.2   Ecological Design

We are witnessing a decline in habitats and biodiversity as ecosystems are destroyed by urban growth and human dominance. This is an area of concern for many residents in Lawrence Heights, demonstrating that knowledge of biophilic and ecological design approaches should be integral to planning and design. Greater emphasis on coexistence, balance, and spatial connections is imperative to improve connectivity between habitat patches in built environments (Barghjelveh et al., 2015). To start, humans need to learn how to coexist and welcome "nonhuman knowledgeabilities" (Hinchliffe et al., 2005, p. 653). As our understanding of urban ecology continuously evolves, our ecological design approaches and principles must be reflective of that.

Ecosystem services support the ecological integrity and public health of cities, especially in urban areas faced with urban ills such as increased noise and air pollution (Wolch et al., 2014). Ecosystem services and the social determinants of health are subject to social contexts at the household, neighbourhood, and city scales as well as natural and built environments more broadly (Jennings et al., 2017). Ecosystem services are relevant to my research as they directly correlate with human health and well-being. There are four types of ecosystem services. First are provisioning services such as water, food, and clean air that are produced through ecosystem functions, natural resources, plant and animal materials (Jennings et al., 2017). Provisioning services are very important in communities like Lawrence Heights which face challenges related to food security due to the lack of affordable healthy food options within walking distance. Many residents rely on community gardens that offer food provisioning services. Second is regulating services. This includes water purification, climate regulation, and pollination for food production (Jennings et al., 2017). Third is cultural services, which includes the non-material benefits that nature offers such as passive and active recreation, aesthetic and spiritual experiences, as well as "the economic benefits generated from people visiting green spaces" (Jennings et al., 2017, p. 73). Cultural services are very relevant when assessing how to program green and public spaces. Lastly are supporting services such as nutrient cycling, photosynthesis, and soil formation, which are imperative to sustain the accompanying ecosystem services and functions (Jennings et al., 2017). The equitable integration of

ecosystem services and the biophilic city approach can alleviate disparities in obtaining ecosystem services attributed to green and public spaces (Jennings et al., 2017). Understanding this is a key factor to achieving environmental justice, which is discussed in Section 4.1.6, as it reduces the social and environmental inequities that impact human health and well-being.

Biodiversity is a significant component to ecological design. Thinking about how to enhance biodiversity and conservation of natural resources, a resident wrote down the following to illustrate their thoughts: sunflowers; milkweed; hummingbirds, butterflies and bees; greenhouses; vertical gardens – aquaponics and hydroponics; food security, locally grown and used; pollinator gardens that use plants and flowers indigenous to the area. This demonstrates the knowledge and interest residents have regarding biodiversity and ecology. In this case, I would suggest that improving biodiversity does not always have to be the responsibility of planners and designers. It may be more advantageous for planners to embrace local knowledge and empower residents to contribute to the perceived and/or actual levels of neighbourhood biodiversity. This could augment the psychological benefits of green and public spaces (Jennings et al., 2017, p. 73).

As mentioned in Section 3.3 on aesthetic and effective experiences, different ideologies of nature-making and socio-cultural dimensions influence what is perceived as good or attractive ecological design. Although some green spaces are perceived as more attractive than others, both managed and unmanaged urban green spaces positively effect human well-being and contribute to urban ecology (Jennings et al., 2017). In Lawrence Heights, residents are dedicated to preserving and expanding local tree canopy (Gladki et al., 2015). This would be considered good ecological design to the community. Higher percentages of tree canopy are more likely to create conditions, such as sound buffers, that encourage outdoor activities and produce greater ecological benefits (Beatley and Newman, 2013). The latter includes filtering air pollution, cooling temperatures, reducing urban flooding, and providing shade (Beatley and Newman, 2013).

Improving environmental quality through ecological design can be achieved by increasing the number of trees that line streets as well as exploring the adaptive re-use, retrofit, and animation of existing urban infrastructure such as utility corridors, remediated brownfields, rail corridors, alleys, and decrepit green spaces (Wolch et al., 2014). These also become new spaces that can be programmed, used, and animated by communities and are beneficial to human health and well-being. Ecological design approaches do not always have to be large-scale to be beneficial for urban health and well-being. Variation and integration of "eye-level green", "green ground cover", and "tree canopy" can not only enhance urban ecologies but

have also shown to improve perceived suitability for socialization in green and public spaces (Peschardt et al., 2016, p. 80).

Another component to ecological design is green infrastructure (GI). GI naturalizes urban environments and is a local and global "interconnected network of green space that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions and provides associated benefits to human populations" (Jennings et al., 2017, p. 72). There are economic, ecological, and social benefits, such as reduced urban heat island; improved pollinator habitat, human health, and quality of life; and more attractive and liveable streetscapes (TRCA, 2016). Environmental justice and the respective human health benefits can be evaluated by assessing the overall "*presence* of, *access*, and *exposure* to, GI" (Jennings et al., 2017, p. 74). Green infrastructure can improve connectivity between habitat patches in built environments through the integration and presence of greenways, nature reserves, or other movement corridors (Katti and Garcia, 2015). These are places where both animals and humans can take refuge from the demanding characteristics of urban landscapes that affect well-being, such as sound, density, development and traffic (Katti and Garcia, 2015).

Robust urban environmental design principles and ecological design approaches can reduce the impact that increased density has on a neighbourhood's urban ecology, especially in heavily urbanized landscapes (Niemela, 1999). To better understand the connection between urban ecosystems and public health, "the next horizon for urban ecology requires an understanding of the interrelated elements of cities including green and gray infrastructure, society, human behavior, and the array of stakeholders that would collaborate in this effort" (Jennings et al., 2017, p. 73). Ecological design approaches can help meet the needs of current and future generations and the environment, creating thriving and lively cities.

While there is a unique attempt to try to avoid displacement with revitalization in Lawrence Heights, a concern about ecological design is the fear that improving green spaces will encourage gentrification, including environmental gentrification. The latter frequently entails investing in greening and environmental improvements in disinvested and derelict areas (Maantay and Maroko, 2018). It is often not until visible public investment and redevelopment in an area initially occur, that environmental gentrification follows as a desirable option (Maantay and Maroko, 2018).

4.1.3   Design for Community Well-being

A large portion of my research stems from the notion that well-being should be at the forefront of planning practices as it is essential for the vitality of humans and the environment. The Community Wellbeing Framework developed by The Conference Board of Canada and DIALOG is very relevant to

this area of research as it offers practical approaches to help practitioners create built environments that foster community well-being (Markovich et al., 2018). As per the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW), well-being refers to:

> The presence of the highest possible quality of life in its full breadth of expression focused on but not necessarily exclusive to: good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populace, balanced time use, high levels of democratic participation, and access to and participation in leisure and culture. (Markovich et al., 2018, p. 12)

Compared to the definition of well-being referring to "positive health" in Section 3.4, I appreciate that CIW's definition concerns the environment and communities, which are both issues for planning.

The Community Wellbeing Framework (see Appendix E) identifies five domains that exist at the scale of the neighbourhood/region, building/site, and interior/exterior spaces (Markovich et al., 2018). Indicators and metrics assist with defining, evaluating, and addressing each domain through design. While the five domains are interconnected and can be applied to Lawrence Heights, the social, environmental, cultural, and political domains are particularly relevant to my research.

Practitioners should further consider how to improve direct *and* passive access to green and public spaces. Residents who participated in the first knowledge exchange confirmed the importance of the welcoming and delight and enjoyment indicators (see Appendix E). They stated that they value clear sightlines and buildings that do not obstruct sunlight, as well as being able to view the outdoors from inside their homes and other buildings. A resident recalled their experience living in an apartment that overlooked a courtyard: "it was so beautiful…it was an extension of the home". In contrast, residents expressed displeasure when they saw other buildings and high-rises from their balconies and windows. "It doesn't help with your well-being", they explained. Built structures should be designed, sited, and oriented to maximize people's "direct physical and visual connections to the public realm"—especially in places where one cannot actively use and/or access green or public spaces (see Appendix E: welcoming; delight and enjoyment indicators) (Markovich et al., 2018, p. 47). It is important to maximize physical and visual connections to nature in residential, commercial, employment and institutional settings, especially in spaces that people are in for more than four hours per day (Bronicheski and Gilbert, 2016; Markovich et al., 2018). This includes increased access to sunlight, fresh air, grass, and plants.

Biophilic and ecological design contribute to designs for community well-being. For instance, how these design approaches are implemented can discourage or incite socialization, play, and cultural vitality (indicators in Appendix E).

When addressing community well-being, I encourage planners to reflect upon Montgomery's (2013, p. 42) question: "How would we build differently, and live differently, if we could chart the connection between the designs of our cities and the map of happiness?".

4.1.4   Regard for Sensory Information

To create diverse spaces that meet subjective and objective needs and interests, green and public space design and planning should deliberately integrate visual, symbolic, audible, olfactory, and tactile information and stimulation (Bronicheski and Gilbert, 2016). Sensory information enables users to be engaged and aware of their direct external social and physical surroundings (Anderson et al., 2017). This might be achieved through designs that promote opportunities for passive activities, such as bird or people watching and listening to the trees blow in the wind (Anderson et al., 2017). Regard for sensory information in design is closely linked to the earlier discussion in Section 3.3 on aesthetic and affective experiences. Whether man-made or natural, the tactile social and physical features of spaces can individually or collectively stimulate people through vision, taste, smell, sound, and touch—invoking aesthetic and affective responses (Ulrich, 1983). People require and desire different forms of sensory stimulation. Some users place greater value on the tacit features—the emotive and subjective qualities— of green and public spaces, while others value the objective physical attributes (Francis et al., 2012).

Understanding the context and needs of the community and intended user groups is imperative to successful urban environmental design. In terms of visual and symbolic information, for example, urban planner Miriam Bart recommends planners learn about the local colour affiliations at an individual and neighbourhood level to ensure that green and public spaces are not created in poor taste. Democratic planning and design processes can reveal cultural design practices and cross-cultural aesthetic preferences which help to produce more inclusive spaces that evoke positive visual, symbolic, audible, olfactory, and tactile stimulation (CABE, 2008).

Regard for sensory information and stimulation is critical as they fundamentally drive people to make meaning in spaces—to experience biophilia, socio-natures and affect. People distinctively experience the world through their senses.

4.1.5   Real and Perceived Safety

The real and perceived safety of urban green and public spaces varies among actual and potential users
(Jennings et al., 2017). When engaging with residents in (re)developing neighbourhoods, designers
should consider three predominant concepts related to safety. As per Newman's (1972) work on
defensible space, which I believe are still very relevant today, these include:

> *Territoriality,* the subdivision of communal space (by real and symbolic barriers) to encourage
> residents to take proprietorial responsibility for it; *natural surveillance*, by positioning windows
> to maximize residents' observation and therefore control of public areas; and *location,* siting
> residential projects to face onto areas of the city perceived as safe, such as busy roads. (Valentine,
> 1990, p. 289)

Informal social control, or natural surveillance, can create a shared sense of responsibility and enhances
one's perceived sense of neighbourhood safety and comfort when using these spaces (Valentine, 1990).

The current fragmented spatial organization of Lawrence Heights has produced a neighbourhood that is
relatively "hidden from public view", causing unsolicited activities to go unnoticed (Toronto, 2012a, p.
15). Augmenting this issue are the fencing and walls that enclose the social housing. Jane Jacobs
advocated for the "effective demarcation between private and public spaces" and the creation of
communal areas that permit natural surveillance in response to planners' "hatred of the streets" (Jacobs,
[1961] 1992, pp. 40, 79). In the case of Lawrence Heights, some residents support natural surveillance
and inward-oriented residential blocks while others do not. One of the key design principles of New
Urbanism is to "improve safety in public housing by creating 'defensible space' and putting 'eyes on the
street'" (Jacobs, 1961, as cited in August, 2014, p. 1161). The concept of defensible space is also used in
the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) approach, which materialized because of
Oscar Newman's work on defensible space (Garcia et al., 2019). CPTED is a more comprehensive and
environmental approach "to creating safe communities that combines design, management, and uses of
the built environment" (Garcia et al., 2019, p. 107). It pays close attention to the needs of users,
anticipated uses and predicted behaviours (Toronto Police Service, n.d.).

However, CPTED approaches and the concept of defensible space are contested within and between
neighbourhoods, as well as for vulnerable groups and marginalized neighbourhoods susceptible to
criminalization. This exacerbates environmental injustices. Public spaces are increasingly policed through
design measures like amplified lighting and video-surveillance in anticipation of behaviours deemed

unacceptable (Valentine, 1990). Some adults in Lawrence Heights believe that improved street lightening could mitigate perceptions of fear and reduce crime-related activities, though they also acknowledge that there are youth in the community who feel differently—that improved lighting brings unnecessary attention. "Cameras can monitor courtyards. Inward-facing buildings

Figure 3: Interior courtyard of TCH in Neptune. (Photo Credit: Rinaldi, February 2020)

to courtyards are good for security but some tenants feel courtyards are a breach of privacy", a resident shared. Residents explained that inward-facing buildings are safer in troublesome communities that experience drive-by shootings, for instance. People often feel safer to sit in and use open spaces that have physically defined perimeters (Peschardt et al., 2016).

With women being a vulnerable group, poorly designed spaces can incite fear in them and threaten their overall sense of security and personal safety. Women are hyperaware and judgemental of their safety in unfamiliar environments "based on the preconceived images she holds about that area and its occupants, as well as from cues she receives about social behaviour from the actual physical surroundings" (Valentine, 1990, p. 297). Spaces that evoke feelings of vulnerability, fear of attack, crime, and harassment cultivate apprehension and reduce their inclination to use these spaces (Valentine, 1990). In Lawrence Heights, women were very involved in design discussions, where safety was a priority for them.

This section reveals that the social and physical characteristics of green and public spaces can influence the level to which one feels safe and comfortable using and making meaning in them.

4.1.6 Environmental Justice

Social and environmental justice has been a central focus of my research interests. I cannot advocate for animated green and public spaces if I am not also advocating for them and their respective benefits to be equitably distributed and experienced. Environmental justice is a framework that places central focus on socio-spatial justice, particularly "distributive, procedural, and corrective justice concerns" (Anguelovski, 2013; Corburn, 2012, p. 541). Environmental justice emerged as a social movement responding to environmental racism, that of which compounds social inequities and has historically been disproportionately experienced by people of colour (Anguelovski, 2013).

