NO 'WALK IN THE PARK': NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITIES OF ECOLOGICAL GENTRIFICATION IN TORONTO

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ABSTRACT

This major research paper aims to understand the phenomena of green gentrification in the context of the City of Toronto, in Ontario, Canada. Through a literature review, various scales of mechanisms that contributed to gentrification in the historical, social, political, and environmental context of Toronto were examined. Then, insights from local city planners in various capacities were collected through semi-structured interviews. The resulting framework recommends context-specific guidelines for studying ecological gentrification, which include paying heed to planning policies, displacement patterns and mechanisms, factors impacting neighbourhood stability and economic development, and community engagement and inclusivity.

DEDICATION

To the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change, which was the first place outside my home country that instilled a feeling of belonging in me.

In every neighbourhood I walk in
buildings, tired or wired,
the streets, slim or bloated,
strolling pedestrians, whether artists, seniors, or light-footed children
or hurrying businessmen and women;
even the parklets, their features and sizes,
and the trees, and where they hail from,
they all sing to me tales unseen by others.
they paint vivid pictures of their histories,
the processes that carried them here,
or the reasonings behind their design.

An interconnected web
of ideas, causes, and effects,
as vast and complex as the ground I am raised upon
at latitude 44 and longitude 79,
has taken shape in my mental landscape.

It's as if riding this earth
six times around the giving sun,
in a crimson brick building
with windows as wide as my eyes
has given me ultraviolet vision
that peels away the layers
of this urban landscape,
to observe the cracks,
to recognize where we erred in the past,
to learn from faulty policies and designs.

To stand on the ruins
of legends of the past;
maybe it is only so,
that we learn to
redefine spaces to
encompass belonging.
Soles lined with Yellow Brick dust;
it is at last the time
not only to envision,
but to roll up the sleeves
to build a landscape
no longer guided by the rules of
blind men walking on clouds.

On this ground,
Let there be
an Emerald City
far from perfection, but
immaculate in every imperfection;
where homes
do not displace our bodies or minds,
and their burden
don't crush residents under them;
and the wizards know every citizen by name,
even of every Munchkin.
A place where life and all of its qualities can flourish,
and every Scarecrow and Tinperson
is rightfully welcome.

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Finally, to my family – my mom, dad, and sisters – thank you for your undivided love and support through the winding path that has brought me to this moment. I would not be where I am without you.

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PREFACE

I started the journey of my master's program aspiring to focus on the connection of mental health and urban green spaces. I applied to the program in late 2020 at the height of the pandemic, and living during the pandemic made me realize that green spaces are an important part of city infrastructure for uplifting mood and focus. In that time, I was working from home in an internship at the City of Toronto Planning department, and the only way I could handle the isolation, was discovering the parks and trails in walking distance of my home. As I read more about urban planning issues, I was exposed to a plethora of other matters I wanted to focus on as well, one of them being housing. When I learned about the concept of green gentrification, I wanted to include it in the scope of my research, and with the advice of my supervisor, I chose to focus on one of the two topics instead. My research is therefore about green gentrification, but as I will describe, housing is always on my mind.

Reading more about green gentrification led me to the seminal works of Dr. Lorien Nesbitt and Jessica Quinton at UBC who study green gentrification. When I started to perform my research, I reached out to them to seek guidance as to how they think I should approach my topic. One day in early August 2023, I met with Jessica Quinton online and discussed the findings of my interviews and brainstormed with her as to how to form my arguments. I was under the impression that green gentrification as I was looking for it, does not seem to occur in a significant way in Toronto, according to my interviewees. However, there were other topics that came up related to displacement, namely the displacement of park users through design, and the removal of encampments from parks. Jessica expressed similar concerns and suggested exploring the other topics more in-depth. While I agreed with her in principle, I stated that I was hesitant to discuss encampments and homelessness in general in my paper, as it is a complex and political topic.

An hour later I left the house to meet my sister. I got into my car and drove into the street as it was raining. As I waited in the traffic at the intersection, I saw a woman holding a sign that said "hungry", so I took out my wallet and looked for change, but the only cash I had was one loonie. As I approached her, I pulled down the window and apologized that I had so little. She replied that anything helped and started singing to me: "I wanna know, have you experienced the rain?" I was stumped as to how to reply and commented that the rain was beautiful. She replied, "Yes, maybe for you. You're in a car!"
I felt embarrassed and pulled the window up and drove away as the traffic had cleared. On the way, I regretted my comment. I reflected on the hurried conversation and realized what she was asking. Yes, I had experienced the rain in my own way. Experiencing unstable housing and having to move six times the previous year, made me feel that I could relate to her in a small way. I wished I thought in the

moment to at least give her my umbrella. I wished I told her as a future planner I will find ways to build more affordable housing. But for her, affordable housing is not relevant. I wish I could ask her where she lived. What if she lived in a tent in a neighbourhood park?

Then it occurred to me: Toronto parks may not displace residences of people, but the City's park planning policies, processes and by-laws displace people living in parks. That's still physical and psychological displacement. I realized however uncomfortable studying encampments in Toronto parks may make me, I need to include them in some form in my research. I don't want to be like politicians who pretend problems like this don't exist and refuse to address them. I can relate to people experiencing homelessness, in a small way. If I don't address this issue, who else will?

In 2019, I struggled to afford housing due to a split with my former partner, so I moved in with my sister in her place in North York and later moved to St. Catharines for an internship, where I shared a two-bedroom apartment in a heritage building for a reasonable price. After the internship, I moved back to Toronto, but the only place I could afford was a two-bedroom apartment on Weston Road, where numerous robberies took place in my building. I signed a year-long rental contract with each roommate, but later learned I was considered a boarder. In January 2023, my roommate couldn't afford the rent and moved back to his mom's place, and as I was not named on the contract, I could not stay. I was previously on a waitlist, and at that time I finally received an offer from university housing for an affordable rent and moved in the bachelor unit in February, and started buying furniture to make my space more homey. However, in March 2023, I noticed cockroaches and by April they were growing larger, and that led me to move out and leaving most of my furniture behind due to a phobia of insects. A friend's shared house had a vacant room, so I moved there. Living within walking distance of Downsview Park, and walking there almost every day affected my mood positively.

In hindsight, from April 2022 to May 2023, having moved six times, the only consistency in my life was forced displacement, the majority of which was because of unaffordability. After all, many Toronto residents are being displaced everyday, regarding if they live in close proximity to a park or not. Thus, the singing woman (as I can only call her), led me to realize that perhaps the way I "experienced the rain" was worthy of being included in the major paper as well, as it is a true testament of my understanding of the housing issues in Toronto.

Feminist theorists have long highlighted the crucial role of urban public spaces, from parks and squares to streets, in the daily lives of citizens, facilitating interactions with unfamiliar individuals and serving as significant manifestations of civic engagement and participatory democracy. These spaces provided

room for “collectivity, belonging, and identity”, allowing citizens to come together, express shared values, and challenge societal norms, advancing established rights and advocating for new ones (Peake 2020, Gender and the City, p. 289). However, feminist scholars highlight the importance of acknowledging the exclusion of women experiencing economic disadvantage, mental health challenges, and homelessness in these public spaces (Peake 2020, p. 289). As such, I chose to look at my experience as what feminist theorists would call an embodied emotional experience of the City, one that inspired me and led me to new directions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since before the COVID-19 pandemic, research has been undertaken on how urban parks of different sizes and qualities can improve residents' mental health in their neighbourhoods (Cox et al., 2017; Francis et al., 2012). During the pandemic and resultant lockdowns people used parks to strengthen social bonds, improve their sense of belonging in the community, and to improve mental and physical health. The importance of parks and public space for communities emerged at the forefront of urban planning discourse; organizations such as Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI), Project for Public Spaces, and various newspapers published articles highlighting this topic (see Myrick, 2020; Brockbank, 2020). Also, among similar scholarly articles published in various cities, is a study by Volenec et al. (2021) which discusses the positive impact of public green spaces on the mental health of community members during the lockdowns of 2020 in New Jersey, and their important role as resources for health and recreation (p. 12-14).