Socioeconomic disparities, land costs, community engagement goals (or lack thereof), uneven power relations, and racial formations have historically informed spatial planning policies (Byrne and Wolch, 2009). Through an environmental justice lens—and particularly a distributive justice lens—we can critically analyze the uneven distribution of high-quality public and green spaces (Wolch et al., 2005). In many North American cities, larger parks and public green spaces are predominantly located in White neighbourhoods compared to neighbourhoods comprising of "lower socio-economic status and non-White" groups (Jennings et al., 2017, p. 75). As Garcia et al. (2019, p. 18) note, "[c]ommunities of colo[u]r experience a host of social and spatial disparities, such as more environmental hazards, poorer upkeep of public spaces and roads, and fewer amenities and services, such as access to high-quality grocery stores". Deprived neighbourhoods, such as low-income and minority communities, disproportionately experience the adverse health effects attributed to the inequitable distribution of high-quality green and public spaces and environmental amenities. They are more exposed to environmental hazards, including air pollutants associated with the high automobile congestion linked to proximate freeways and rail corridors (Wolch et al., 2014).

Expanding on the previous discussion on socio-cultures in Section 3.3, uneven power hierarchies attributed to socio-cultural, socio-ecological, and ethno-racial relations deeply implicate people's access and use of various culture natures (Byrne and Wolch, 2009). This intensifies environmental injustices by producing binary spaces of inclusion and exclusion, cohesion and division, negative and positive engagement (Cattell et al., 2008). The criminalization of specific outdoor activities and anxieties regarding the safety of green and public spaces not only deprives particular groups of accessing them but also contributes to nature deficit disorder, a phenomenon identified by Richard Louv (Beatley and Newman, 2013). Supporting this point, resident Kaydeen recalled many green and public spaces that were previously unused, uncared for, and ignored by City processes. But when the City does pay more attention to these spaces, Kaydeen noticed that they become increasingly policed, secured, and locked up. Kaydeen articulated that people will use spaces—that are often underused—as needed, whether it be to garden, socialize or play. "Eventually it gets determined whether those types of activities are appropriate or not, after people have already been there", she noted. Surveillance and other various tactics are used to help control crime and deter unwanted activities and user groups (Kipfer and Keil, 2002). Excluding specific people or groups from particular spaces that they identify with maintains visible power imbalances and injustices.

Accessibility is thus another key aspect of environmental justice, which will be further discussed in the subsequent section. Inclusive programming, planning, design, and management produce green and public spaces that are more accessible, welcoming, reflective of the local community, and equitable in terms of

human health and well-being benefits (CABE, 2008). In advance of revitalization, residents communicated that they would like "public spaces and parks that are accessible to all people, from children to seniors, and assurances that they would not be priced out of the neighbourhood" (Kurek, 2019). I see accessibility as an important part of designing for environmental justice; it is fundamental to the ability of communities to animate green and public spaces.

4.1.7 Connectivity, Mobility, and Accessibility

Green and public spaces are essential everyday spaces through which people travel. Connectivity, mobility, and accessibility are critical design components of successful green and public spaces and public space systems that support formal and informal activities and routines. Lawrence Heights' inward-facing built environment and its unpleasant pedestrian realm along public streets has made it difficult and undesirable for cyclists and pedestrians to access and use many green and public spaces (Toronto, 2010a, p. 57). A comprehensive understanding of green and public space connectivity, mobility and accessibility are essential to alleviate adverse effects on the environment and human well-being, especially in urban areas.

In the context of my research, connectivity pertains to the physical connections between green and public spaces and the broader community. Mobility interrelates with a neighbourhood's build and social infrastructure, where the analysis of mobility places high regard for the multiple modes of transportation and people's travel patterns; how they might walk, bike, drive—how they move. Mobility assesses people's social and physical needs and abilities to understand the opportunities and limitations associated with connectivity, integration and circulation (Toronto, 2010). Accessibility refers to the degree of difficulty associated with accessing a green and public space. Accessibility considers the social and physical opportunities and barriers that effect passive and direct access to these spaces. I will provide brief examples of current challenges in Lawrence Heights as well as potential approaches that can mitigate the effects of these challenges.

Through my research, I found that the informal circulation patterns of local communities are often overlooked. In Lawrence Heights, people have established alternate and informal circulation routes due to the lack of physical connectivity imposed by the built environment. Its ring roads and lack of direct routes increase travel distance and time while physical barriers like fences and construction hoarding obstruct pedestrian routes to locations like Lawrence Square Mall and Yorkdale Mall. Consequently, undefined paths have been formed beyond the existing sidewalks; there is a pathway through a fence along Varna Drive and there are shortcuts through courtyard gates to allow travel along the interior instead of on main

roads (Gladki et al., 2015). Revitalization has compounded connectivity challenges, as these informal shortcuts are increasingly obstructed or removed. This effects residents' daily lives. For instance, Kaydeen explained that people who use the food bank have been severely impacted and can no longer safely access it, as all of the internal pathways have been closed due to disruptions related to construction. When planners are unaware of informal circulation patterns, residents' accessibility, connectivity and mobility are all affected, and thus their well-being and safety. Design that addresses these three considerations would achieve the support systems indicator (see Appendix E) by improving access to necessities, supportive facilities, services and amenities at different scales (Markovich et al., 2018). This also alleviates physical and predisposed psychological barriers (Toronto, 2010a),

Access and accessibility are key components that enable or inhibit communities from using and animating their green and public spaces. Resident Kaydeen explained that TCHC residents have historically encountered many bureaucracies and challenges discerning the difference between city-owned and TCHC-owned spaces. Kaydeen anticipates that the transition to a mixed-income neighbourhood will exacerbate this problem as there will be "another population of people with its own set of rules and expectations". How residents use and animate TCHC spaces have been made unattainable, inaccessible or restricted. "I think that yes, people can animate spaces – and they do largely – I've seen it happen. But what competes with that are rules that are often exclusionary", Kaydeen explained.

Privately-Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces (POPS) introduce additional challenges with navigating the ability to access, use and animate public and green spaces. There are nuances attributed to POPS. Public use is welcome until behaviours deemed unacceptable result in confrontations with private security and defensive control measures. For instance, the newly developed condominium at 160 Flemington Road has

a POPS that is accompanied by a plaque, which indicates that the space is available for enjoyment but to also respect others' uses and City by-laws. The fine line between public and private spaces makes it increasingly difficult for the broader community to equitably enjoy and animate their green and public spaces because they are made

Figure 4: New POPS at 160 Flemington Road. (Photo Credit: Rinaldi, March 2020)

inaccessible to specific programming, activities and user groups. Community fragmentation may occur as a result of the transition to becoming a mixed-income neighbourhood with an influx in privately-owned spaces (e.g. condominium amenities). POPS can reduce residents' use of external community green and public spaces and consequently, compromise the size and quality of social networks in the broader community. To encourage interaction between market residents and tenants, I would argue that green and

public space networks should facilitate social connections *between* new developments. This could be achieved through social programming or physical infrastructure that integrates "private residential space with surrounding public space" to improve connectivity between market, rental and TCH residents (Talen, 2000, p. 173).

There are, however, best practices, policies and recommendations which can improve connectivity, mobility and accessibility. For instance, sustainable and integrated active transportation networks can further develop connections between people and green and public spaces; increase pedestrian use of these spaces; as well as support active lifestyles and related health benefits (see Appendix E: mobility indicator) (TRCA, 2014; Markovich et al., 2018). To do so, the City of Toronto Official Plan (2019, 2–4) advocates improved bikeway networks, sidewalks, pathway and trail systems, and the use of hydro corridors for bikeways and walkways in identified growth areas. Similarly, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) encourages developing a connected system and larger green space network within the GGH that comprises of publicly-accessible parkland, open space, trails and shoreline areas, including a trail through Lawrence Heights (OMMAH, 2019). The proposed north-south Greenway in the new Lawrence Heights will encompass a 10-metre wide linear park and trail; it exemplifies how planners have sought to improve green and public space connectivity within and beyond the neighbourhood for both pedestrians and cyclists (Toronto, 2011c).

A new public street network and hierarchy of major, primary and local streets could improve green and public space access, convenience, mobility, and connectivity for all users (Toronto, 2012a). The pathways in Lawrence Heights enable pedestrians and cyclists to more conveniently travel between streets and streets with dead ends. Visual and physical permeability enables people "to both move through an environment and see the routes available to them" (Francis et al., 2012, p. 407). Well-designed and well-managed green and public spaces can more effectively serve as primary connectors for movement within and between neighbourhoods (CABE, 2008).

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) (2014, p. 44) encourages planners to adopt a "complete streets" approach, where streets are designed to become desirable, safe, and enjoyable places for all street activities, ages, abilities, road users and modes of travel (Toronto, 2019, p. 3-3). Complete streets and communities similarly comprise "economically vibrant" public open spaces that support sustainable development and "connect people and places" (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 3-3). Similarly, the 'woonerf' concept in the Netherlands is regarded as social public spaces where pedestrians, cyclists and cars can safely and comfortably coexist—they are "living streets" and "encounter zones" (Sunday, 2017; Sauter and Huettenmoser, 2008, p. 79). These design approaches provide added outdoor space for various

activities including community engagement and community-based planning efforts that would further animate the community. They are also options that could be adopted in places like Lawrence Heights, where residents would like to see bicycles better separated from other uses—both within and beyond their approximate nine kilometres of existing bike lanes and paths (Toronto, 2018b). "I was shocked when I came here", a participant noted of their experience moving from northern Europe to Toronto. "I don't bike anymore but it's very important to me health-wise—it affects my health positively". Adopting multi-modal complete street designs aligns with Larco's (2016) sustainable urban design framework matrix, as active means of transportation, improved safety and walkability can be achieved whilst embracing biophilic city designs (Roseland, 2012).

Where possible, urban design interventions for green and public spaces should be small-scale and scattered throughout a community, as opposed to having fewer larger spaces where resources are notably concentrated geographically (Wolch et al., 2014, p. 241). This idea enhances previous discussions on environmental justice and connects to Jane Jacobs' (1992, p. 95) critique where she asked, "why are there so often no people where the parks are and no parks where the people are?". In my opinion, it is because distance and timed distance inaccurately depict how accessible these spaces are (Wolch et al., 2005). Physical proximity to green and public spaces does not equate to accessibility. There are additional barriers that impact access and usage including real and perceived user safety, mobility and time constraints, traffic pressures, distance, insufficient public transit routes, human congestion and overcapacity (Toronto, 2017b). A resident explained that although Toronto comprises many parkettes, there are still obstacles to accessing them. They suggested that if they are not accessible by transit then they should be within walking distance, "no further than a block or two". Wolch et al. (2005) regard an "accessible" park, or park edge, in Los Angeles as one that is less than half a kilometre away from a resident's home. During an interview with a Toronto Community Housing representative, they noted that the planned green space network in the revitalized Lawrence Heights will encompass a more equitable distribution and hierarchy of public green spaces.

The integration of accessibility standards, or lack thereof, also impacts green and public space access. Residents referred to the inadequate provision of accessibility measures, such as ramps and curb cuts. Inclusive, safe, age-friendly, practical, and barrier-free designs ensure spaces can be easily used and accessed with dignity and meet everyone's needs—that people feel respected, comfortable and welcomed in them (CABE, 2008). Complying with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), can assist with this. Consideration for the needs of vulnerable groups (e.g. women, parents, seniors, those with disabilities) is also important as they often depend more heavily on resources, amenities and community spaces within proximity and walking distance to their home (Engel et al., 2016). The Toronto

(2017) Parks Classification System provides further guidance on the planning and design measures required to ensure adequate park access and connections based on the five distinguished park types in the City. Chapter 6, particularly Sections 6.1.3 and 6.3, offer key insights related to this section.

4.2   Placemaking as a Deliberate Process

Placemaking refers to "the deliberate shaping of an environment to facilitate social interaction and improve a community's quality of life" (Silberberg and Lorah, 2013, as cited in Garcia et al., 2019, p. 107). Placemaking can animate the public realm and enrich liveability. It is a way in which individuals, cities and towns can respond to "concerns about healthy living, social justice, community capacity-building, economic revitalization, childhood development, and a host of other issues facing residents, workers, and visitors" (Silberberg and Lorah, 2013, as cited in Garcia et al., 2019, p. 107).

As per the Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan, placemaking entails physical and social components that welcome "vibrant public activity" and "provide the setting for civic life and social interaction among residents" (Toronto, 2010, p. 2). The physical components that shape the public realm include buildings, public spaces and natural landscapes (Toronto, 2010). Social components include social cohesion, histories, memories, sense of connection and identity (Toronto, 2010). The social and physical components of placemaking collectively contribute to a community's local character, public safety, attractiveness and overall capacity (Toronto, 2010). Project for Public Spaces (n.d., p. 1) articulates that placemaking can be most impactful in the following areas: "equity & inclusion; streets as places; architecture of place; innovation hubs; market cities; place governance; sustainability & resilience; rural communities; creative placemaking; and health". Often times, emotions, environmental psychology, cultural literacy, artistic thinking, and diversity are overlooked in city making (Landry, 2012). Instead, they should be deliberately integrated with the urban fabric as they contribute to placemaking.

Because placemaking is a deliberate approach to managing change in a neighbourhood, politics are also deeply embedded. The planning and design of green and public spaces and the placemaking that occurs within them can be regarded as an outcome of processes that "(1) involve the use or abuse of power, (2) respond to or resist market forces, (3) work to empower certain groups and disempower others, and (4) promote multiparty consensual decision-making" (Corburn, 2012, p. 543), therefore conflicts arise over the meaning of place. Placemaking may not always be socially and environmentally just due to conflicting objectives between the state, private-sector and local communities (Corburn, 2012).

Placemaking efforts can contribute to the "growing aesthetization of urban space" as well as the "culturization of economic development" (Kipfer and Keil, 2002, p. 243). The attractiveness and economic development linked to placemaking—as exhibited through the introduction and exclusive allure of POPS, for example—may encourage the "militarization of urban space" and amplify environmental injustices (Kipfer and Keil, 2002, p. 244). In response, I think it is crucial to consider Henri Lefebvre's 1968 concept of "right to the city", a neo-Lefebvrian discourse that advocates the reclamation and co-creation of urban spaces, especially those that have been disconnected, criminalized, exclusionary and securitized (Beebeejaun, 2017, p. 324).

How, then, can communities become more involved in placemaking discussions and efforts?

5   Lawrence Heights Sets an Example

While Chapter 4 offers important ideas to consider and apply to planning and design processes, it is also worthwhile to explore a few of the exceptional spatial and social (un)programming examples in Lawrence Heights' green and public spaces that emerged through community efforts and resident experiences. Lawrence Heights successfully demonstrates how green and public space programming can support community priorities and interests, including enhanced social relations and well-being. The following examples heightened my interest in this area of research and support the subsequent discussions in Chapter 6.

The contested spatial organization of Lawrence Heights has created unique opportunities for social and physical activity. The residential courts enclosed by housing have produced micro-neighbourhoods and interior spaces that have become vital for daily interactions and physical activity among children, youth and adults (Gladki et al., 2015). The courts are used as a setting for community engagement and reoccurring community events (social programming) such as summer barbeques, block parties, movie nights, and ice cream socials. The latter are also used as an opportunity for TCHC and local stakeholders to inform and update residents on various subjects, such as revitalization.

In 2012/2013 an outdoor stage (see Figure 5) was built in a previously underutilized green space, adjacent to Flemington Road and TCHC housing. It encompasses bleachers for seating and vibrant public art, which wraps the concrete retaining wall along Flemington Road that encloses the space.

Figure 5: Outdoor stage in Lawrence Heights. (Photo Credit: Rinaldi, March 2020)

This wall has been animated by residents and painted with artwork that highlights important local sites and services, community partners, common physical activities, and quotes including "perseverance until it happens". The stage serves as a 'third place' for the local community to host events, such as the annual Community Harvest Festival, the December Festival of Lights, Summer Thursdays, and open mic nights.

Figure 6: Pizza oven and greenhouse at 10 Old Meadow Lane. (Photo Credit: Rinaldi, March 2020)

10 Old Meadow Lane is a distinguished community meeting and gathering space—a 'third place'. While the interior of the building has provided space for events, gatherings, committee meetings and celebrations, the site's outdoor space has offered similar opportunities. The exterior contains seating, a pergola, raised planter boxes, gardens, picnic benches, a small greenhouse, a stone-constructed pizza oven and a community information board for postings. There have been many outdoor community events hosted here including Friday night pizza-making nights. 10 Old Meadow Lane validates how physical amenities and features can animate spaces and allure social opportunities, becoming spaces communities regularly make meaning in.

The outdoor space at the rear of John Polanyi Collegiate Institute has become a cherished community hub and "oasis" for residents. It encompasses a PACT Grow-to-Learn garden with art pieces, a skateboard park with lively illustrations, and a former track that residents enjoy walking. These spatial and social programming options promote social stability, equity (e.g. food security), culture, leisure and recreation (e.g. gardening, walking)—all of which are inherently linked to well-being. Kaydeen explained that community gardens promote cognitive stimulation and are "therapeutic and helpful for people working through different types of emotional stability". Adding to this, resident Margaret Jarvis explained that community gardens could provide food for many as "the high cost of fresh vegetables is a serious problem, especially for low-income families". Kaydeen explained that community gardens have "become a big piece of what it means to live, or be able to live, a healthy life in Lawrence Heights". Spatial and social programming that is conducive to well-being requires considering the met and unmet needs of people, such as those that are inherently social and emotional (Cattell et al., 2008).

In 2006, residents of Lawrence Heights came together to assemble and construct the "KaBoom!" playground in their neighbourhood—otherwise known by the community as the "Purple Park". Aligning with the play and affordability metrics (see Appendix E), KaBoom! (n.d.) is a non-profit organization that aims to "achieve playspace equity" in recognition that all kids should be allowed to "get the play they

need to thrive, regardless of race, zip code and family income". The non-profit believes that "a community that lacks access to quality playspaces also misses out on the chance to give kids the joys of childhood and the physical, emotional and social benefits of play" (KaBoom!, n.d.). This one-day event promoted community building and collective action. Approximately 100 community volunteers and hundreds of corporate employees came together to build this new playground in Lawrence Heights (City News Staff, 2006). Going forward, it will remain programmed green space and physical infrastructure that bolsters well-being for children and youth in the community.

Figure 7: "Love or Love" mural. (Photo Credit: Rinaldi, March 2020)

The dynamic public art in Lawrence Heights is palpable. Public art can tell stories, commemorate and contribute to a community's character, cultural diversity and vibrancy (Toronto, 2019). It can also highlight physical elements such as important sites and landmarks. Lawrence Heights features more than three large murals (e.g. *Love or Love*; *Deep Roots, Limitless Heights*) that portray the community's history, identity, stories and the lived experiences of residents (Gladki et al., 2015). Many small-scale murals have been created, including those on utility poles flanking streets, electrical boxes, exterior walls, bridge underpasses, and along pathways. Corresponding plaques accompany larger murals to convey the story behind the artwork and highlight community members who assisted with the project. According to the accompanying plaque, the "HOME" (see Figure 7) component of the larger mural at the Ranee Avenue underpass reflects "the community's ongoing relationships with place, family and belonging". Project coordinator Joshua Barndt explains that the underpass' *Love or Love* (see Figure 7) and *Limitless and Heights* murals pay homage to "young people in Lawrence Heights social housing" as it is a common saying they use, which reveals their "undying love for each other [and] limitless respect" (Sunshine, 2012).

The Lawrence Heights Community Centre portrays a notable exterior elucidating the community's "hard work, creativity and struggle…over the past six decades" (Gladki et al., 2015, p. 47). The *Deep History* mural piece (see Figure 8) on the building's exterior wall ties into the larger *Deep Roots, Limitless Heights* mural. It was completed by youth

Figure 8: Deep Roots, Limitless Heights mural. (Photo Credit: Rinaldi, March 2020)

in the community under the mentorship of professional artist Joshua Barndt and in partnership with a local non-profit called ArtStarts (Xhakollari, 2013). Michael Carty, youth resident and mural assistant,

highlighted the mural's meaning: "It means a lot, Deep Roots…Because the [community's] roots are deep and come from the ground up, you can't break a root. So we're trying to build something new and Limitless Heights shows that there is no limit. You can do anything you want to become in this life" (Xhakollari, 2013). The *Deep History* component of the larger mural exhibits a creative visual timeline that conveys the deep history of the community. It refers to development and construction; histories of violence and stigmatization; community development and mobilization. Some milestones in the mural include: in 9000 BCE people began to enter the area as ice sheets receded; in 1806-1814 an Irish settler acquired land and settled in the area; Lawrence Heights was built on land developed by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation between 1955-1962; homes in Lawrence Heights were completed in 1962; fiscal responsibility of public housing was downloaded from province to local municipalities in 1948; in 2005 Lawrence Heights was identified as a priority neighbourhood; in 2007 the Toronto Community Housing Corporation approved the option to explore the revitalization of Lawrence Heights; Community Animators were introduced in 2008 during the revitalization process, and; in 2010 the Social Development Plan was developed. Beyond animating the public realm, this mural is an educational piece on the community's history and transformation and is made accessible by using plain language and being in a public outdoor setting.

Figure 9: Public Accessory Commission bike rack in Lawrence Heights. (Photo Credit: Rinaldi, February 2020)

The Public Accessory Commission (2016, p. 3) is a public-private partnership that focuses on "building beautiful, functional, sustainable accessories that animate public space". These public accessories are built by and for the community, through the Cycle Home program. The three key components of this program are youth training and capacity building, participatory development, and cross-sectoral partnership (Public Accessory Commission, 2016). The Cycle Home program engaged twelve at-promise youth in Lawrence Heights through a 20-week pre-apprenticeship program where youth acquired skilled trades experience. The pre-apprentices co-designed and built multiple bike racks (see Figure 9) and identified the most suitable locations to install them in their community (Public Accessory Commission, 2016). The Cycle Home program empowered residents to co-create artistic pieces that commemorate the community's deep history and values while improving and enlivening otherwise generic bike rack designs (Public Accessory Commission, 2016).

Lawrence Heights is unlike many other communities in that its public art is a direct reflection of the community. The artists are consciously locally hired or inspired. Dillon Consulting's urban planner, Miriam Bart, confirmed that Lawrence Heights is an anomaly among many neighbourhoods in Toronto and the GTA, such as Oakville, that are often more interested in the work of global architects who can produce a defining feature that draws wider attraction and tourism. Such formal placemaking efforts consciously brand a place and approach public art from an economic development perspective (Garcia

Figure 10: Public art by youth, on utility box in TCH splash pad. (Photo Credit: Rinaldi, February 2020)

et al., 2019). Drawing on her current planning work related to Triangle Park in the new Lawrence Heights, Bart suggested that planning efforts in transforming neighbourhoods should be integrated more with public art projects and in a cohesive manner.

Residents feel respected, taken care of, and a sense of ownership when their green and public spaces are animated and improved. This can generate a snowball effect as residents are more likely to contribute to the programming and animation of community spaces when they experience bolstered subjective feelings such as happiness, pride, and belonging. A resident confirmed this, explaining that they had planted colourful flower beds outside of their apartment building, which then sparked interest amongst other residents who solicited their help to do the same in front of their buildings (see Appendix A: green spaces, item G. b.). "You need a sense of pride in the place you live", they said. Spatial programming can thus inspire social programming and vice versa.

Figure 11: Outdoor seating area central to TCH units. (Photo Credit: Rinaldi. March 2020).

Lawrence Heights also exemplifies how communities can uphold the meaning and value of unprogrammed community spaces that have been fundamental to the development of social relations. During the walk-along, residents highlighted "unique elements of everyday spaces that [are] not always readily perceptible to an outsider and might not necessarily be determined by aesthetic criteria" (Cattell et al., 2008, p. 551). Pictured (see Figure 11) is a central outdoor seating area that is enclosed by TCH residential units and connected to a paved pedestrian pathway. Residents recollected that this became a key space for many people, especially youth, to regularly congregate and socialize. However, one might not be aware of this at first glance as the use of the space was eventually

discouraged as it became policed and monitored by TCH staff. Similarly, the covered doorway stoops at the entrances of TCH apartment buildings are informal outdoor places where residents tend to meet, though most are also monitored and under camera surveillance. Nevertheless, these unprogrammed spaces facilitate informal placemaking practices based on individual actions—which often go unrecognized by planners and those external to the community (Garcia et al., 2019). Analyzing the use of unprogrammed spaces reveals that the activities which occur in green and public spaces are not always defined by planners, but often by the community itself who are actively making meaning in them.

I appreciated Kaydeen explaining that residents in Lawrence Heights are "very creative and resilient and can find ways to meet their own needs, when they need to". Flexibility in spatial and social programming accommodates activities that are impossible to anticipate and enables communities to meet their own needs, which may have been previously overlooked by planners. For instance, the spatial (un)programming of outdoor community spaces in Lawrence Heights has accommodated those living without balconies or in older buildings lacking proper ventilation and central air, especially during the summer months. Kaydeen noted that residents will use and try "to reclaim unused green space in a way that supports social cohesion, mental health and well-being". This is a key distinction that validates my belief that spatial and social programming should be adaptable to ensure that the local community can use these spaces based on their personal circumstances and in a way that is conducive to individual health and well-being. As Kaydeen said, "I think it's hard to think about how people use outdoor spaces without also looking at and thinking about all the social things…looking at the ways in which people are trying to survive".

The Heritage Interpretation Plan incorporates many additional opportunities for spatial and social programming in green and public spaces that would honour the community's history, culture and identity (Toronto, 2011). An illustrative diagram proposes potential locations for heritage interpretation in the new Lawrence Heights (see Appendix F). The diagram primarily centres around rental building amenity spaces, neighbourhood parks, bridges, streets, transit stations and entrances, schools and community centres. The Heritage Interpretation Plan encourages animating these spaces with public art, interpretive displays, street furniture, monuments and memorials, photography, reused salvaged materials, audio projects, performances, community events and workshops (Gladki et al., 2015). Examples of specific strategies include construction hoarding art and resident handprints being cast into the concrete at the new linear park (Gladki et al., 2015).

The above-mentioned spatial and social (un)programming efforts in Lawrence Heights suggest that *when* people feel more connected to communities, the more likely they are to *want* to contribute to those spaces

and vice versa. Green and public space provision should be considered the bare minimum, as Lawrence Heights exhibits that thoughtful spatial and social (un)programming improves exposure to and use of these spaces (Jennings et al., 2017).

6 Empowering Communities to Inform Planning

This chapter provides key insights and recommendations based on my findings in the case of Lawrence Heights and through my review of relevant policy framework, planning documents, social development strategies, media, and scholarly literature. To recall, Chapter 3 discussed why green and public spaces are important for social relations, community health and well-being, while Chapter 4 discussed how these concepts are taken up in planning and design. Applying concepts and urban environmental design approaches from Chapter 4 establishes a basis for engaging with communities and understanding what they might value more broadly. Chapter 5 focused on spatial and social programming examples in Lawrence Heights to illustrate the unique power and capacity that communities have in shaping the places in which we live.

Recognizing that social planning and community development are not well integrated in land use planning practices, Chapter 6 will demonstrate the benefits of this integration, and the mechanisms that support it. Throughout my paper, I use the term "empower", as it "place[s] final decision making in the hands of the public" (see Appendix H) (Elton Consulting, 2003, p. B07-063). I believe that, in some cases, professional planning opinions could take a back seat to community efforts as I have come to realize that animated spaces are produced as a result of engaged and empowered communities. This approach is supported by Healey (1997; 2010a, p. 624), who argues that planning opinions should embrace mutual learning and consensus-building as well as integrate traditional technical knowledge with "local/experiential knowledge". When residents are empowered to inform the planning of their communities, planners should still play a supportive role and help guide relevant processes; this strengthens relationships and planning efforts.

6.1 Community Efforts Have the Power to Shape Green and Public Spaces

Communities can inform the spatial and social programming of green and public spaces in a way that "invite[s] use, activity and interaction"—acknowledging the "untapped potential and… opportunity to invite public life" (Gehl Studio and Toronto, 2018, pp. 12, 21). Community efforts have greatly influenced green and public spaces in Lawrence Heights, from how they are defined in documents to their spatial and social qualities. Chapter 5 exhibits the latter and the strong sense of community, belonging

and organizational capacity in Lawrence Heights. Residents have assisted with the development of policies, strategies, programs, guiding documents, and community groups (see Appendices G & I) that are intended to guide revitalization and preserve the neighbourhood's rich cultural and historical urban fabric (Gladki et al., 2015).

Chapter 3 on the conceptual ideas related to the importance of green and public spaces advances readers' understanding of what might drive or inspire community-based efforts. Communities have the capacity to uniquely delineate, define and ascribe meaning to green and public spaces, as well as define what liveability means and how it can be realized (Partners for Liveable Communities, n.d.). The six forms of community capital (social, natural, physical, economic, human, cultural) contribute to a community's overall capacity to influence planning and design processes (Roseland, 2012).