Moreover, a study by Park People found that park use in Canada increased significantly during the pandemic, and respondents reported positive impacts on their mental health (85%), physical health (81%), and social connections (71%) (Park People, 2021, p. 11).

However, recent studies have shown that the development of certain urban parks tends to inadvertently cause the displacement of vulnerable communities through green gentrification (Anguelovski 2018). I believe one of the ways to reclaim parks as true places of physical and mental health restoration is to find the drivers and driving mechanisms of gentrification led by green development and to seek to prevent gentrification in future developments, which this major research paper aims to address.

The definition of green gentrification that I initially adopted for my research is one used by Quinton et al. (2020, p. 974), where "vegetative green gentrification" is a process in which capital (re)investment and greening create landscape change geared towards a higher class of residents, resulting in the displacement of marginalized households". The authors state that green gentrification is "complex to define, identify, and understand—in part because of the evolution and multiple mutations of gentrification" (Quinton et al., 2020, p. 970). Quinton et al. (2020) frame green gentrification as a result of local context influencing greening endeavours and encourage researchers to consider the entire experience of gentrification instead of any one individual indicator (p. 974). They further highlight the importance of rejecting the assumption of a migrating template for gentrification and paying attention to both outcomes and underlying processes and mechanisms (Quinton et al., p. 974). As such I believe

that studying green gentrification in Toronto's specific historical, social, political, and environmental context is important.

The analysis of my findings from the interviews led me to adopt a broader definition to encompass the various kinds of displacement caused by green development in Toronto. Using the term ecological gentrification, in the following pages, I discuss my findings from interviewing professional planners in the field to gain a better understanding of the local context. This insight, informed by a literature review of historical gentrification in Toronto led me to devise a place-based conceptual framework for studying ecological gentrification in Toronto, which recommends context-specific guidelines through paying heed to planning policies, displacement patterns and mechanisms, factors impacting neighbourhood stability and economic development, and community engagement and inclusivity.

2. RESEARCH APPROACH

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 OVERVIEW

The initial purpose of this research was to study green gentrification in Toronto. Quinton et al. (2020) frame green gentrification as a result of local context influencing greening endeavours, rather than a direct result of any one indicator. These authors encourage researchers to consider the entire experience of gentrification, rejecting the assumption of a migrating template for gentrification, and rather paying attention to outcomes and underlying processes and mechanisms (Quinton et al., 2020, p. 974). To understand the local context and nuances of the social, economic and political forces that affect gentrification mechanisms in Toronto, I sought to draw upon the experience of practicing city planners, through semi-structured interviews. The journey however, led me to change my direction slightly, changing the scope and key definitions later in the process, which I will discuss in more depth in section 2.1.3.

2.1.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

As a racialized female academic, I don't ascribe to the Enlightenment epistemology, which is founded on the white male's dominance in science, delegitimizing women as knowledge producers (Strega & Brown, 2015, p. 6). I rather prefer to adopt a post-structuralist feminist standpoint in my work, as feminist scholars highlight the importance of challenging mainstream worldviews in knowledge production related to social justice issues (Strega & Brown, 2015, p. 2). Counter to the hegemonic discourse founded on the Enlightenment epistemology, the theory of "research as praxis" recognizes that knowledge is shaped by historical, social, and cultural factors, thus affirming its “situated and contingent” nature; research as praxis seeks to address power imbalances (Strega & Brown, 2015, p. 6, 10). In a poststructuralist approach to urban planning and social justice research, this theory involves challenging dominant narratives and power structures to create space for diverse understandings and experiences of the world (Strega & Brown, 2015, p. 19).

Another anti-hegemonic, poststructuralist approach to the account of Method, as the philosophical underpinning and the way of practice, is employing greater methodological variety in social sciences (Law, 2004, p. 4, 6, 10). To broaden and remake Method, Law calls for “unmaking many of our methodological habits”, such as our unrelenting desire for certainty, the anticipation of consistently reaching relatively steady conclusions on phenomena; the conviction that as social scientists, we

possess unique perspectives that enable us to look more deeply into specific aspects of social reality; and the aspirations for broad applicability and "universalism" of theories and mechanisms (Law, 2004, p.9). He hopes that researchers in social science adopt "vulnerable method", "modest method", and "diverse method" (Law, 2004, p.11). One example of this can the counter-story telling, which in critical race methodology is a tool that exposes, analyzes, and challenges dominant narratives of racial privilege (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32).

Paying heed to Strega and Brown (2015), and Law (2004), breaking away from the affinity to universalisms and reproducibility of findings, I adopt a feminist poststructuralist approach, which is vulnerable and diverse in expression. As a social science academic, it seemed natural to incorporate the lived experience and expertise of a range of city planners, through a method I later learned was called Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. Also, these planners were from diverse platforms: non-profit organizations, municipalities, conservation authorities, and the private sector, the variety of which offered a multidimensional lens to the issues that I raised in interviews. I also incorporated my own lived experience [as described in the preface], as "an embodied emotional experience of the City" (Peake, 2020, 289), and "counter storytelling" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 2).

2.1.3 RESEARCH TRAJECTORY

In this section, I describe my research trajectory, which defied any regularity in form; as mentioned earlier, circumstances led me to adjust my course, changing the scope and key definitions later in the process. I describe where I started and where I have landed to conclude this research. Initially, I intended to use mixed methods to utilize quantitative and geospatial data analysis and bridge any possible shortcomings in understanding the social dimensions of underlying processes with semi-structured interviews of city planners. The original research question was: Should we study green gentrification in Toronto? If yes, through what approach, trends and indicators should it be studied? If not, why not?

To respond to the original research question, I planned to complete a gray literature review on green gentrification focusing on the Canadian context, highlighting why this research is important to be undertaken and evaluating the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and gaps in the literature. I aimed to perform interviews with city planners to discuss a possible place-based approach (see Anguelovski 2014, Chapter 7) to study green gentrification in Toronto. To devise a possible approach to studying green gentrification, I aimed to consult with Professor Nesbitt regarding her approach and continue to investigate possible data sources (GIS, city planning, park reports and studies, StatsCan and related studies, CMHC data, etc. see figure 1) My recommended approach would seek to examine local

examples of green gentrification by using available historical statistical and geospatial data to track gentrification in proximity to greenspaces in Toronto and overlay this data with park development projects to identify possible correlations. Then, I would use these findings to identify parks to examine more closely in a green gentrification case study to understand the local nuances more comprehensively. In addition, I looked to explore the literature and precedents for place-based anti-displacement policies and inclusive greening policies, including possible tools and available resources (see Anguelovski 2020). The resulting framework would recommend context-specific guidelines and recommend conducting interviews with experienced professionals in the field, as well as studying the best practices in anti-displacement policies and practices, both transnationally and internationally. The following table shows an initial list of the available data I located for each indicator of gentrification.