6.1.1 Spatial and Social Programming and Unprogramming

As demonstrated in Chapter 5, spatial and social programming and unprogramming refer to this idea that spaces can be intentionally programmed and defined, or unprogrammed and undefined. As such, the flexibility and choice that spaces offer will vary. I use spatial programming to denote the spatial configuration of physical infrastructure and features, such as buildings, playground structures, paving, stage structures, and seating. Social programming refers to the social activities that occur within spaces. To understand when and how spaces should be programmed, unprogrammed, or a mix of both, planners should first discern what is important to the community being planned for.

Even within a community, people will look for different spatial and social qualities in spaces. A resident confirmed this upon explaining that "'community space' can be a physical space, geographical area or place where groups of people meet…it can relate to neighbours, culture, etcetera". When describing the physical features of green spaces, the following words came to mind for participants: food, gardens/flowers, seating, playgrounds, group events/games, open-access, public, natural spaces, trees, sun/shade, smells, walkways, animals, rest (seating), the ability to grow flowers, fruits and produce, as well as the opportunity to mentally relax and appreciate nature. These descriptions beautifully illustrate the breadth of social and physical programming that people associate with green and public spaces— how people differently use spaces to meet their individual and collective needs. Further to earlier discussions on design considerations, the spatial and social programming of green and public spaces may have a greater influence on the activities that occur compared to the physical shape and size (Peschardt, 2016).

6.1.2 Action Items for Lawrence Heights: Programming Needed to Better Support the Community

Although my paper highlights the compelling spatial and social (un)programming in Lawrence Heights, there remain gaps in programming that would otherwise ensure green and public spaces further support social relations and community well-being. The 2012 Social Development Plan and the 2019-2022 Action Plan (in the draft Progress Report and Action Plan) are two examples of how to identify priorities and gaps, particularly those that align with the six themes in the Social Development Plan (see Appendices A, C, D). In the context of these two documents, action items are those that require greater priority and investment to "continue to build and develop a strong community" (Toronto, 2012a, p. 24). While this section predominantly focuses on some of the action items specific to Lawrence Heights, it nonetheless provides key insights for other communities to consider.

To begin, Lawrence Heights has been confronted with many trepidations, losses and traumas related to gun violence and racial profiling. Through community engagements, a Peace Garden has been named a priority action item (see Appendix D: green space, action item 1). It will be a dedicated "garden space to reflect, mourn, and remember people who have lost their lives to gun violence in the community" (Toronto, 2020). It is an opportunity for approximately 50 to 100 residents to be actively involved in animating a meaningful community space with therapeutic attributes (Toronto, 2020). This includes planting flowers to commemorate and honour those who have passed.

The draft Progress Report and Action Plan suggests creating stimulating outdoor learning environments with informative signs—both of which can also be used by educators (Toronto, 2020). The ideas behind biophilia are brought to life through tangible outdoor learning spaces and opportunities on urban gardening, bee pollinators, native plants, and animals that have been planned for the neighbourhood (Toronto, 2020). These spaces can heighten biodiversity, stewardship, sense of identity, and pride in public spaces (Toronto, 2012a).

Recreational programming, including children's play areas and seniors' playgrounds, are an action item for strong neighbourhoods (Toronto, 2020). The community expressed interest in dedicated outdoor spaces for physical activity—or green exercise—for children, adults, and seniors. These spaces will positively contribute to physical and mental health, including heightened moods and self-esteem levels (Wolch et al., 2013). Residents would like to see a variety of new amenities including "those which the community already enjoys, such as sports fields, playgrounds, basketball courts, and community gardens as well as new amenities such as picnic areas, an amphitheatre, and space for cultural events" (Toronto,

2010a, p. 63). The City of Toronto Official Plan, the Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy, and the Community Wellbeing Framework (see Appendix E: play metric) prioritize access to stimulating,

Figure 12: Youth playing basketball in Neptune. (Photo Credit: Rinaldi, March 2020)

enjoyable, creative, and inviting spaces which promote well-being and social cognitive development, particularly for children and youth (Markovich et al., 2018). This is important particularly in inner-city neighbourhoods, as children of colour often lack access to vital active park spaces and structured social programming opportunities (Wolch et al., 2005). Reinforcing this idea, Chapter 1 of the City of

Toronto (2019, p. 1-3) Official Plan states that "well-being is measured by how well we provide for our children and the most disadvantaged among us". Toronto (2017) parks take a broad approach to planning with the different purposes, functions, characteristics, distinct features and amenities of parks that encourage a variety of activities and uses in the community.

Residents advocated for additional seating in green and public spaces, particularly along walking routes, to encourage social and physical activities, including recreational programming. This is especially important for senior groups and those with children, as long walks and duration in spaces become tiring (see Appendix A: green spaces, item D). Visibly safe and comfortable spaces stimulate social activities and permit extended use. Adding to this, pleasurable play-wait areas appeal to parents and caretakers as they allow them to comfortably watch their children play in these spaces (Gehl Studio and Toronto, 2018). Beyond seating, residents in Lawrence Heights believe the integration of more tree canopy, hard surfaces, ramps, as well as amenities such as public washrooms and drinking fountains will also increase the use and convenience of green and public spaces, particularly parks.

"Space making" is a priority theme in the draft Progress Report and Action Plan (see Appendix C: community connections, priority theme 6) (Toronto, 2020). Residents would like more outdoor and indoor informal spaces where they can gather. While the proposed open-ended 'Commons' will serve as a new outdoor community hub, residents also expressed interest in a resident-managed community hub for social activities and to serve as an incubator for community initiatives (Toronto, 2012a). Adaptable spatial and social (un)programming that is informed by citizen-led engagement can foster space making and encourage the creation of "micro-community pockets within the park" (Gehl Studio and Toronto, 2018, p. 60). I believe that all space making and programming efforts should also consciously strive to encourage intergenerational activity between groups. Have planners considered these ideas in the case of the Commons?

Aligning with resident concerns, I agree that all spatial and social (un)programming options for green and public spaces should carefully address how to permit year-round use in regions with stark seasonal differences. They should also incite day *and* night use. Evening based activities, such as movie nights, are much-needed and would "bring the community together" (see Appendix D: green space, action item 10) (Toronto, 2020, p. 25).

Different spatial and social programming enables users to "achieve well-being for different reasons" and disparately use spaces based on individual preferences relative to life course and time-space routines (Cattell et al., 2008, p. 558). The draft Progress Report and Action Plan demonstrate that communities can be engaged in decision-making efforts that will help to produce more animated spaces.

6.1.3   Versatile Communities: Resident Movement and Activity Should Delineate Spaces

Drawing on ideas about accessibility, mobility, and connectivity in Chapter 4, planners should also accept a community's deliberate and inadvertent movement and habits in these spaces as guidance for future plans and decisions. This is, however, not to replace empowering communities to intentionally inform green and public space planning and programming. Paying attention to how spaces are used conveys meaningful information on how and why these spaces are used—revealing that communities are not static but are fluid and adaptable. This is substantiated as resident movement and circulation patterns differ and are influenced by their own needs and desires, reinforcing the notion that public life is authentic, dynamic, contextual, inclusive and spontaneous (Gehl Studio and Toronto, 2018). Urban design qualities influence public life and how people stay, move through, and make meaning in space (Gehl Studio and Toronto, 2018).

Resident mobility patterns could indicate alternate and more favourable mobility preferences and physical connections that differ from a planner's initial assumptions. The shortcuts and informal walking routes previously discussed in Section 4.1.7 are an example of this. During an interview, a resident stated that there needs to be greater consideration for how an "*entire* area is used by the people who live there". They feel this has not been the case during revitalization. Planners and developers remain unaware of the community's formal and informal walking routes to and from school, home, daycares, and the subway, for example. A resident explained that a car is expensive and there is no reason for one, as they and many other residents live within a close walk to the subway line that takes them downtown Toronto and elsewhere in the City. There needs to be more consideration for neighbourhood demographics to determine appropriate transportation networks and circulation routes. As mentioned in Chapter 4,

improving connectivity and mobility is especially important in communities where automobile ownership may be unnecessary, discouraged, or unattainable.

The ability and desire to safely meander is another form of resident movement which is often disregarded. A resident feels as though "[p]eople who plan park areas will just decide arbitrarily where they want the paths to go and that's not necessarily where people want to go…watch where people go, and then pave it, But also allow the opportunity just to meander through the park". Spatial qualities like paving, wayfinding, and street furnishings can make meandering paths a more viable and safe option (Gehl Studio and Toronto, 2018). Meandering paths have also proven to offer restorative and therapeutic health benefits by promoting contact with nature and enabling unstructured light physical activity—which is what residents want more of (Bronicheski and Gilbert, 2016). Identifying where meandering paths exist, or should exist, requires taking the time to study informal and formal resident movement patterns.

Markedly, informal and formal means of resident movement indicate where people make meaning and how they go about daily life in green and public spaces. For some, it may mean establishing and maintaining travel patterns where they are more likely to have chance and momentary encounters (Cattell et al., 2008). For others, it is the ability to safely meander in a way that is conducive to their well-being. Studying resident movement and travel patterns can help planners delineate spaces and identify which spaces require improvements through planning, design, and programming in order to enhance connectivity, social relations, and community well-being.

6.2   Engaging the Community

As illustrated in previous sections, community engagement can inform planning. Community engagement is an ongoing process that is described by the American Planning Association as "'public participation and involvement that promotes relationship building through learning, action, and the expression of needs and values' and 'working collaboratively with individuals and groups to achieve specific goals'" (APA, 2007, as cited in Garcia et al., 2019, p. 53). Public participation places "emphasis on purpose-driven, context-sensitive, holistic, user- and stakeholder-oriented, evidence-based designing and designs" (Bryson et al., 2013, p. 24). Through community engagement and planning processes like those exhibited in Lawrence Heights, "residents develop a sense of community and a measure of control over their local environment" (Shipley and Utz, 2012, p. 30).

It is my opinion that conventional planning does not fully respect nor meaningfully engage with local communities and their local contexts. Community engagement is not merely a check-box task to complete

nor is it one-size-fits-all. However, it is almost as though conventional planning addresses it as such. 'Community' holds different meanings for individuals and groups and therefore community engagement will always entail different expectations, goals, values, objectives, and participants based on the subject matter.

Community engagement is an opportunity for planners and city officials to build partnerships and gain insight regarding the unique imaginations, ideas and lived experiences of intended and potential users—it requires a level of cultural competency (Schweitzer, 2016; Garcia et al., 2019). Bottom-up participatory planning privileges local knowledge and collaborative community action that is democratic and inclusive (Beebeejaun, 2017). This contrasts institutional participation processes that traditionally claim a "power of knowledge" (Beebeejaun, 2017, p. 326). The redistribution of material resources and decision-making power in communities can empower and mobilize disadvantaged groups who have traditionally been excluded from participation in the production of their community's urban fabric and civic life (Anguelovski, 2013; Corburn, 2012). This diverges from prioritizing the interests and demands of white, affluent and highly educated groups who already hold immense social capital and power in shaping their communities (Corburn, 2012; August, 2014).

I do think that community engagement in participatory planning demonstrates an environmental justice framework, whereby it "demands that those being asked to bear an environmental or health burden 'speak for themselves' in the design, analysis, and implementation stages of the process[es]" related to the places they live, work and play (Corburn, 2012, p. 544). This is important in communities like Lawrence Heights, as time and time again, residents have expressed their fears, concerns, opinions, suggestions and feedback regarding revitalization and the idea of losing the community spaces that they have worked effortlessly to create. Integrating local knowledge with expert opinions can help planners assess the adverse effects of policies, practices, and spatial transformations as well as advance the development and implementation of efficacious and viable planning and design interventions (Anderson et al., 2017; Jennings et al., 2017). Ahmed Adan, community leader, activist, and spoken word artist in Lawrence Heights says of revitalization:

> [A]s we enter new phases, I want developers to be more visible. In the past, residents have needed to make themselves available, organize, and put forth effort to be heard. Now, I want them to listen…be mindful of the changes this process has on our lives…I want to see developers more active in the community, speaking to residents, and showing their care for our input. Not only do we need representation, we also need action…Revitalization affects us 24 hours a day, 7 days a

week, 365 days a year. And promises without action, are nothing but empty promises. (City of Toronto, 2020, p. 18)

How, then, can city-builders more meaningfully and actively empower the voices of residents and their lived experiences?

6.2.1 What Has Supported and Enhanced Community Engagement in Lawrence Heights?

While the transferability of planning approaches in the case of Lawrence Heights initially seemed conceivable at the onset of my research, it became apparent to me that Lawrence Heights is unique. This section will briefly explore the mechanisms that have fostered community engagement in Lawrence Heights. Being able to collectively identify action items, actively participate in urban environmental design, and animate green and public spaces would have not been possible, or not possible to the extent that they were so successful in Lawrence Heights, without the following mechanisms. Some of the approaches discussed in this section venture away from traditional planning approaches and demonstrate how planners might be able to move towards a practice that is more contemporary and forward-thinking—one that adopts a community development lens and is more inclusive of different perspectives.

Beyond the planning legislation and professional "codes of ethical practice" that mandate community engagement, additional steps need to be taken in revitalizing communities and Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA) (Shipley and Utz, 2012, p. 22). As one of Toronto's thirty-one Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, Lawrence Heights is subject to an additional set of social development policies, strategies and guidelines. These include the 2020 Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy (TSNS 2020), the United Way's Action for Community Change (ANC), and the Social Development Plan (SDP). The TSNS 2020 aims to activate people, resources and neighbourhood friendly policies. Activating people relates most to community engagement, as it states that:

> Residents should be at the core of the decisions that impact their lives and their community. This means ensuring that policies and programs not only provide vital services, but also invest in building individual and community capacity to lead…encouraging resident leadership and ownership in the planning, implementation and evaluation of initiatives; tapping into the organizations, networks and places where residents already connect, and opening up new ways for people to access the process. (Toronto, 2020)

A participant explained that additional supports and opportunities are made available in revitalizing communities and NIAs that place greater weight on systems-changing and community engagement in decision-making. The TSNS 2020 has helped foster and re-create conditions in Lawrence Heights that encourage residents to animate and co-create community spaces. The SDP and the ANC similarly mobilize and empower residents, providing them with the training and tools they need to properly engage in decision-making processes and inspire change in their community. Through social development policies and City planning processes in Lawrence Heights, the City strives to strengthen community economic development, advance skill development, foster social inclusion as well as facilitate community development and broad-based community organization (TCH, 2006). Another facet to the success is the long period over which the City's robust engagement strategy in these neighbourhoods is being implemented. This builds long-term commitment, legitimacy and trust among residents and City staff which then deepens discussions and collaboration.

TCHC staff and the developer partners for Phase 1 of redevelopment, Context and Metropia (together, Heights Development Inc.), have been very involved in the Lawrence Heights revitalization process. While I think this is rather unusual compared to other development projects, it is commendable. TCHC staff have been advocates for tenants and have helped improve resident involvement in processes that directly affect their daily lives. Carmen Smith (2019, para. 29), former TCHC Manager of Community Renewal and Revitalization in Lawrence Heights wrote that:

> To build a deep community engagement and development practice, it's critical that housing practitioners facilitate conditions for tenant involvement in meaningful ways. We have to work with tenants as true partners in the process.

The Heritage Interpretation Plan and the Social Development Plan encourage resident participation in Lawrence Heights. For instance, they advocate residents be involved in the "naming processes for new streets, buildings, and public spaces by involving [residents] in the planning, design, and governance of these new community spaces" (Toronto, 2012a, p. 26). Community Animators were actively involved in leading this process as they engaged with the community and collected valuable information. They helped TCHC create a YouTube video in 2015 titled *Lawrence Heights Street Naming Roll Call* to inform residents about the street naming process, including the opportunity to submit ideas for potential street names and subsequently vote for the final names. More than 100 submissions were received from residents. The seven new street names were decided following three rounds of engagement with residents and City councillors over ten months. The names are reflective of the community's history and identity.

What interested me the most in terms of community engagement in Lawrence Heights was the many grassroots initiatives and community-based organizations that help advance social development initiatives (see Appendix G). They also promote social learning and healing as well as help manage and process community-specific traumas, concerns and competing interests (Schweitzer, 2016). Take the Lawrence Heights Inter-Organization Network (LHION), for example, which plays a significant role in the community. It is a coalition of organizations, agencies, service providers, residents and community groups that meet regularly. There are also numerous action committees and grassroots advisory and working groups that have been developed by residents and local stakeholders to identify priorities, mobilize resources, encourage community involvement and further animate the community. Planners should familiarize themselves with the groups and meetings in the communities in which they work, as they are opportunities to regularly engage with local stakeholders and gain an interdisciplinary understanding of neighbourhood dynamics, community needs, challenges and goals.

In recognition that the 2012 Social Development Plan included a call to support resident to resident engagement and resident voices in decision-making processes (see Appendix A: community connections, item C), it appears as though there has been a conscious effort to thoughtfully do so. As such, Lawrence Heights sets an example as to how planners, City staff, and local stakeholders can embrace community development, empower local leaders to become more engaged, as well as expand community outreach. For example, approximately 130 Community Animators have been trained in Lawrence Heights. Community Animators are tenants living in Toronto Community Housing who are paid to assist TCHC with disseminating information, supporting other tenants, and facilitating community surveys. This approach has proven to be very successful and has become a model for other TCH neighbourhoods. Mother, Grassroots Community Facilitator and Organizer, and Former Co-Chair of the Lawrence Heights Inter-Organizational Network, Kaydeen Bankasingh, recalls her experience:

> I became a Community Animator with TCH during [revitalization]. I decided to be a champion for this work, and use my voice to organize and share information with neighbours. I knew that this was the only way to ensure the future could be built to include us. We created spaces to talk about our concerns and keep our community's needs, ideals and hopes in full focus. (Toronto, 2020, p. 26)

Community Animators have routinely engaged with over 400 households in Lawrence Heights between 2012 and 2018 (Toronto, 2020). One Community Animator was elected to be a member of the RFP (Request for Proposal) Evaluation Committee and asked to help form a Tenant Advisory Committee that would evaluate developer partner proposal submissions (Smith, 2019). Similar to Community Animators,

TCHC has established a group of Revite Nerds. These are youth in the community who have been hired through TCHC's youth employment program. They helped us with door-to-door canvassing and collecting information for the Progress Report and Action Plan this past summer.

There is undeniable value in regarding social development policies as essential to all planning practices—beyond NIAs and redeveloping neighbourhoods—as they seek to empower communities as well as highlight the social infrastructure that is often overlooked in technical and traditional planning practices.

6.2.1.1 *Ecological Democracy and Landscape Literacy*

Expanding on what has supported community involvement in Lawrence Heights, I believe that the level to which landscape literacy and ecological democracy are demonstrated has enhanced the community's engagement and dedication towards their green and public spaces. I have come to understand that my research perspective is closely related to the concepts of ecological democracy and landscape literacy, as they are "a cornerstone of community development and of urban planning and design"; they "transform problems into opportunities and liabilities into resources" (Spirn, 2019, p. 129).

Landscape literacy and ecological democracy respectively exhibit a "cultural practice that entails both understanding the world and transforming it" and are directly involved "in building community where 'actions are guided by understanding natural processes and social relationships'" (Spirn, 2019, p. 128-129). Ecological democracy can enrich community engagement processes related to green spaces in particular. Ecological democracy and landscape literacy are linked to awareness of and appreciation for socio-natures and biophilia, which can inspire and empower communities to feel confident intervening in the planning of community spaces. Community engagement, and my research project in and of itself, are thus an avenue for people to exhibit their ecological democracy and landscape literacy. As I learned, people are passionate about sharing their knowledge of the natural landscape surrounding them, which ultimately increases landscape literacy for others.

6.2.2 Processes to Community Engagement

In addition to deeply engaging with the mechanisms addressed above in Section 6.2.1, there are community engagement techniques and approaches that planners can adopt or seek to improve to facilitate more equitable participatory planning processes. These can include public meetings, focus groups, citizen juries, visioning, scenario workshops, collaboration, consensus building, social media, and computer and web-based techniques (Shipley and Utz, 2012). Community engagement can be process-

oriented, content-oriented, or user-oriented and can take place at the individual, group, or community-level (Bryson et al., 2016).

Throughout this section, readers should be cognizant that the level of public participation differs between approaches (see Appendix H). As per the Public Participation Spectrum developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), public participation includes inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower—each respectively increasing in public participation as you move across the spectrum (see Appendix H) (Elton Consulting, 2003; Garcia et al., 2019). Each form of community engagement has a level of commitment to those who have been involved in the engagement process (Elton Consulting, 2003). Engagement processes can either give information, seek information, share information, or exhibit participatory decision making (Elton Consulting, 2003). Similarly, Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation guides how to facilitate citizen control, mobilization, and democracy through eight different forms of power-sharing and participation, or lack thereof (Garcia et al., 2019). These include therapy and manipulation (non-participation); informing and consultation (tokenism); placation (higher degree of tokenism); as well as partnership, delegated power, and citizen control (citizen power) (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation and the Public Participation Spectrum provide a basis for selecting appropriate processes and tools for community engagement, whilst remaining critical and reflective.

Community consultations are one method of community engagement. Public meetings were one of the first iterations (Shipley and Utz, 2012). Effective consultation seeks to understand and incorporate the following: (1) the public's motivation to participate and city official's motivation to engage with the public; (2) participation with policy and communicating goals and expectations at the onset; (3) decision-making methods and processes that demonstrate procedural and distributive justice, and ; (4) ensuring representation of marginalized groups (Shipley and Utz, 2012, p. 25). While community consultations were used to gain input on the planning and design of the new parks in Lawrence Heights, the Public Participation Spectrum (see Appendix H) argues that community consultations do not allow for the highest level of public impact or commitment (Elton Consulting, 2003). In addition to consulting with communities, I recommend practitioners actively involve and collaborate with them in a way that is more accessible, interesting and mutually beneficial. This leads me to the next approach.

Stimulating and visual community engagement techniques can be easier for people to visualize individual and collective thoughts, ideas, spaces and mental images (Lynch, 1960). It can evoke the aesthetic and affective experiences mentioned in Section 3.3. "Computer-aided photo-manipulation" is an innovative visualization technique for planners to convey visual spatial patterns and relationships—advancing

collaborative decision-making processes (Al-Kodmany, 1999, p. 41). This approach would be most applicable to the final decision-making stage (Al-Kodmany, 1999). At this stage, a precomposed photo library and potential visual iterations would often be presented to the community, based on the previously gathered information on community interests and design concerns. Photo-manipulation is a more tactile experience that offers a sense of realism, excitement and ownership; it evokes meaningful discussion and feedback (Al-Kodmany, 1999). It can also be a more accessible form of engagement for those with language barriers as it is an accessible and "interactive visual 'language' that would enable all members...to fully participate in the process" (Al-Kodmany, 1999, p. 39). While this technique is just one example, the reach and effectiveness of public consultations and decision-making processes can expand with the increased use of technology and web-based techniques in general (Shipley and Utz, 2012). When I explained to participants the alternative approaches to community engagement, which were more tangible and interactive, they were enthralled and wanted to learn more. There are, however, limitations to visualization and technology-based techniques, such as the inability to access a computer, smart device, or internet. This makes the process less equitable.

Design charrettes are a collaborative approach that can foster relationships with residents and local stakeholders (Gladki et al., 2015). Design charrettes are often employed in community planning to promote public participation and "shared decision-making...*with* stakeholders" (Roseland, 2012, p. 263). Design charrettes help ascertain common aspirations for a community and generate creative discussions (Roseland, 2012). I applied components of a design charrette to the knowledge exchanges I organized for my research; knowledge exchanges emphasize the sharing of knowledge and perspectives. This adaptation made for a more interactive and exciting discussion as participants were able to collectively draw on trace paper and illustrate what they were speaking to on a physical map of the community— validating the use of the following technique.

Similar to the two previous techniques, community mapping is also quite visual. It is a Public Participatory Geographic Information System (PPGIS)—a tool intended to "identify, understand, analyze, resolve, [and] disseminate community issues with the explicit intentions of education, engagement and empowerment" (National Community Mapping Institute, n.d.). Community mapping helps us socio-spatially understand localized experiences. Community mapping could include illustratively representing the emotions and meanings people ascribe to different spaces as well as the physical qualities that may or may not produce social and/or spatial barriers (Beebeejaun, 2017). Community mapping translates the cognitive maps individuals have created and enables planners and communities to visually analyze ideas and concerns, identify patterns, begin to challenge norms and understand solutions (Chaskin, 2013). It discerns importance to everyday banal and "quotidian spaces" that have historically been neglected as

sites of everyday life, such as—in the case of my research—pedestrian walkways, the doorways of building entrances, resident parking lots and underpasses (Beebeejaun, 2017, p. 331).

Walking methodologies, such as the walk-along organized for my research, enables planners to better understand the lived experiences of marginalized groups, including women, low-income and racialized groups (Beebeejaun, 2017). For instance, walking methodologies can bring "women together to safety map community assets or areas of concern as a way of integrating everyday life with rights" (Beebeejaun, 2017, p. 329). Walking methodologies are a way to involve the local community and solicit ideas in a more collaborative and natural setting, where participants can physically pinpoint what they are speaking to or lead the walk as needed. My walk-along with residents uncovered how communities speak about tensions related to the environmental management of spaces, how they are intended to be used, and how communities typically use them.

Expanding on walking methodologies, safety audits have been conducted in Lawrence Heights through group walks that have been supported and/or organized by the Safety, Housing and Community Space Action Committee (see Appendix G). Residents and local stakeholders attend these, particularly those familiar with the subject areas. This approach to conducting safety audits entails active public participation whereby "walking [i]s a collaborative and political strategy" to challenge any fears, identify specific safety concerns, as well as encourage constructive mitigation strategies and solutions through dialogue between users (Beebeejaun, 2017, p. 328; Markovich et al., 2018). Annual safety audits continue to be a priority action item in Lawrence Heights to "activate community ownership, safety-focused skill building training and audit facilitation around lighting and cameras" (Toronto, 2020, p. 17). Thus, it is a form of community engagement that can simultaneously assist urban dwellers in reclaiming and improving their green and public spaces.

Asset-mapping can inform asset-based approaches to community engagement. As used in walking methodologies, knowledge exchanges and design charrettes, asset-mapping is a collaborative process that facilitates a socio-spatial analysis of assets in a community—helping planners identify what needs to be protected and further supported to enrich social capital (Ebi and Semenza, 2008). Assets might include specific green spaces, features, amenities, grocery stores, community groups or buildings. An asset-based community development approach promotes transformative power amongst residents as they collectively generate solutions that reduce inequities and build resilience (Kresge Foundation, 2015). An asset-based approach to community engagement is frequently demonstrated in Lawrence Heights, whether it be through social development strategies like the Social Development Plan or the Community Development Officer's approach to supporting and engaging with the community. An asset-based approach places

greater emphasis on community assets, or strengths, as opposed to weaknesses (Garcia et al., 2019). It enables planners and other professionals to become more aware of community assets that may have otherwise been disregarded. It strives to empower residents in the community and strengthen existing capacity.

To advance my discussion on practical approaches to community engagement, I thought it would be worth highlighting an interview I had with urban planner and community engagement specialist Miriam Bart from Dillon Consulting. Bart provided insight on Dillon's involvement in the planning and design development of the Triangle Park (name subject to change), a project part of the Lawrence Heights revitalization. Our discussion focused on the steps taken to engage with the community. Bart illuminated the value of pre-

Figure 13: Conceptual Plan of Triangle Park. (Source: City of Toronto, n.d.)

engagement interview calls with the community and outreach with 'community champions'—those who know the area better than City staff or planners. This indicated preliminary opinions and thoughts on what might be important, who should be involved and how the community should be engaged. Upon becoming more acquainted with the community and the broader revitalization project, Bart noted the importance of continuously revisiting and evaluating the goals and desired outcomes, and refining engagement approaches between public consultations to ensure that the public engagement and decision-making processes are effective and inclusive (Bryson et al., 2016). Consequently, because it was initially challenging to gain resident feedback on the design of Triangle Park, Bart adapted her approach to public consultations to empower residents in the decision-making process and gain more meaningful information. As such, Bart developed a 10-point system. Points were allocated to each park feature or amenity (e.g. public washroom, seating, trees, splash pad, public art) according to relative monetary value. With a limit of 10 points, residents decided how to allocate points based on the amenities and features they would like to see in the new park. Bart recollects that many residents placed greater importance on open space, seating, trees, and a junior/senior play structure. This activity informed the conceptual plan and design for Triangle Park (see Figure 13), in a way that better reflects the local community. This approach to community engagement also demonstrates a level of mindfulness towards community context; focusing on the monetary value of large projects may be counterintuitive.

These are just a few of many approaches to community engagement. Approaches will be adapted according to the intended participants, user groups, subject matter, and overall facilitation capacity. It is

through meaningful discussions with the local community that planners can learn more about the social and physical components that make green and public spaces particularly enjoyable—in the same way that participants expressed the favourable spaces and qualities through my engagement with them. Planners should be willing to involve communities in the co-creation of spaces and related decision-making through community engagement processes.

6.2.2.1   *Critiques and Recommendations*

Adding to the previous section on processes to community engagement, this section briefly discusses relevant critiques and recommendations, many of which were mentioned by participants.