Category	Topic	Data	Date Range	Resolution (Neigh /CT?)	Source	Reason to Capture
Demographics	ethnic proportion	ethnic/caucasian proportion	2006 - 2021	CT. neigh	Stats can, City Neigh profiles	track socioeconomic shifts
	education	level of education	2006 - 2021	CT. neigh	Stats can, City Neigh profiles	track socioeconomic shifts
	age	age	2006 - 2021	CT. neigh	Stats can, City Neigh profiles	track socioeconomic shifts
Socioeconomic	income	median (or mean) income	2006 - 2021	CT. neigh	Stats can, City Neigh profiles	track socioeconomic shifts
	Housing Ownership	home ownership rate	2006 - 2021	CT. neigh	Stats can, City Neigh profiles	track socioeconomic shifts
	poverty	poverty rate	2006 - 2021	CT. neigh	Stats can, City Neigh profiles	track socioeconomic shifts
Housing	dwelling type	dwelling type	2006 -2016	CT. neigh	Stats can, City Neigh profiles	track exclusionary displacement
	dwelling tenure	dwelling tenure (rental or ownership)	2006-2016	Neigh	CMHC	track exclusionary displacement
	cost	housing cost (or value)	2006-2016	Neigh	CMHC	track exclusionary displacement
		average rent	2006-2016	Neigh	CMHC	track exclusionary displacement
	private/social	private/social housing proportion	2006-2016	Neigh	CMHC, Social Housing Toronto	track exclusionary displacement
Parks /greenspaces	establishment (North York)	parks masterplan; landuse map; City Maps aerials	aerial (05,09,11,12,15-18, 21); BG report parks (80); OP Landuse maps (94); post-amal map (98?)	n/a	city of Toronto, PFR, TPL	pinpoint correlation with gentrification
	establishment (Etobicoke)	OP parks/ land use maps, parks masterplan;City Maps aerials	aerial (05,09,11,12,15-18, 21); parks maps (88); masterplan (69,92) Landuse (88,99); post-amal map (98?)	n/a	city of Toronto, PFR, TPL	pinpoint correlation with gentrification
	establishment (old City of Toronto)	OP parks/ land use maps, parks masterplan;City Maps aerials	aerial (05,09,11,12,15-18, 21); masterplan (2004); post-amal map (98?)	n/a	city of Toronto, PFR, TPL	pinpoint correlation with gentrification
	mechanisms (rezoning, brownfield rem, conservation etc.)	the table on parks from brownfields; Large parks assignment (policy)	1989-2000	n/a	De souza (2003);	pinpoint correlation with gentrification; policy analysis

Figure 1 Possible data sources for research in gentrification

However, due to evolving circumstances, my supervisor and I agreed that instead of conducting the research on green gentrification in Toronto, I would instead design an approach for studying the phenomenon. What resulted from this adjusted course of action, is two major changes on how I present my major research. One change is that instead of offering an approach, in this work I offer a conceptual framework, as it is a method best suited for understanding social phenomena, and offers an interpretive and indeterminist approach to studying social reality (Jabareen, 2009, p.51). Another change that came later on was using different vocabulary to describe my findings. I originally focused on the concept of green gentrification, however, as various layers of social justice issues emerged in my interviews with

participants, I felt that the concept of green gentrification did not entirely encompass the my findings. Therefore, I adopted the concept of ecological gentrification, which by definition fit into my work better.

To complete this major research, I first consulted literature that described potential approaches to doing research, as opposed to describing research completed, as guides for the format of my paper. I also explored literature on gentrification patterns in Toronto to understand the various social, economic, political, and environmental forces at play. I performed a literature review on gentrification focusing on the Canadian context to better understand the assumptions that scholars make about the causes and effects of green gentrification. To understand gentrification in Toronto, I explored the works of prominent Canadian urban scholars such as Alan Walks (2008, 2021), David Ley (2003), John Caulfield (1994), and others to gain a better understanding of historical social, economic and environmental contexts that influence gentrification patterns. I applied a feminist angle of inquiry to the study of gentrification as well, by exploring the works of Liz Bondi (1994), Leslie Kern (2010, 2013, 2022), Linda Peake (2013, 2020), Damaris Rose (2010, 2015) and others.

I have provided a summary of my findings in Chapter 5; a table with specific indicators and mechanisms of each article is included in Appendix A. As Quinton et al. (2020, p. 974) concur, investigating the mechanisms through which greening drives gentrification, can assist in developing a more precise definition for green gentrification.

2.1.4 RESEARCH TIMELINE

The research process commenced with my MES II-III exam in May 2023, starting with background research for a literature review, and preparation of an ethics application. The ethics protocol application was approved on July 7, 2023, and participants were formally contacted starting July 19th. Interviews were initially scheduled from July 31 – August 31, 2023, but the period had to be extended to September 14th, 2023, to accommodate summer vacations. After interviews were completed, analysis and composition of the final draft of the research paper went on until November 2nd, 2023, when it was submitted to the research supervisor, and the final copy was submitted to the faculty of Environmental and Urban Change on December 4th, 2023.

2.1.5 SAMPLING

City planners who had work experience in the City of Toronto were chosen as interview participants. Most participants were previously known to me, identified through professional connections and LinkedIn, or referred by such individuals. In total, data was collected from ten participants, including six from the public sector, two from the private sector, and two from the non-profit sector. They included

representatives from local government, conservation authorities, landscape architecture firms, planning consultancy firms, nonprofit organizations, and a local University. Most participants chose to remain anonymous.

2.1.6 DATA COLLECTION

The ten individuals participated in live virtual interviews, averaging around one hour in length. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, which allowed for precision and direct quotes. The interview guide and the list of questions can be found in Appendix B. Employing semi-structured interviews as feminist methodology not only enabled the exploration of emerging themes and ideas but also provided me with insight into the lived experience of participants as not only professionals but residents in the observation of local gentrification patterns over time. These interviews explored the understanding of planners of green gentrification in Toronto by asking about their professional opinions and personal experience observing gentrification patterns generally and around green spaces. Interview questions were adapted and evolved based on emerging patterns.

2.1.7 DATA ANALYSIS

An informal content analysis using sticky notes supplemented and dissected emerging themes and topics from the interviews. Also, various grey literature were consulted, including the City of Toronto Parkland Strategy (O2 Planning + Design et. al., 2019), the City of Toronto Facilities Masterplan (Moneith Brown Planning Consultants, 2017), and various Staff reports which are all publicly available.

2.1.8 DATA MANAGEMENT

All of the interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of participants and transcribed by transcription software. Written records, video and audio recordings, and other data were stored securely in an encrypted external hard drive in a secure place, to be destroyed after two years, which is the standard for the discipline. Participants were informed of this data storage process on the consent form. The transcripts were manually tagged using pre-determined codes based on the questions asked and interview themes.

2.1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Due to the sensitivity of interview-based research, this study underwent a rigorous ethics approval process by the Office of Research Ethics (ORE) at York University. All study details, including methodology, interview outreach tactics, and interview questions were approved.

2.2 Limitations

One limitation of this study is the number of participants. Out of the 30 planners who responded to the invitation to participate in this research, only 10 agreed to attend the interview. Among the reasons for declining to do so were that the planners felt they were not familiar with the topic (9), or the participants felt they were too early in their career to have a conclusive opinion on this topic (3 participants); the others did not have the time to commit. I have discussed various perceptions which could have contributed to this apprehension in section 4.4. Also, many issues were raised by participants, which I could not address in the scope of this paper. I have discussed some of these topics in section 6, as future research directions that may flow out of this work.

3. CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Active parks: parks that include many layers of programming, such as playgrounds, basketball courts, tennis courts, etc.

Brownfield: abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.

Capital Budget: The capital budget pays for the assets that underpin service delivery in the city. It funds the development and repair of public transportation, roads, bridges, public buildings such as libraries, community centres, and fire stations, water and sewer utilities, parks, and other large infrastructure projects. As part of the yearly budget process, the City of Toronto develops and submits a new 10-year Capital Budget and Plan each year. The capital budget is supported by reserves, development charges, other levels of government, and borrowing or incurring debt.

Capital project: a capital project is large infrastructure projects. In the case of Toronto Parks & Forestry (PFR), it typically involves the planning, design and construction of PFR assets such as active, or passive parks, trails or community recreation centres. It may also include State of Good Repair Projects on existing assets, over a certain value.

CIL: section 42 cash-in-lieu policy

Condoization: refers to the process of converting rental apartment buildings into condominiums for private sale and purchase. It involves the transformation of the tenure and governance of the building to accommodate the new ownership structure and involves various agents, knowledge, logic, and processes that are necessary for the establishment and management of condominiums (Grisdale & Walks, 2022, p. 230).

Development: As stated in sec. 41 of the *Planning Act*; the construction, erection or placing of one or more buildings or structures on land or the making of an addition or alteration to a building or structure that has the effect of substantially increasing the size or usability thereof.

Ecological gentrification: implementing an environmental planning agenda relating to public green space, which results in the displacement or exclusion of the most economically vulnerable community while advocating an environmental ethic (Dooling, 2009, p. 630).

Exclusionary displacement: indirect forms of displacement that forestall working-class tenants over time (i.e., renovations and/or conversion of units to homeownership), as it is the most visible indicator of gentrification. At least three mechanisms may cause exclusionary displacement: 1) changes in housing stock kinds, including condominium construction; 2) changes in tenure types (e.g., rental vs. owner-occupancy) and private vs. social housing. (Walks et al., 2021, p. 627-628).

Facility: indoor recreation buildings and outdoor active recreation spaces such as basketball courts

FMP: City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan

Gentrification: a multifaceted notion that may be defined as a process in which relatively higher-income individuals move to less affluently populated metropolitan areas, resulting in the rehabilitation or reconstruction of the physical environment and the attraction of new cultural institutions. Feminist scholars also identify its links to changes in both paid and unpaid work, as well as shifts in women's positions in both formal and informal sectors, resulting from changes in home structure and gender makeup of the labour force (Bondi, 1994, p. 182).

Green development: the act of planning, designing, and construction of greenspace in urban areas.

Green gentrification: a process in which capital (re)investment and greening leads to landscape change tailored for a higher class of residents, causing the displacement of marginalized households (Quinton et al., 2020, p. 970). Authors list the following indicators of green gentrification:

1. Capital reinvestment;
2. Social upgrading of an area by high-income in-movers;
3. Landscape change; and
4. Displacement of low-income groups (p. 970)

Green space paradox: refers to the conflicting result of creating urban green spaces in low-income communities. Despite the best intentions to redress historical injustices, the existence of these green amenities frequently leads to increased land values and the displacement of minority populations into less desired locations with less green spaces. This contradiction also applies to the redevelopment of formerly industrial locations, where efforts to combine economic growth with environmental values can result in gentrification and the development of sustainable urban developments. The significance of these processes is highlighted in the literature, particularly in relation to the cleanup of locally undesirable land uses (LULUs) such as brownfield sites. (Anguelovski 2018, 462-463)

Greenspace: greenspace of varying sizes, accessible by the public, can be categorized as active or passive, including linear parks.

GTA: Greater Toronto Area, which includes the City of Toronto, as well as municipalities within the Regions of Halton, Peel, York, and Durham.

LULUs: locally undesirable land uses

Nature/ passive parks: parks with little to no programming, designated for the conservation and enjoyment of nature

Park development: the act of planning, designing, and construction of active or passive parks in urban areas.

Parks: greenspace of varying sizes, accessible by the public, can be categorized as active or passive.

PFR: City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation

POPS: Privately Owned Public Spaces

Re-investment: investing public or partnership funds on major alterations, expansions, or renovations to an existing facility

Revitalization: major alterations, expansions, or renovations to an existing facility

SOGR: state of good repair; State of Good Repair funding extends the useable life of facilities by remediating deficiencies identified by asset condition assessments, such as mechanical systems, roofing, structural systems, flooring and equipment replacement.

Toronto: Refers to lands within the municipal boundary of the City of Toronto.

Yuppy: an expression used for the class of young, urban professionals.

4. GREEN GENTRIFICATION IN TORONTO

4.1 How gentrification has been studied in Toronto (a brief history)

In this section, I provide a literature review of selected works of prominent Canadian urban scholars on gentrification in Toronto to gain a better understanding of historical social, economic and environmental contexts that influence gentrification patterns. I also apply a feminist lens to examine the role of gender in gentrification in the local context.

Studies of gentrification in Toronto illustrate various mechanisms at play, which I find useful to group into four categories: deindustrialization, leveraging the profit potential of landscape identities, municipal policies, and condoization.

In the 1980s, Toronto experienced deindustrialization, which was characterized by the decline of the manufacturing sector and the loss of industrial jobs and a shift towards a knowledge-based economy, with an emphasis on creative and cultural industries (Hracs, 2007, p.34). This shift attracted young professionals and artists to the city, leading to the gentrification of neighbourhoods.

One mechanism that contributed to gentrification in Toronto is the leveraging of the profit potential of landscape identities. Ethnic packaging, cultural capital, and the artist-effect played a role in this process. Ethnic commercial strips, such as those in the Kensington Market and Chinatown neighbourhoods, functioned as marketable branding mechanisms that produced nearby residential gentrification (Hackworth & Rekers, 2005, p. 212). These areas were marketed as culturally diverse and vibrant, attracting affluent residents who were interested in the cultural amenities offered by these neighbourhoods (Hackworth & Rekers, 2005, p. 215). Additionally, artists played a significant role in the gentrification process. Ley (2003) mentions that Toronto artists who lived in neighbourhoods like Yorkville, the Annex, and Don Vale in 1971 subsequently relocated to Riverdale, Queen Street West, and Parkdale, leading to price inflation and gentrification in these areas. The role of cultural capital, as discussed by Ley (2003, p.13), highlights how the societal valorization of the cultural competencies of artists brings followers richer in economic capital, contributing to gentrification. As such, artists are seen as agents of gentrification, contributing to the aestheticization of neighbourhoods and attracting investment, and in turn, the presence of artists and cultural activities in neighbourhoods like Parkdale and Queen Street West contributed to their gentrification (Ley, 2003, p. 16).

Municipal policies also played a role in gentrification in Toronto. Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), zoning regulations, and land use policies influenced the transformation of neighbourhoods. BIAs, such as the ones in the Junction and Queen Street West, played a role in promoting economic development and attracting investment, contributing to the transformation of these neighbourhoods (Kern, 2013, p. 511). Zoning regulations and land use policies have also shaped the built environment and influenced the types of development in different neighbourhoods. These policies have played a role in the gentrification process by facilitating certain types of development and influencing the demographic composition of neighbourhoods. Also, Hracs (2007, p. 34) suggests another driver being the adoption of culturally driven strategies for economic development and urban renewal, aimed at attracting members of the creative class back to the downtown area. Toronto is associated with an absolute decline in non-condo private-sector rental units, and the construction of non-market/social housing units has not been sufficient to compensate for the private-sector units lost to gentrification (Walks, Hawes & Simon 2021, p. 627). The declining investment in social and non-market forms of housing has also contributed to gentrification (Grisdale & Walks, 2022, p. 241; Walks, Hawes & Simon 2021, p. 605).

Condoization has been a significant driver of gentrification in Toronto. The city experienced a massive wave of condominium development starting in the mid-1990s (Kern 2010, p. 363). Condominiums were extensively marketed to young, professional urban women, who made up a high percentage of condominium purchasers (Kern 2010, p. 366-367). The shift towards a more market-oriented approach to housing policy led to the privatization of public housing and the promotion of homeownership and private rental housing (Grisdale & Walks 2022, p. 232). The construction of high-rise condominiums has led to the displacement of affordable rental units and the loss of existing affordable housing (Grisdale & Walks 2022, p. 232). Condoization has also been linked to the financialization of the housing market, with homes becoming major assets for financial investment (Grisdale & Walks 2022, p. 231).