Firstly, community engagement processes are made difficult to access and participate in due to many social and physical barriers. These include meeting format, time, "transportation constraints, childcare needs, lack of money…limited access to information, language and literacy barriers, and lack of trust" (Garcia et al., 2019, p. 63, 69). Existing and potential barriers should be fully considered and addressed beforehand in community engagement strategies. Receiving last minute notice, no notice, and/or notice through inaccessible means (e.g. online) also contributes to non-access. Not addressing or mitigating social and physical barriers shows a lack of regard on the part of planners for the fair representation of all groups. Everyone should have an opportunity to attend public meetings as well as have adequate time and advance notice so that they can properly prepare for engagements and present their ideas.

Participants suggested that planners could better include communities by bringing the message *to* people instead of bringing people to the message. This indicates that meeting settings should be more convenient for participants and thoughtfully selected. Schools, parent council meetings and the common spaces of apartment buildings are perceived as more suitable settings for public meetings and engagement. Grassroots methods, online technologies, and connecting with resident groups are additional avenues.

A participant believes that the engagement structure and design (e.g. location, agenda) are perhaps more important than the meetings themselves. For a meeting to be successful, they explained that residents or local champions should be invited beforehand to co-produce the meeting agenda and assist with selecting the meeting location. This is an asset-based community development approach that redistributes decision-making power to the local community. Creating these relationships with local champions earlier on assists planners in becoming more aware of neighbourhood dynamics, subject matter interests, and potential barriers at the onset. It was brought to my attention by a participant that some residents may not feel safe or comfortable in specific spaces or geographic areas of their community due to resident conflicts and/or

traumas. Technical reports and online research can be misleading as they do not provide practitioners with a comprehensive understanding of communities, including their socio-cultural context and neighbourhood dynamics. Therefore, planners must first have an outreach strategy that identifies gatekeepers or local champions who are willing to help them navigate the best approach to community engagement and development. Learning about neighbourhood dynamics can be critical to the success of community engagement processes and planning practices in their entirety. These due diligence efforts could increase attendance and enrich dialogue as participants and facilitators feel more comfortable and better prepared.

Once planners become more aware of neighbourhood dynamics and community needs, having the right people to develop and facilitate engagements is imperative. Many administrative skills should accompany community engagement processes. These include interpersonal skills such as the ability to listen and facilitate meetings and team building, as well as the ability to clearly communicate proposals, plans, ideas, strategies, and next steps using plain language. Strong facilitation skills can ensure that planning processes are not deviated or construed, as it is possible to instill ideas in participants and manipulate engagements or designs, which then produces different results or helps achieve a preconceived end goal (Talen, 2000). The Community Development Officer for Lawrence Heights showed that successful community engagement goes beyond having administrative skills. It requires learning how to always lead with positivity, relate to the group in the room, and incite excitement. There is a distinct shift when people are excited and *want* to engage in discussions—it elicits more meaningful outcomes and relationships.

That being said, I agree with a participant that the approach to engagement processes should be more dialogue focused, or conversation driven. Community engagement can be deceiving—and frankly, is not community engagement—if it does not welcome the opportunity for feedback or allow communities to make final decisions, or if it presents pre-determined planning options that ignored community input (see Appendix H) (Elton Consulting, 2003). Dialogue focused engagements, too, can still be disingenuous if the outcome is not reflective of the community's voices. Lawrence Heights has had particular green space initiatives located in areas distant from the intended user groups who initially expressed interest at community meetings. This resulted in inaccessibility and little use.

As an overarching recommendation, the planning profession should determine an all-encompassing universal definition of community engagement as this would establish a standardized approach. Not only would this help planners navigate engagement processes, but it would also make it easier for communities to hold planners accountable and ensure that their voices are reflected in projects.

With any planning or community engagement process, my advice to planners is to be mindful that a sense of community is to be perceived as a process instead of an end goal (Talen, 2000). To the greatest extent possible, a sense of community should not be forced, rushed, or skewed by underlying motives. This should also be considered when developing a standardized definition. The efficacy of community engagement efforts is often indicative of the potential success of revitalization (Talen, 2000).

Finally, upon asking what 'meaningful' means to participants, I was able to think more about how these responses could further inform my discussions on community engagement. Residents expressed that they are interested in: being exposed to new things, not just those that are familiar. Meaningful experiences are those that give them a voice. Another participant explained that 'meaningful' implies having an experience that changes the way one might do things, for the better. Meaningful means inclusivity and belonging. It means accepting class, race, and religious identity. Perhaps, then, by asking such questions we can decipher what meaningful community engagement processes might entail.

6.2.3   Taking it One Step Further: Building Capacity & Building Partnerships

I do think that community engagement practices in planning and design can be taken one step further to inspire opportunities, strategies, and programming that build community capacity and long-term partnerships.

I urge planners and agency partners to explore how green and public spaces can better integrate programming that promotes continuous learning and connection to nature and people. In Margaret Jarvis' (2008) written statement with recommendations for future meetings with the City, she asked that planners "be very mindful of how important parks are to all residents... [and] look for ways [that] green spaces may provide the opportunity to train people in landscaping, gardening, [and] cooking for health". To support this and explore relevant possibilities, it is advantageous for planners to identify interesting initiatives and build partnerships with local champions and stakeholders, including schools and community-based organizations. For instance, Park People is a Toronto-based charity that transforms underused green spaces and urban infrastructure in communities, from creating community gardens to hosting outdoor movie nights (Toronto Public Health and Wellesley Institute, 2019). Park People (n.d.) has helped Lawrence Heights' Friends of Lotherton organize Jane's Walks, festivals, an adopt-a-tree program, as well as create community gardens. Park People (n.d.) recognizes that "[p]arks can deliver outsized impacts on our health, economy, ecology, and social belonging, but only when they're shaped and animated by their communities". Therefore, it is important to build partnerships with communities *and* co-create community spaces. In my opinion, Lawrence Heights has been more successful than other

neighbourhoods in building partnerships with local organizations and agencies that help foster community engagement and animate their public realm.

There are, however, ways to enhance these partnerships and community-based initiatives. For instance, this can include engaging with community partners that offer trade programs which assist, train and support community members in various fields. This was noted in the Heritage Interpretation Plan, which suggested partnering with trades in the community to assist residents with creating historical and informative plaques that accompany the seven new street names (Gladki et al., 2015). In addition to the level to which Community Animators and Revite Nerds are already engaged in the planning process, I think it would be mutually beneficial for planners to similarly offer training or job-shadowing programs in the planning field. This creates an opportunity for people to build capacity and learn about a field they might otherwise not have exposure to—embracing the community development approach to planning in its entirety. Training and job-shadowing planning programs enable people to be more involved in decision-making and planning processes as well as share their knowledge about the neighbourhood being planned for.

I also recognize that providing adequate funding can build capacity by enabling and empowering communities to animate their green and public spaces. Regardless of the immense pride, determination and dedication in Lawrence Heights, it has proven to be difficult to animate their community spaces due to a lack of funding. A resident explains that there needs to be "funding to make [their] initiatives alive and ongoing". Rather than deciding how to allocate funding without the community's input, the 2012 Social Development Plan and the draft Progress Report and Action Plan embrace bottom-up planning processes where residents aid in the identification of action items that require funding support (see Appendices A, C, D). Not only does this allow residents to actively participate in decision-making processes related to funding, but the documentation of these action items allows residents and agency partners to cross-reference, evaluate and report back on them in the future. The Progress Report is an example of this, as it reports back on achievements. Through Lawrence Heights, I learned that planning and designing green and public spaces is not always necessary, as it may be more useful to provide better financial resources that support and empower community-based initiatives that already exist or could otherwise exist to animate green and public spaces.

In addition to increasing financial support, I would also encourage enabling resident participation in and management of these spaces, as this shows trust in residents, builds capacity and promotes long-term stewardship (Beatley and Newman, 2013).

6.3 Understanding Communities and Spaces: Respecting Human Needs, Concerns, Diversity and Difference

There is a need for planners to deeply engage with communities and actively seek, hear, learn, appreciate and respect their socio-cultural contexts. This engagement includes lived experiences, intersecting oppressions, and the diverse perspectives, cultural understandings, meanings and uses linked to green and public spaces. These are often not captured in technical studies (Brand, 2007).

In this section, I address planning's failure to acknowledge, accept, and celebrate diversity and difference. This often results in hostile and exclusive practices that perpetuate the systemic inequities which have made it difficult for people to use and animate green and public spaces to their full potential. Added to this are the intersecting socioeconomic factors that motivate people's disagreement that public spaces "are open to all and a cornerstone of urban life" (Hu, 2018). Consequently, users of these spaces are criminalized if they do not identify with a more desirable and socially accepted socio-economic class. Incivility is emphasized over civility, as diverse urban life is perceived as "threatening" instead of "enriching" (Young 1995, p. 268, as cited in Cattell et al., 2008, p. 545). A paradigm shift is required to ensure that the planning policy framework and research agendas do not continue to uphold these contrasting notions of public life (Cattell et al., 2008). Instead, they should embrace diversity and the "special and valued attributes that make a place desirable [and comfortable] to live in or visit" (Rouse and Bunster-Ossa, 2013, p. 21).

Furthermore, planning and design processes should not be homogenous or apply a one-size-fits-all approach. The green and public space qualities attributed to health and well-being in one neighbourhood could be different in another, let alone between residents within a given neighbourhood. In saying this, people should not have to be subordinate and conform to "localized identities" because of neoliberal urbanism or the culture that planning and design impose on urban environments (King, 1990, p. 408). Lawrence Heights has demonstrated the capacity to resist cultural homogenization by boosting their efforts to preserve their community's history and identity through the meaningful representation of cultures—as exhibited through the Heritage Interpretation Plan (King, 1990). Planners should put in the extra work and strive to actively create heterogeneous communities.

In keeping with resisting cultural homogenization and in preparation for revitalization, residents advocated documenting, preserving and celebrating the community's history and transformation. There is a collective desire to unite the community by documenting the tangible and intangible stories of those who have, and currently live, in Lawrence Heights (Gladki et al., 2015, p. 28). Denise Bishop-Earle, a

long-time resident of over 30 years, said "[i]f we don't preserve the stories of the community, it's like a tree that has no roots..[i]f we don't claim it and pass it on, who's going to know the history?" (Sunshine, 2014). In an effort to do just that, residents have identified key landmarks and icons (see Appendix F), participated in public art projects, and have been involved in the broader redevelopment process (Toronto, 2012a). Redevelopment amplifies 'public space consciousness' as communities become more aware of the historic, social and symbolic meaning they have attached to places (Cattell et al., 2008, p. 557).

Nevertheless, with public space consciousness and a strong sense of connection to their community, residents in Lawrence Heights are deeply affected by the physical and social transformations associated with revitalization. Kaydeen explained that these transformations are very emotional and traumatic as people's memories, homes, and spaces are destroyed and erased (Kurek, 2019). In revitalizing neighbourhoods especially, planners need to recognize that "[d]isplacement isn't just physical displacement…it's also [their] networks and relationships" that are being impeded and displaced (Kurek, 2019). Understanding communities and spaces requires having a high regard for people's traumas, habits, lived experiences, and affective and aesthetic experiences. When there is no regard for these, people's daily lives and well-being are impacted.

In Lawrence Heights, daily routines and travel patterns have been hindered without any prior notice due to revitalization. A resident explained their feelings on this:

> You do something one way for years and then suddenly you can't do that anymore, it's a little traumatising… nobody ever asks or has a conversation with you and that can definitely make you feel unimportant.

This is why I believe all planners must have meaningful discussions and engage with communities throughout the entire process in order to understand diverse community needs and concerns as well as help people process change in the very communities they have helped shape. Residents fearfully question and want to ensure that the "spaces [they] worked so diligently to create will remain open to the voices that formed [them]" and be extended to "future voices" (Toronto, 2020, p. 26). Documenting, preserving and celebrating a community requires being aware of the social and physical attributes attached to people's meaningful experiences in green and public spaces. This is how communities can also inform planning—by planners appreciating and respecting their lived experiences and identifying how these can be preserved through planning efforts.

To develop a more intersectional understanding of people's lived experiences of place, I recommend applying an intersectional feminist approach to all planning practices. This enables planners to become more acquainted with complex human needs, concerns, oppressions, diversity and difference. An intersectional feminist approach exposes how spaces, spatial practices, and people's everyday life are deeply implicated by built and natural environments (Beebeejaun, 2017). It investigates the multifaceted gendered experiences of urban dwellers in public spaces and the intersection with race, ethnicity, class, age, ability, and sexuality, for instance (Beebeejaun, 2017). An intersectional feminist approach allows planners to challenge and reimagine the way we think about cities. Adopting feminist planning practices can ensure women are afforded access to the same temporal and spatial experiences in cities that most men already have (Damyanovic and Zibell, 2013; Beebeejaun, 2017). Women are in a unique position to support improvements in the built and natural environments and inform planning practices, as they have developed an intimate relationship and familiarity with community spaces because of their "routinized practices of moving through spaces as part of their caring duties within daily life" (Beebeejaun, 2017, p. 327).

Therefore, to demonstrate that environmental and social justice is of utmost priority, planners should deeply engage with communities, including marginalized groups, in order to accept, preserve, and celebrate a diversity and difference among people and between communities. This is also crucial to creating inclusive and animated green and public spaces that promote community well-being and social relations. My research with Lawrence Heights has revealed how I can better connect with communities and plan with respect for their lived experiences of place.

Conclusion

Green and public spaces are essential for healthier, happier and more connected people. They are fundamental settings that promote subjective and objective psychological and physiological well-being. They evoke affective and aesthetic experiences and promote social interaction and physical activity. In this paper, I provide a conceptual analysis of the importance of green and public spaces; considerations for conventional and traditional planning and design practices; and discuss how communities can inform the spatial and social programming of green and public spaces through community engagement and development efforts. Embracing local knowledge and diverse socio-cultural perspectives through deep community engagement can enable urban planners, designers, and communities to co-create meaningful and animated green and public spaces.

I urge planners and those in academia to continue exploring how social development policies can be advanced and integrated with planning practices. There is potential to improve the coordination between the fields of urban planning and public health more holistically and comprehensively, as well as balance the needs of humans and ecologies to improve community well-being. Lastly, I encourage planners working outside of social planning to explore different avenues where planning practice could demonstrate a community development and asset-based approach that empowers communities and provides them with the skills and tools they need to actively engage in city-building processes.