Overall, some of the mechanisms that led to gentrification in Toronto can be divided into four categories of deindustrialization, leveraging the profit potential of landscape identities, municipal policies, and condoization, each of which have shaped the transformation of neighbourhoods in Toronto with significant social and economic implications. At any given Toronto neighborhood, distinguishing the mechanism of gentrification from these four categories can perhaps provide insight into pinpointing and understanding possible patterns of ecological gentrification.

4.1.1 Gendering Gentrification in the Canadian Context

The connection between women and gentrification becomes more clear by examining the social dimensions of the nature of work and gender roles. Firstly, the rise in women's education levels in Canada has led to increased opportunities for well-paid occupations and a desire to reject suburban living (Rose, 2015). As more women enter the workforce and seek urban districts that can accommodate their multiple responsibilities at home and work, they contribute to the demand for more costly private housing (Bondi, 1994, p. 188). This economic shift, particularly the success of middle-class women, led to the expansion of a "yuppy" aesthetic and the formation of wealthier households (Bondi, 1994, p. 188). This has resulted in more women being attracted to diverse and affordable inner-city neighbourhoods, contributing to the early phases of gentrification (Rose, 2015).

The separation of work from home, particularly the separation of productive activities from the home, has also influenced gentrification. Industrial manufacturing separated domestic labour from other types of work, reinforcing the division of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers (Bondi, 1994, p. 183). This separation of work and home has led to the spatial disconnection of residential areas and workplaces, shaping the dynamics of gentrification.

Furthermore, the changing nature of work and gender roles plays a significant role in gentrification. The traditional gender division of labour has been slowly shifting away from men working outside the home and women taking on domestic labour. However, even in families with two full-time working adults, women still handle most of the housework (Harris, 2015, p. 202). This imbalance in household responsibilities may lead women to seek neighborhoods that offer amenities and services that can help them balance work and family life, contributing to the gentrification of those areas (Curran, 2017, p. 3).

Additionally, changes in fertility rates and women's rising control over their reproductive choices have impacted gentrification. As fertility rates have decreased and women have more control over their reproductive decisions, those in better economic positions are less reliant on their partners for financial support (Bourne and Rose, 2001, p. 108-109). This economic independence allows women to seek neighbourhoods that align with their preferences and needs, potentially contributing to gentrification.

Changes in household composition, including the deferral of childbirth and smaller family sizes, have also played a role in gentrification. Smaller, wealthier families, often referred to as "dinkys" (dual income-no kids yet), can afford expensive properties and are more likely to choose inner-urban residential settings that minimize commute expenses (Bondi, 1994, p.189). These changes in household size and composition, along with the increasing engagement of married women in the labour force, have

contributed to income and wealth gaps between dual-earner households and those with only one earner or non-earners (Bourne and Rose, p. 112-113).

Furthermore, the precarity of work in cities like Toronto has led women to create tactics to manage and alleviate precarity for themselves and others (Kern, 2013, p. 522). This includes providing unpaid labour and developing informal support networks, which inadvertently contribute to the gentrification of neighbourhoods (Kern, 2013, p. 522). Additionally, the cultural capital of women workers and business owners in gentrifying neighbourhoods plays a role in the process. These women have limited financial capital and are vulnerable to rising living and business expenses, but their presence in industries such as art, hair salons, and cafes are attractive neighbourhood amenities that contribute to the transformation of neighbourhoods (Kern, 2013, p. 516-517).

In a 2010 article, Kern asserts that women contribute to new-build gentrification, as single women are among the highest demographic to own condos (p. 363). Affluent professional women's attraction to central residential locations increases the demand for gentrified landscapes (Kern, 2010, p. 367). Women who work in professions that dominate the post-industrial city, such as cultural production, law, financial services, education, design, and marketing, for example, can enjoy the growing "yuppy" social and cultural ambience, as well as the proximity to stores and services which help them simplify their domestic responsibilities (Kern, 2010, p. 375). Additionally, women's participation in urbanization rests on the disadvantage and displacement of other women, and other marginalized groups (Kern, 2010, p. 367). In her 2022 book however, Kern confines the contribution of women to new-build gentrification in Toronto just to the 2000's in the time of the condo boom (p. 71). She rather asserts in general that gentrification is a process that exploits and exacerbates gender inequalities and perpetuates women's subjugated status in the home, without offering more recent observations in Toronto (Kern, 2022, p. 78).

Further, the structuralist and neo-Marxist approaches to gentrification often overlook the role of gender. Bondi argues that gender must be considered in analyzing gentrification preferences and their impact on gender divisions in the home. The changing meaning and substance of domestic labour and homemaking can lead to new beliefs about masculinity and femininity (Bondi, 1994, p. 194). Kern agrees with the inclusion of a feminist lens, in that re-urbanization is ideologically organized, and it groups some populations by including them in the re-urbanization endeavour in particular ways (2010, p. 364). Specifically, Kern asserts that women's participation in re-urbanization rests on the disadvantage and displacement of other women and other marginalized groups (Kern, 2010, p. 364). Therefore, in studying gentrification, it is important to adopt a feminist lens to uncover the gendered aspects of the process (Kern, 2010, p. 367). This lens allows us to examine how gender roles and

relationships are manipulated and perpetuated to advance re-urbanization agendas (Kern, 2010, p. 367). By analyzing entrepreneurial urban restructuring through a feminist perspective, we can identify marginalized groups and question which women are deemed desirable subjects of re-urbanization (Kern, 2010, p. 367). Additionally, this approach helps us understand how various systems of oppression intersect to shape the neoliberal urban agenda. Ultimately, a feminist perspective is crucial in comprehending how gender influences new-build gentrification and its impact on affected individuals (Kern, 2010, p. 367).

To summarize, there is a direct correlation between women's education levels, work-family balance, fertility rates, household composition, and work precarity and gentrification patterns. As "yuppie" women seek neighborhoods with amenities, they may contribute to gentrification, which affect housing demand and urban revitalization patterns. Of course, we must keep in mind that gentrification patterns are ever evolving, in tandem with the larger economic, social, and political forces at play. Perhaps the yuppie women who propelled condoization in the 2000's in Toronto were the first wave of gentrifiers (Kern, 2022, p.36), similar to the artists in the 1980s in Toronto. As I study ecological gentrification patterns, I will keep in mind that a feminist lens can examine further the gendered aspects of this dynamic process, and their relation to park access, use, and design.

4.1.2 Relevant Indicators

Figure 2 summarizes my findings on indicators of gentrification in literature and in interviews conducted. Some highlights of the indicators that participants felt strongly about will be discussed below.

Conversion of Multifamily Dwellings into Single Units

Three participants (M01, P03, M04) spoke about the conversion of multifamily dwellings into single-unit dwellings as a common indicator of gentrification and changing socio-economic conditions in neighbourhoods. This phenomenon can involve the renovation of rooming houses or boarding houses into single-family homes, displacing tenants who were living in those units. Another indicator is the conversion of low-rise retail spaces into mid-rise or taller buildings, which often leads to the demolition of affordable rental units. The rental replacement policy in Toronto only applies to demolitions of six or more units, so smaller conversions may not trigger any replacement. Gentrification can also be seen through smaller household formations, where apartments that used to house multiple people now have fewer occupants.

Category	Indicator Theme	Indicators from Literature	Indicators from Interviews	Neighborhoods Displaying Indicator
Demographics	Diversity indicators	ethnic/caucasian proportion	change in ethnic mix	Mount Dennis, Queensway in Etobicoke
			Languages and years in Canada	Queensway in Etobicoke (reducing in diversity)
	education	level of education		
	age	age	age	Queensway in Etobicoke
	Population		population increase	Regent Park
Socioeconomic	income	median (or mean) income	change in income and class	Queensway in Etobicoke
	Housing Ownership	home ownership rate	conversion back to single unit	Roncesvalles, Parkdale, Annex
	poverty	poverty rate		
Housing	dwelling type		conversion back to single unit	Roncesvalles, Parkdale, Annex
		dwelling type	diversity of unit types	
	dwelling tenure	dwelling tenure (rental or ownership)	mix of housing stock - shifting towards more ownership	Roncesvalles, Parkdale, Annex
	cost	housing cost (or value)	increase in housing prices	Moss Park
		average rent	increase in residential rent	Regent Park
	private/social	private/social housing proportion	change in affordable units	
	Density		density increase	Regent Park
Access			access community services and schools	Dufferin Grove
			access to main roads/ walkability	Dufferin Grove
			access to transit	Dufferin Grove
Social mechanisms	Aesthetics	following the artists (the artists effect)	aesthetic character change, e.g. street signs	Little Portugal
			following the artists (the artists effect)	Annex, Geary Avenue
	household size		smaller households	Roncesvalles
Infrastructure	Transit		transit investment	Dufferin Grove
	Parks		More park programming	Dufferin Grove
Economic	commercial activity		change in businesses (from family owned to corporate)	Ossington Strip, West Queen West, Church and Wellesley village
	commercial land value		Increase in commercial rents	Ossington Strip, West Queen West, Church and Wellesley village

Figure 2: Comparison of Gentrification Indicators in Literature and Interviews

Displacement of Seniors

Participant M01 spoke about seniors and their needs in the community. He noted that seniors and "Empty Nesters" strive to find creative ways to stay and age in their housing, such as co-housing with younger students. However, they can also be displaced due to rising rental costs or changing demographics. The movement of families or seniors out of an area indicates a problem in that area, as "canaries in a coal mine". "When they have to go into a care facility if they don't have a complete community, the care facility may have to be outside of their neighbourhood, so they will be displaced out of their neighbourhood" and lose their social support system (Participant M01).

Data Collection Challenges

Participant M05 raised the question of how to track displacement, particularly when it is not within the purview of Neighborhood Improvement areas (NIA) where officers and other resources are dedicated to monitoring. She added, that the challenge lies in determining how this tracking can be accomplished at a city-wide level, where attention may be less focused. It is important to note that although literature talks about the impact of gentrification changing the level of education and poverty rate, no participant spoke to those indicators directly.

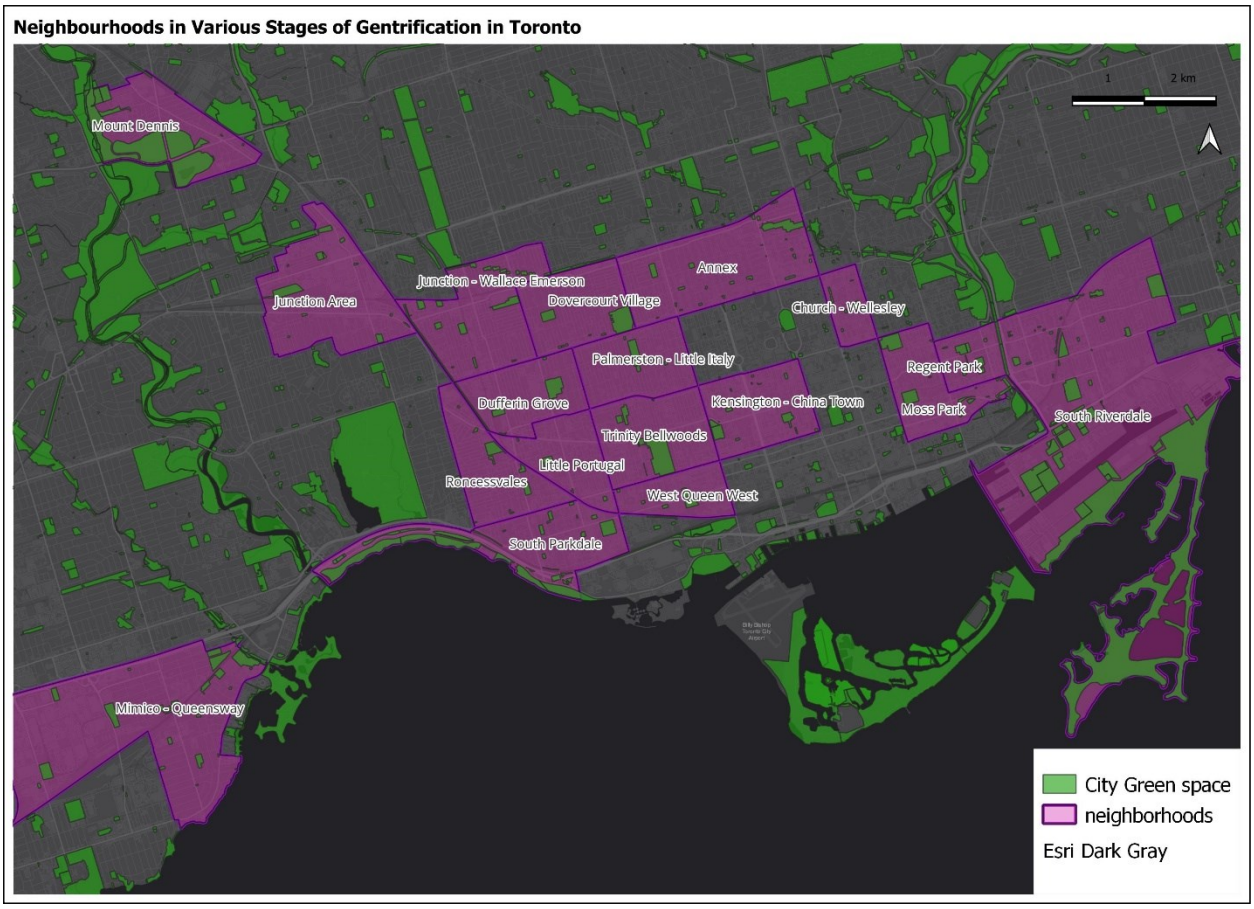


Figure 3: Map of neighbourhoods in varying stages of gentrification in Toronto

4.2 A Map Worth a Thousand Words?

I initially set out to seek local examples of green gentrification by using available historical statistical and geospatial data to track gentrification in proximity to greenspaces in Toronto and overlay this data with park development projects to identify possible correlations. Through interviews with practicing city planners, I gathered a list of indicators of gentrification (See Figure 2) and a map of neighbourhoods where gentrification has taken place in various degrees (see Figure 3). However, I learned that the process of gentrification, and indeed the process of park planning in Toronto, are far more complex than I had imagined, and as such, my planned method of overlaying maps would not be sufficient in tracking green gentrification.

Although a map may be worth a thousand words, there needs to be a storyteller to give voice to the stories hidden between the contour lines. To put it plainly, I discovered that hearing someone educated in the planning field talk about their lived experiences within the urban fabric and observations from

various city neighborhoods, can capture much deeper insight than any map could. Participants mentioned points such as the impacts of global forces, various political and economic dimensions that further illuminated for me the complexity of green gentrification. In this section, I will first discuss the global forces that have impacted the process of gentrification in Toronto, and the political and economic complexities that implicate park planning and redevelopment in the City, and then will highlight some policy, economic and social dimensions of the research findings concerning gentrification in Toronto.

4.2.1 The Impact of Global Forces on Gentrification in Toronto

As I learned in my interviews with professionals in the field, gentrification and green gentrification are not straightforward phenomena to study on a map; participants talked about a variety of global forces at play that create a complex landscape influencing development patterns.

Some participants mentioned the effects of global financial forces on development. Global investment and capital, along with the financialization of housing, have contributed to a decline in public investment in housing since the '90s. Gentrification has been occurring in cities like Toronto due to factors such as immigration pressures, internal growth, and economic forces. According to these participants, the rapid rate of growth in certain global cities exceeds the capacity of existing systems to respond effectively. The phenomenon of displacement and hardship in communities due to global flows of capital is not unique to Toronto but is seen in other cities like Vancouver, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, and London. Gentrification often drives revitalization efforts, as it attracts more attention, money, and political capital. This process of gentrification then leads to a focus on revitalizing specific areas. Participants expressed that immigration policies also impact demographic changes in specific neighborhoods, which in turn, affect the built environment of these neighborhoods. An example of this was the influx of Filipino women through the caregiver program.