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Appendices

Appendix A Shaping Our Community Together: Our Social Development Plan & Action Plan for Lawrence Heights (2012)

Community connections, community services, community safety, housing, green spaces, and employment are the six key priority themes of the 2012 Social Development Plan (SDP) that require further attention and investment during and after revitalization to build a stronger community (Toronto, 2012a). The following priorities and action items are quoted directly from the SDP (Toronto, 2012a), although the SDP provides a more detailed breakdown.

Key Priority	Action Item

Green Spaces	A. Ensure that our green space is accessible and well maintained.
	    a. Design and operate parks efficiently while providing accessible green space for everyone. Parks should have options for a variety of activities designed for people of all age groups and physical abilities.
	    b. Develop the sense that our parks belong to everyone in the community. Parks are a place where our community will grow together.
	    c. Ensure that permits for park activities for community groups and sport clubs are accessible, fairly distributed, and support community-wide events.
	B. Encourage gardening and food-related activities to support healthy lives and community building.
	    a. Encourage new food related activities and ensure that current activities (bake ovens, North York Harvest Food Bank, community gardens) are supported and enhanced through partnerships.
	    b. Plant community gardens in public spaces, such as landscaped areas near public facilities, herb hedges, and rooftops. Also, encourage housing designs that consider these opportunities.
	    c. Promote gardening activities both in private space and homes, such as on balconies and in yards.

C. Use new physical infrastructure to build an accessible and connected community that supports healthy and active lifestyles.

    a. Support and advocate for the creation of bicycle paths and separated bike lanes on our roads.

    b. Promote and support the TTC by designing welcoming and safe walkways and pedestrian access in our community.

D. Ensure there is adequate street furniture to meet the needs of our community.

    a. Support the provision of benches for people to meet, relax, and enjoy their surroundings.

    b. Have picnic tables, shelters, and other amenities that support places to gather and ensure those spaces are well monitored by our community.

    c. Create places where community news and information can be posted.

    d. Place garbage, recycling, and composting bins in places that encourage everyone to keep our community clean and beautiful.

E. Develop accessible and safe transit links.

    a. Encourage and support improving the Ranee Avenue and Lawrence West TTC Subway Station entrances to include community information posts, elevators, safe and welcoming entrances, access tunnels, and community art.

    b. Support the City and TTC in providing bus shelters that protect us from the elements and will create safe and welcoming waiting spaces.

F. Ensure there are adequate park amenities to meet the needs of our community.

    a. Enhance our ability to use parks for multiple activities such as, barbecues, picnics, and other social gatherings.

    b. Encourage the use of plants and other vegetation that require low maintenance in the design of open spaces.

    c. Support our community voice in the parks design and planning process and ensure that children's playgrounds are accessible and designed for children of all ages.

G. Support environmental learning, community ownership, and pride in public spaces.

a. Encourage environmental learning opportunities in schools, homes, local agencies, and in the broader community surrounding Lawrence Heights.

b. Help our community to take ownership and be active stakeholders in achieving common goals, such as keeping front yards, gardens, and common spaces clean and safe.

c. Expand the recycling and green bin programs, while providing on-going education for our homes, businesses and community facilities including outdoor spaces.

d. Support and encourage policies and recommendations from our community that respect the sustainability of our environment.

A. Document the history of the community and its transformation

a. Develop a Heritage Plan that identifies the key cultural and historic references from the Lawrence Heights and Neptune neighbourhoods, keeping the memories and vitality of our communities alive.

b. Develop events and initiatives that are inclusive, highlight the history of our various neighbourhoods and welcome new residents to our community.

c. Support ways to have our residents included in the naming processes for new streets, buildings, and public spaces by involving us in the planning, design, and governance of these new community spaces.

Community Connections

d. Identify key landmarks and community icons that our residents remember and honour; create a way to capture and integrate these memories into the new neighbourhoods (for example: facility design that reflect the history of Lawrence Heights).

e. Preserve and celebrate the identity and history of the original community; this can be achieved through oral and visual displays or at community events/ gatherings.

B. Increasing our community's connections through stronger communication.

a. Evaluate other agencies working with us as to how they serve our community as it changes through revitalization. Leverage any opportunities that may become available to support and benefit our residents.

C. Support resident to resident engagement.

    a.   Support the formation of a resident-to-resident body that brings people together from diverse groups and across neighbourhood boundaries regularly to share, discuss, resolve, and celebrate.

    b.   Ensure that the resident voices and principles in this Social Development Plan are present at all key decision-making tables and that new community initiatives, projects, and programs are developed and designed with the involvement of our residents.

    c.   Create a resident-managed community hub and identify key locations for social connection activities that are financed, organized, and operated by our community.

Appendix B Progress Report (Looking Back at 2012-2018 in Lawrence Heights)

The Progress Report component of the draft Progress Report and Action Plan highlights milestone moments and achievements in Lawrence Heights between 2012 and 2018 (Toronto, 2020). The following are quoted directly from the draft Progress Report and Action Plan, as highlighted by residents and service providers through community engagements (Toronto, 2020):

Green Space Milestones (2012-2018):

- **Capacity Building:** Regular participation in gardening workshops and training providing sustainable and healthy food sourcing, community connection, and skill-development for residents. Or Cycle Home's Placement & Training Program in 2016 partnered with youth in the community interested in the skilled trades to design and build community bike racks as a public accessory.

- **Animating Space:** Green space was frequently animated for community events or initiatives, like OpenMic Nights, Community BBQ's, Harvest Celebrations, and Back-To-School Festivals, which brought together community and cultivated connections. As well as the ongoing animation of community garden-plots or orchards have helped alleviate some stresses related to food security by providing food to residents.

- **Public Art:** Publicly displaced art pieces, like the Hydro Pole Paintings, community-built sculptures, or murals like Love or Love; Deep Roots, Limitless Heights in 2012 have enlivened public spaces and show- cased local creativity.

- **Outdoor Amenities:** Public gathering spaces like community gardens, shade structures and bike racks which have been updated and added in Lawrence Heights throughout revitalization, to create spaces for community connection and meeting.

- 48 hectares of publicly accessible green spaces are available

- 180 TTC stops in the community

- 9 kilometres of bike lanes and paths in the community

Community Connections Milestones (2012-2018):

- **Community Heritage:** The development of *Heritage Interpretation Plan* in 2015 as a road map for identifying and communicating key historic, cultural and social references, and to preserve the history and memory of Lawrence Heights

- **Resident Leadership:** Experiences like the *Residents First Project* in 2015 that provided leadership skills and capacity building to residents. Or the many grassroots resident groups like Hope & Hustle Heights or the Lawrence Heights Arts Centre that have emerged and been supported. As well as

funding opportunities like Revitalization MicroGrants or the Neighbourhood Grants Program that resource the ideas of resident-led groups for community wellbeing.

- **Public Art:** Murals and public art displays across the community, like the *Deep Roots, Limitless Heights* mural in 2013 on the Lawrence Heights Community Centre. Or the art installations surrounding construction sites which have given opportunities for local artists to partner with arts-based agencies and develop their skills, and ensure the art reflects the insights provided by the neighbourhood.

- **Neighbourhood Solidarity:** Yearly walks and tours through the community, like Jane's Walk or Peace Walks that created opportunities to observe, learn, and connect people in neighbourhood experiences. As well as, the regular community-wide happenings like Friday Night Café's, Ice Cream Socials, Block Parties, Movie Nights, or Neighbourhood Games which create opportunities for community connection and social cohesion.

- 19 Public Art Projects & Events That Reflect & Document Community History

- 7 local streets named by community voting

- 7 community walks were hosted, such as Jane's Walks and Peace Walks

Appendix C Action Plan: Priority Themes—Looking Forward to 2019-2022 in Lawrence Heights

The Action Plan component of the draft Progress Report and Action Plan outlines priority themes that residents and local stakeholders identified during community engagements in Summer 2019. The priority themes related to green space and community connections (themes in Social Development Plan) require further attention and support over the next three years. The following priority themes are quoted directly from the draft Progress Report and Action Plan (Toronto, 2020):

Note: the below are not exhaustive lists; they are selected based on their relevance to my research.

Green Space:

	Priority Themes	Description
1	Garden Space	Encourage food-related activities to support sustainable and local gardening practices, healthy living and community building; dedicate resources to coordinate, plant, maintain and grow thriving community garden spaces for year-round food production opportunities
2	Beautification	Beautify public spaces with public art; ensure green space is clean, well maintained, and used by educators to stimulate outdoor learning experiences; reclaim the Lawrence-Allen Expressway through murals, public art, and a food growing corridor; and support environmental learning, community ownership over public space, and pride in public realm
3	Accessibility	Ensure old and new physical infrastructure like sidewalks and playgrounds is built to support an accessible and integrated community for those with various ability requirements like physical and sensory disabilities
4	Activity	Animate outdoor spaces like parks, community gardens, bake oven, and flower beds to create safer, more useable gathering spaces for residents
5	Wayfinding	Explore the multi-functional use of TTC shelters in Lawrence Heights to incorporate public art, heritage displays, and resident interaction; create public accessories like bike racks, street furniture, information boards, that are multi-use and locally sourced and designed

| 6 | Common Space | Ensure infrastructure in public parks is developed with community input and consider the provision of public restrooms nearby, street furniture, off-leash dog areas, splash pads, and outdoor equipment designed for workouts/exercising; create spaces for people to reflect and remember those who have lost their lives to gun violence. |

Community Connections:

	Priority Themes	Description
1	Social Cohesion	Create intentional moments to foster social connection, relationship building and contact between market, rental and TCH residents, within the Lawrence Heights, Neptune and Lotherton neighbourhoods—and among them
2	Community Identity	Showcase community milestones and resident talent to promote a positive neighbourhood identity, debunk negative neighbourhood stigmas, and recognize both neighbourhood strengths and challenges
3	History Telling	Empower and encourage residents to write, record, and celebrate their community history
4	Intergenerational Links	Develop intergenerational initiatives to share knowledge, experience, and build relationships between older adults and younger generations
5	Resident Leaders	Increase resident-to-resident engagement, capacity building training, and advocacy opportunities within agencies and across communities
6	Space Making	Create additional informal spaces for residents to gather—indoors and outdoors; and dedicate a Multi-Faith & Multicultural Centre for residents to celebrate, teach, and practice their faiths and cultures

Appendix D Action Plan: Action Items—Looking Forward to 2019-2022 in Lawrence Heights

Below is a list of action items identified by residents and local stakeholders that require further attention and support over the next three years. These expand upon the previously mentioned priority themes identified in the Action Plan (see Appendix C). The following action items are quoted directly from the draft Progress Report and Action Plan (Toronto, 2020):

Note: the below are not exhaustive lists; they are selected based on their relevance to my research.

Green Space:

	Action Item	Description
1	Peace Garden	Dedicate an existing or new garden-space to reflect, mourn, and remember people who have lost their lives to gun violence in the community.
2	Transit & Accessibility Audit	Review to create a more interconnected and safe transit network of pedestrian, vehicle, and bicycle transit options that is close to services and amenities.
3	Waste Collection Tools for Beautification	Garbage and recycling containers to keep the Neptune community clean and reduce the amount of garbage left outside and on the ground.
4	Gardeners Collective	A workgroup group dedicated to coordinating access, maintaining accountability and setting garden guidelines and processes.
5	Outdoor Learning Spaces	Dedicate outdoor spaces for learning opportunities like bee pollinators, highlight/protect native plants, animals, and signs displaying history of outdoor spaces.
6	Wayfinding Tools	Animate and provide more signage/ wayfinding tools to indicate where services, special interest areas, parks, community spaces are located in the community.
7	Urban Gardening Seminar	Urban farming workshop series to build knowledge and skills on greenhouse, container, and plot-bed gardening for vertical high-rises.
8	Gardening Plots & Container Gardening	Additional garden plots or locations for container gardening made available in Lotherton.
9	Recreational Space Improvements:	Fix uneven/cracked ground, nets, seating and lighting in the Lotherton soccer field and Neptune basket-ball courts.

10	Movie Festival	Animate park space to host movie nights to bring the community together, animate public spaces, and provide needed evening-based activities.
11	Gardening Tool Library	A peer-to-peer sharing system to increase accessibility and availability of equipment for residents to grow food.
12	Community Clean-Up Days	Yearly event to maintain the cleanliness of the community's green spaces, instill ownership over their community, and connect residents with such spaces.

Community Connections:

While the action items for community connections may not directly speak to green and public spaces, they are actions that could take place within, or further animate, green and public spaces.

	Action Item	Description
1	Cultural Festival	Celebrate the many cultures of Lawrence Heights with food, music, and storytelling to promote inclusion and cross-cultural understanding.
2	"Welcome Home"	Twice annual event for new residents to provide information about the history of the community, a resident-led walking tour, and a directory of local services and amenities.
3	Intergenerational Mentoring Program	Mentorship pairing which promotes greater understanding, learning and respect.
4	"I Am Lawrence Heights" Storytelling	Online, print and in-person campaign to showcase resident talent, celebrate community history, and create a positive neighbourhood identity.
5	Community Art Exchange	Information sessions on the vision, place and benefits of art, as well as engaging others in the process of art-making, exhibitions and art therapy.

Appendix E Community Wellbeing Framework—Indicators and Metrics for the Five Domains

With a focus on community health and well-being, the Community Wellbeing Framework can be applied to existing and future plans and designs related to green and public spaces.