Some participants mentioned the recent history of deindustrialization and its effect on neighbourhood development. In cities like Toronto, Montreal, and in the Rust Belt in the US, deindustrialization has led to significant loss of financial revenue and jobs, resulting in poverty in affected neighbourhoods. Initially, the focus of redevelopment was on addressing contamination risks, but it shifted towards reinvestment in economic and job-related initiatives. However, the decline in industrial jobs necessitated a shift towards building different types of neighbourhoods. As a result, the need for green spaces became apparent, as people were not willing to live in areas without amenities for their families and pets. This led to a call for a broader vision of reusing properties beyond just employment and tax base considerations.

4.2.2 The Impact of Political Ideology on Gentrification in Toronto

Some participants spoke about conservative ideologies and policies that have shaped growth patterns. The political ideology in Toronto and Ontario, which has been conservative in nature for the past 15 years, has not prioritized investment in maintenance and support for aging infrastructure. This poses a parallel challenge to the housing crisis that cannot be separated from it. In terms of growth policies, our city has a clear focus on encouraging development in specific areas while protecting the majority of the land for existing residential purposes. This approach to protecting neighbourhoods, protecting the so called 'yellow belt', restricts more intense forms of development to maintain the character of these areas. However, there is now a shift in the conversation and policy framework, indicating a potential change in this approach. Participants also mentioned there is a growing demand for single-unit housing, with people preferring to live outside the downtown core in one-bedroom or studio apartments, which reflects the idea that the needs of communities change over time.

4.2.3 Complexities of Park Planning, Redevelopment, and Investment

In addition, participants talked about the political nature of park planning and redevelopment that results in uneven investment and reinvestment in parks across the city. Some participants spoke of the political and economic complexities of investment in parkland. Investment in parks is often tied to new development as new development generates revenue for reinvestment. As such, neighbourhoods with more development tend to have more local funding available, creating a complex financial environment. This process of "wipe the slate clean and start new" reflects a political or policy choice rooted in a mindset that can be seen as colonial and neoliberal, as it prioritizes newness over addressing existing needs.

Determining where to invest in parks involves setting capital budget priorities and political discussions and decisions made by City Council. City staff typically recommend investment based on criteria such as parkland need and access to parks, guided by the Parkland Strategy (O2 Planning + Design et. al., 2019) and the Facilities Master Plan (Moneith Brown Planning Consultants, 2017) but the final decisions are made by city councils. The current park funding structure also functions in a way that areas experiencing less growth may receive less attention and lack political will or community support for investment, which can be caused by representation challenges, limited community capacity, and pressures on citizens to drive change without sufficient resources. This approach may overlook the needs of local communities that may prioritize park maintenance or improvements over new development.

Some participants discussed the role of Friends of the Park groups in building parks that align with the needs of local communities. They highlighted the potential challenges and conflicts that arise when different interest groups have varying visions for park usage and emphasized the need for diversity of these groups so that their input may better reflect the community at large. One participant emphasized the importance of not solely relying on them for park development and maintenance and keeping the city staff in the decision-making. For example, two participants mentioned the creation of a pizza oven and fire pits in Dufferin Grove Park as examples of community-led initiatives, acknowledging the privilege and organization required for such developments. They expressed that these amenities may not be accessible to all members of the community, and the potential exclusion of marginalized individuals, such as the homeless, from utilizing these amenities. Further, the presence of amenities like a farmer's market, children's programming, and diverse park features were said to have contributed to increased housing costs and served as selling points for the neighbourhood.

4.2.4 Some Highlights of Findings on Gentrification in Toronto

Policy Dimensions

There was consensus among the interviewed professionals that gentrification is more concentrated and directed in Toronto, since development is not evenly distributed across the city, and rather has a “spiky pattern,” referring to the concentration of investment in more high-growth districts. The City's policy framework protects the more affluent lower-density neighbourhoods (“the yellow belt”), concentrating growth in already built-up areas. This approach inadvertently encourages and concentrates development in smaller pockets of urban forms, historically where lower-income individuals could access affordable housing. As these areas undergo redevelopment, often due to lack of opportunities or financial reasons, it drives displacement and turnover in previously affordable communities. More policy implications will be discussed in chapter 4.3.

Economic Dimensions

One participant expressed that gentrification is happening all over Toronto, but different neighbourhoods experience gentrification at varying stages. The city's attractiveness, coupled with a lack of affordable housing, has intensified the process. The initial signs of gentrification are often seen through the increased purchase of real estate in an area, followed closely by park improvements. In Toronto, speculation on land plays a significant role in initiating gentrification. Unfortunately, there is a level of complacency and acceptance towards gentrification, which is disheartening as it is not an inevitable outcome.

Many participants discussed commercial gentrification. In neighbourhoods such as Church and Wellesley Village, South Riverdale, and Little Portugal, there has been a noticeable transformation in the types of businesses and services available. Previously, there were small, independently owned shops like mechanics, clothing stores, gift shops, and grocers. However, these have been replaced by more corporate entities and high-end luxury establishments. For example, local bakeries and butcher shops have been replaced by chain stores like Shopper's Drug Mart or trendy bars like cupcake bars or bespoke cocktail bars. These instances of commercial gentrification with the introduction of more upscale establishments and the displacement of long-standing businesses have resulted in a change in the demographic of neighbourhoods, with a focus on attracting young, predominantly white middle and higher-income individuals. While some may appreciate the changes and the availability of more upscale options, it is important to acknowledge the potential exclusion of long-time residents who may not be able to afford the higher prices associated with these new businesses. The cumulative effect of gentrification is a neighbourhood that undergoes significant transformation, both in terms of its physical appearance and the composition of its population.

Social Dimensions

Participants also spoke about the social impacts of gentrification. One participant mentioned it involves an aesthetic transformation in the character of a neighbourhood, often seen through changes in street signs, and the “change in vibe”. Also, the establishment of Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) can create this effect as well.

Another participant expressed one impact of gentrification extending to social cohesion within a neighbourhood. In neighbourhoods with a predominantly European demographic, the sense of social cohesion may be affected if new residents do not feel welcomed or if there is a language barrier. This can result in a decrease in community engagement among residents, with people being less inclined to gather in public spaces such as squares or parks. The changing demographics can also influence the type of policing observed in the neighbourhood, further altering the dynamics of the community.

Another impact of gentrification mentioned is the introduction of more programming and community events in the neighbourhood. This is primarily due to the increased social capital and capacity brought in by the more affluent residents who move into the area. With their spare time and resources, they can establish community groups and organize activities such as park programming. It is crucial to note that this does not imply that lower-income communities lack social capital or the ability to host community groups. Rather, it highlights the disparity in available energy, capacity, and resources that can impact the quality of life and the ability to organize events within these communities.

4.3 Funding Greenspace

As many participants noted, the complex funding structure of park (re)development in the City of Toronto, creates a difficult landscape in which to study green gentrification. In this section, I will discuss findings on growth-derived funding from interviews, a simplified overview of the funding structure of parks and recreation facilities, social justice dimensions, and the implications of the discussed topics for studying green gentrification in Toronto.

4.3.1 Growth-Derived Funding

All participants agreed that in Toronto the creation of parkland is primarily driven by development projects. The policy framework in Ontario dictates that the majority of funding for parks comes from development. This includes parkland dedication, cash-in-lieu funding, and development charges. One municipal planner noted that "virtually no funding for parks comes from the general tax base or general revenue" (participant M04, municipal planner). Therefore, the City relies on development to fund new community centres, parks, arenas, and sports fields. It is important to note that these parks are negotiated and created as part of larger development application packages. The funds derived from development are specifically allocated for new capital projects and cannot be used for park maintenance or operational costs.