The following indicators and metrics are quoted directly from the Framework (Markovich et al., 2018):

Social Domain:

Indicators	Metrics
1. Welcoming	a) Design, siting, and orientation provide direct physical and visual connections to the public realm b) Public/common areas and points of entry are located along main pedestrian routes and design as special, civic spaces c) Lighting, design and placement is human-scaled, circadian, assists wayfinding along public/common areas, supports a sense of safety, and is sympathetic to the surrounding environment d) Has worked with stakeholders to identify context-specific safety challenges and mitigation strategies, and employed best practice CPTED principles and other tools e) Meets AODA standards and has worked with stakeholders to identify project-specific vulnerable and/or challenged users and designed accordingly f) Designed to accommodate the needs of people of all ages, including children and seniors g) worked with partners and stakeholders to identify and make welcome all context-specific individuals and/or populations
2. Support Systems	a) Is within walking distance of health-related support services b) Is within walking distance of healthy food options c) Provides quiet space for individual repose
3. Socialization	a) Provides access to outdoor social gathering space b) Has worked with stakeholders to identify and accommodate context-specific spaces for social gathering(s)

Environment Domain:

Indicators	Metrics
1. Delight and Enjoyment	a) Maximizes physical and visual connections to nature from public/common areas and from spaces where people typically spend more than four hours per day b) A biophilia plan is developed and implemented for the project, maximizing human-nature interactions for public/common areas and spaces where people typically spend more than four hours per day c) Designed to evoke a sense of awe and encourage people to linger d) Quality design and beauty is a characteristic of the project recognized by users/stakeholders
2. Natural Systems	a) Enhances the ecological function and biodiversity of the site b) Is GHG-neutral (or negative) c) Implements measures to promote water conservation and provides high-quality water treatment for use on-site d) Employs noise reduction materials and measures to reduce ambient noise levels (50 decibels for large public spaces; 40 decibels for general spaces; 30 decibels for quiet spaces]
3. Mobility	a) Provides ample opportunities for people to lead active lifestyles b) Prioritizes and celebrates active modes of transportation and connections to transit, rather than single-occupancy vehicles
4. Resilience	a) Identifies risks and implements a resilience plan b) Develops and implements a climate adaptation plan

Economic Domain:

Indicators	Metrics
1. Affordability	a) It benefits, and can be enjoyed by, people of all income levels within the community
2. Complete Community	a) Enables a balanced lifestyle, connecting people to places to work, live, play, study, take transit, and make quotidian purchases, within walking distance

3. Life-Cycle Value	a) Life-cycle cost analysis (LCCA) conducted as part of the project's business case (including maintenance operation) with results confirming accessible long-term costs and benefits
4. Local Economy	a) Results in a net long-term amplification (of size, strength, diversity) of the local economy and the readiness of a knowledge economy

Cultural Domain:

Indicators	Metrics
1. Cultural Vitality	a) Incorporates visual arts, public art, and/or opportunities for art programming b) Commemorates natural and cultural heritage c) Enables easy access to cultural destinations
2. Sense of Belonging	a) Enables a personal sense of ownership and expression by users b) Identifies and commemorates significant cultural heritage attributes of the site and surroundings, including those of Indigenous peoples
3. Play	a) Provides access to spaces for spontaneous, informal, creative enjoyment p. 88
4. Learning	a) Offers opportunities for all people of all ages to learn and develop (e.g. flexible, joined, and fluid spaces for informal gatherings, individual spots for personal time) b) Communicates contributions to community wellbeing

Political Domain:

| Indicators	Metrics
1. Sense of Ownership and Stewardship	a) Design allows users to control their environment b) Users participate in the stewardship of the project c) Users are engaged in defining and monitoring community well-being indicators
2. Collaboration	a) Process includes clear and effective mechanisms for engaging with ha broad spectrum of professional disciplines and stakeholders, from the outset

	b)	Project outcomes establish mechanisms and spaces for ongoing collaboration with, and among, stakeholders
3. Integration	a)	Effectively integrates a diversity of professional perspectives from inception throughout the life of project/space

Appendix F Potential Locations for Heritage Interpretation in the Revitalized Neighbourhood

The below illustrative map (Figure 18 from the Lawrence Heights Heritage Interpretation Plan) proposes strategies and potential locations for heritage interpretation in the new Lawrence Heights (Gladki et al., 2015, p. 47). The Heritage Interpretation Plan provides a detailed framework that can guide residents, development partners, planners, Toronto Community Housing and others in the implementation of the proposed strategies.
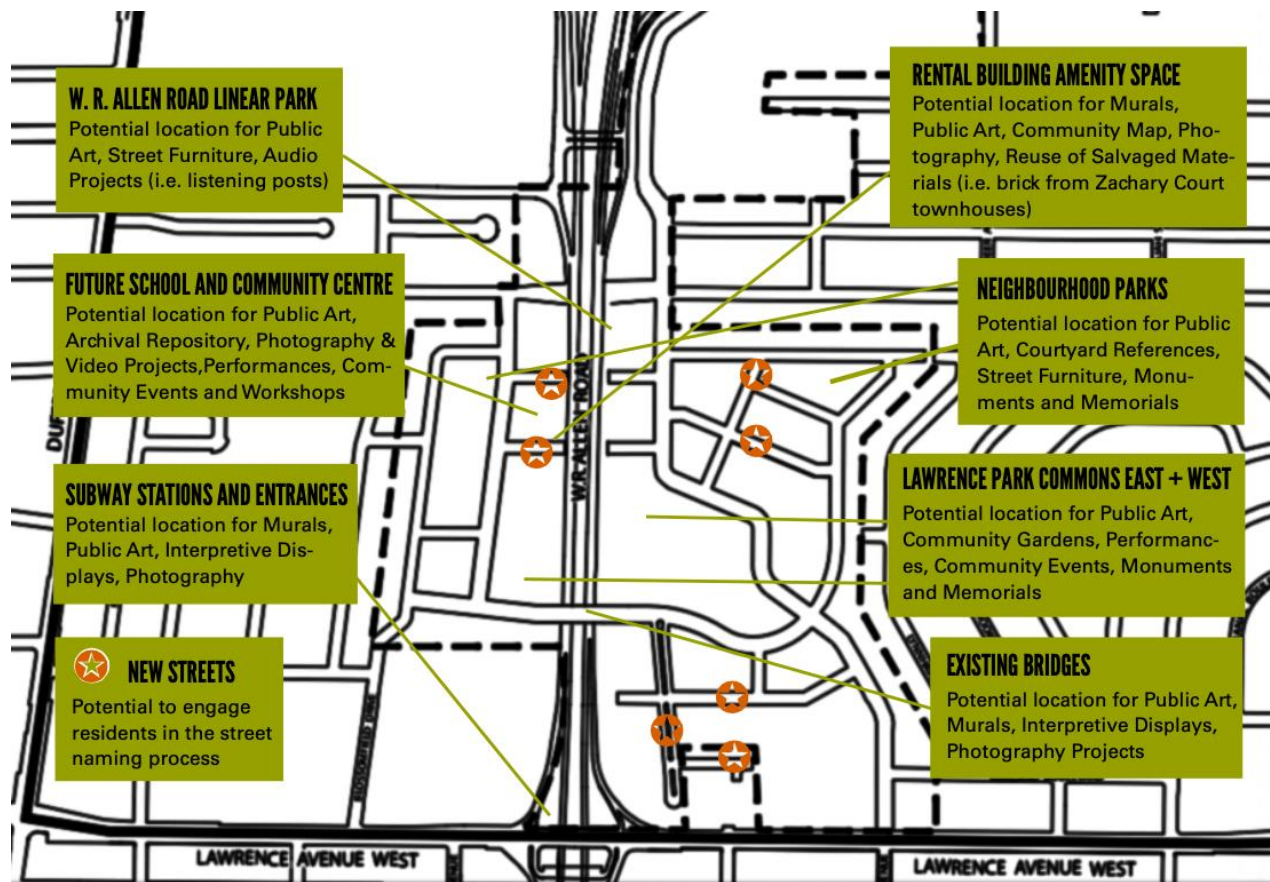
Appendix G Grassroots Groups, Committees, and Agency Partners

Various actors sit at the table and are involved in shaping Lawrence Heights as well as informing revitalization. I believe the extent to which community engagement and development are exhibited in Lawrence Heights would not be possible without the continuous collaboration between residents and local stakeholders, as well as through the creation of grassroots groups and committees. This appendix provides a non-exhaustive list of stakeholders that have supported Lawrence Heights before and during revitalization.

The Lawrence Heights Inter-Organization Network (LHION) (n.d.) is a "coalition of organizations, service providers, residents and community groups that work to coordinate the delivery of programs and services in the communities of Lawrence Heights, Neptune, and Lotherton". LHION oversees and advances six community action committees:

1) Seniors
2) Healthy Living
3) Youth Development and Leadership
4) Safety, Housing and Community Space
5) Community Action and Civic Participation
6) Economic Opportunities and Employment

Establishing various action committees helps to ensure that there is diversity, representation, and inclusion of all groups when identifying and responding to community needs, concerns, and interests. The six action committees were developed based on the six priority areas identified by residents and stakeholders.

Each action committee has one elected resident co-chair and one elected agency partner co-chair. For instance, TESS and Social Planning Toronto respectively co-chair the Employment Committee and the Civic Participation and Community Action Committee. Other action committee members also attend these meetings, including agency partners and residents. This approach builds capacity and demonstrates my previous discussion that expert opinions should support and empower local knowledge.

Agency Partners (not an exhaustive list):
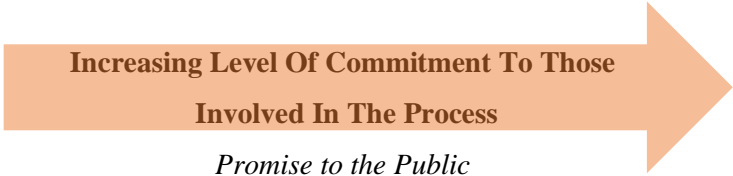- ArtStarts
- Barbara Frum Library

- City of Toronto Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA)—Community Development Unit (CDU)
- North York Community House (NYCH)
- North York Harvest Food Bank
- Pathways to Education
- Social Planning Toronto
- Toronto Employment & Social Services (TESS)
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC)
- Unison Health & Community Services'
- Community Crisis Response Program (CCRP)

There are also many grassroots resident groups, such as Hope and Hustle Heights as well as Feisty Seniors, which support community connections and contribute to the animation and well-being of Lawrence Heights. Grassroots resident groups should always be engaged in planning processes as they are advocates for particular subject groups and interest areas. Based on my experiences, Lawrence Heights demonstrates a compelling case for planners to become more engaged with local communities and familiar with the scope of actors who should be involved in community engagement processes.

Appendix H Public Participation Spectrum

The below chart is quoted and adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), as cited in Elton Consulting (2003, p. B07-063). It is a useful resource on the spectrum of engagement, levels of commitment and the associated objectives that each form of engagement is set out to achieve. To achieve the highest level of public impact, community engagement as a planning process should empower communities.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Participation Spectrum

Increasing Level Of Public Impact →

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Objective				
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public and private concerns are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public

Increasing Level Of Commitment To Those Involved In The Process →

Promise to the Public

We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns,	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in	To place final decision making in the hands of the public

and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible

Appendix I Policy Framework and Tools

The planning policy framework for Lawrence Heights is shaped by provincial legislation and policy, with detailed goals and objectives set out in the City of Toronto's Official Plan and the Lawrence-Allen Secondary Plan that are a product of the Lawrence Heights planning process. Planning policy framework and guidelines reinforce and expand on one another and assist in creating healthier, more animated communities. The (re)development of neighbourhoods like Lawrence Heights requires interdisciplinary collaboration between the province, municipalities, and local stakeholders to protect, improve, restore, and animate public and green spaces (Toronto, 2019). Based on my review of the policies, I believe there is a need to develop more comprehensive land-use planning policies and design guidelines that increase the provision of high-quality green and public spaces and promote community liveability, well-being, public health, and resilience. This appendix provides a non-exhaustive list of planning policy framework, design guidelines, and social development policies that I looked at to deepen my understanding of green and public spaces in (re)developing neighbourhoods. Planning policy framework and design guidelines include but are not limited to:

- *Planning Act:* Provincial legislation that sets out the rules that manage and control Ontario's land use planning.
- *Provincial Policy Statement ("PPS"):* Is issued under Section 3 of the Planning Act and provides direction for land use planning and development in keeping with provincial interests.
- *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe ("Growth Plan"):* This is a provincial policy and tool which helps manage and direct future growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region.
- *City of Toronto Official Plan ("OP"):* Conforms to the Growth Plan and the Planning Act. It provides strategies, guidelines and policies that help "balance[e] social, economic and environmental needs and priorities" (Toronto, 2019, p. 3-1). It includes thirty-four Secondary Plans.
- *Lawrence-Allen Secondary Plan:* This is an amendment to the City of Toronto Official Plan, providing strategies, guidelines and policies related to the Lawrence-Allen area. It was approved by City Council in 2011, enabling TCH (n.d.) to advance revitalization.
- *Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan ("LARP"):* Offers a detailed vision for Lawrence Heights and the Lawrence-Allen neighbourhood over the next 20 years. I aligned my report with key planning directions and themes identified in the LARP, including mobility, liveability and placemaking.

- *Lawrence-Allen Public Realm Master Plan:* Ensures that revitalization is consistent with the City of Toronto Official Plan and the Lawrence-Allen Secondary Plan. Provides direction for investment, revitalization, programming and design of green and public spaces.
- *Lawrence-Allen Urban Design Guidelines:* Ensures that revitalization is consistent with and supports the City of Toronto Official Plan and the Lawrence-Allen Secondary Plan. Encompasses guidelines, plans, and design practices that foster placemaking and produce a green, high-quality public realm.

In addition to the planning policy framework and design guidelines are a set of social development policies that contribute to the planning process. Social development policies underscore community assets, community engagement and development. These include but are not limited to:

- *2020 Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy (TSNS):* Activates people, resources, and neighbourhood-friendly policies that support healthy communities in Toronto's 140 neighbourhoods and 31 Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA), including Lawrence Heights. The five main domains in the TSNS are healthy lives, economic opportunities, physical surroundings, social development, and participation in decision-making.
- *Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC), a United Way Initiative:* Identifies community concerns and develops action plans for community revitalization.
- *Building Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy (United Way Toronto)*: aims to improve access to community supports and services, supports ANC and Resident Action Grants, focuses on investment and developing partnerships.
- *Strong Neighbourhoods – A Call to Action, Report:* Provides strategies for revitalization projects, specifically those in identified neighbourhoods that require greater investment and support. It prioritizes civic engagement and inclusion.

Social development policies specific to Lawrence Heights:
- *Shaping Our Community Together: Our Social Development & Action Plan for Lawrence Heights (2012) ("Social Development Plan"):* Guides revitalization and the transition to a mixed-income and mixed-use neighbourhood. It focuses on six key themes: green space, employment, community connections, community services, safety, and housing. It places a central focus on social infrastructure and programming.
- *Lawrence Heights Heritage Interpretation Plan (2015):* Developed in collaboration with residents as per recommendations and policies set out by the Social Development Plan, Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Study, and the Lawrence-Allen Secondary Plan. It is intended to

provide strategies for each phase of revitalization that will preserve and highlight the tangible and intangible cultural features and histories in Lawrence Heights.

- ▪ ***2012-2018 Progress Report, Lawrence-Allen 2019-2022 Action Plan, draft (2020) ("Impact Report and Action Plan"):*** Distinguishes emerging issues and action items in Lawrence Heights related to the six priority themes of the Social Development Plan that require further support and investment during and after revitalization.

In my opinion, planning tools and policy frameworks including the Planning Act, Official Plans, Secondary Plans, and the Growth Plan do not demonstrate a community development approach to planning, nor are they holistic and comprehensive. There should be a greater effort to embrace and integrate social development policies. This produces new opportunities for built and natural environments to foster community development.