The participant noted that due to the dedicated local reserve funds, areas with more development will have more local investment in parkland. The cash-in-lieu allocation strategy, despite its intended purpose of equitable distribution of investment, inevitably leads to discussions surrounding the establishment of capital budget priorities, hence entailing political considerations and decisions made by the city council. The Parkland Strategy (O2 Planning + Design et. al., 2019) and Facilities Master Plan (Moneith Brown Planning Consultants, 2017) are employed by city staff to inform investment decisions, taking into account factors such as the demand for parkland and equitable access. Overall, it appears that the cash-in-lieu allocation policy (see overview section below) is intricate and functions within a multifaceted financial context.

4.3.2 A Simplified Overview of Parkland Funding Structure in Toronto

After interviews with professionals and reviewing relevant policies, I have learned that none of the parkland investments in capital projects in the City of Toronto are derived from a general tax base or general revenue. Rather, almost three-quarters of the funding for capital projects is collected as follows:

1. ***Planning Act* Section 42 Parkland dedication**: either land equal to 5% of the area of land to be developed (for residential uses), or if size, shape or location of land proposed for parkland dedication is deemed unsuitable by Council for such purposes, then cash-in-lieu will be collected at 5% of the value of the area (and up to %20 in some cases, depending on the size of the property), and allocation policies (Toronto Municipal Chapter 415-25) will dictate how the funds are to be distributed into the various reserve funds, including district-wide and city-wide reserves (Toronto Municipal Chapter 415 Article III).
2. ***Planning Act* Section 37 Community Benefit Charges:** required for the capital costs of facilities, services and matters required for development and redevelopment, payable at 4% of the value of the land (Toronto Municipal Chapter 415 Article VI).
3. **Development Charges:** which include fees collected for processing Planning and Committee of Adjustment applications, Building Code permits, etc. (Toronto Municipal Chapter 415 Article I).

It should also be noted while the above sources account for the majority of funding for capital projects, they are not the sole sources. Other sources include partnerships, grants, etc., and conditions and exemptions apply.

4.3.3 Strategic Initiatives

The Parkland Strategy (O2 Planning + Design et. al., 2019) is a City-wide guiding document for the growth, expansion, and improvement of the park system in Toronto over the next 20 years. The Parks, Forestry, and Recreation Department (PFR) works closely with the Planning Department and other stakeholders to identify opportunities to align the Parkland Strategy with ongoing development projects. This includes incorporating the Parkland Strategy into Secondary Plans and local park plans, as well as determining where funds from development charges or parkland dedication can be invested in capital projects.

One municipal planner discussed the current redevelopment of the Six Points area in Etobicoke which is guided by the Etobicoke Centre Secondary Plan. As part of this plan, parks have been pre-built and some are already completed. Other parks which are still in the design phase after community

consultation are intended to provide green spaces to the neighbourhood strategically located for safety and convenience for a higher quality of life for residents.

Several municipal planners discussed Regent Park, where parks were already present before the revitalization efforts began. However, as part of the proposal to revitalize the area, the existing parks were upgraded and revitalized. Also, the creation of new parks and recreation facilities was a key component of the plan to improve Regent Park. One of the participants noted that the City has recently formed a partnership with Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment (MLSE), which has committed to allocate funds towards the establishment of the Regent Park Athletics Grounds. The proposed facilities for the grounds include an enhanced hockey rink, a multifunctional cricket/soccer surface, a dedicated basketball court, as well as a playground and community garden. Regent Park had previously received funding through a partnership with The Daniels Corporation for its community centre. Partnerships for co-funding of improvements to parks and recreational facilities were also noted to take place in St. James Town.

4.3.4 Social Justice Dimensions

While conducting interviews and analyzing the data, I found many social justice dimensions surrounding investment in parks and policies surrounding the funding of parks and recreation facilities in the City. In the following section, I will discuss relevant input from participants, and then I will draw on what I have learned in this process to critique some of the relevant policies and recent legislative changes. Overall, problematic ideologies of prioritizing the status quo population, uneven (re)investment across city parks guided by park and recreation policies, and recent Provincial legislative changes social injustices create a compounding body of implications for studying green gentrification in Toronto.

Inequities in Investment

Participant I10, Professor De Sousa, noted that investing in green space, such as active parks and nature parks, may not bring direct economic value to a city. While parks may not be the most lucrative investment from a capitalist perspective, (in comparison to industrial land uses where a high tax is collected and minimal servicing is provided), their benefits in terms of health, both mental and physical, can be used to justify the spending on them. Additionally, parks can serve as green infrastructure, providing services such as stormwater management. By highlighting these benefits, the public can be convinced to support the allocation of funds toward the development and maintenance of parks. The participant also noted that investments in green space can greatly benefit the surrounding neighbourhood by increasing property values.

The same participant went on to argue that the push for greening urban neighbourhoods is primarily driven by wealthier communities who possess the political influence to facilitate development in these areas. However, it is worth noting that in recent years, organizations such as Groundwork USA, Evergreen, and Trust for Public Land have been actively advocating for green spaces in lower-income communities as well. These efforts aim to ensure that all neighbourhoods, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to green spaces and their associated benefits. Also, the participant expressed that the City has demonstrated commendable efforts in promoting equity in the allocation of resources for green spaces across various neighbourhoods, particularly through the implementation of Neighbourhood Improvement Area policies.

Another participant, a municipal planner, noted that parks built within a larger development are seen to create "successful or complete communities", typically catering to middle-income individuals, and not necessarily those in need of affordable housing. However, to address inequities in park planning and ensure that investment is not solely focused on areas of new development, the City of Toronto has implemented the Parkland Strategy (O2 Planning + Design et. al., 2019) and the Facilities Masterplan (Moneith Brown Planning Consultants, 2017). These documents, adopted in 2019, aim to provide a better understanding of parkland and facility needs across the city. Previously, investment decisions were often reactive and driven by pressure from councillors or opportunistic funding processes. However, the City is now shifting towards a more data-driven approach, prioritizing investment based on needs and overall system assessment. This includes directing resources and planning efforts towards areas outside of high-growth districts. For example, studies have been conducted in neighbourhoods such as Oakwood–St Clair Parkland Study and Kennedy– Ionview Parkland Study, where parkland needs have been identified. The goal is to spread investment more evenly across communities and address historical underinvestment in certain areas.

While there is still progress to be made, the City is committed to being more equitable and has established a framework for performance measurement to evaluate the effectiveness of its efforts. The focus is on targeting investment where it is needed and addressing longstanding inequities, even if it means moving away from the core downtown and growth centres. This shift in policy frameworks is a challenging but necessary step towards a more balanced and inclusive approach to urban planning in Toronto.

> We're not unaware of some of these challenges, and we're trying our best to adjust policy frameworks that have historically driven these inequitable investments and adapting them to a new more evidence-based world where we are investing outside of the typical areas and trying to inject money into the have-not areas, but it's a challenging conversation and the challenging project.
>
> - Participant M04, municipal planner

Inequities Driven by Policy

Cash-in-lieu Policy

Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 415-25 (Article III) item A (see Figure 4 below) lays out cash-in-lieu allocation policies. As a municipal planner noted, it is an attempt at equitable distribution of funds throughout the city, as 50% is allocated to district-wide reserves where the funds are generated, and 50% is allocated to city-wide reserves. However, Item B of the policy states that Community Councils have the power to trump that structure and use 100% of funds in their own district. The flexibility of this policy makes me question the equitable implementation of these policies.

Parkland Conveyance

Further, in Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 415-26 (Article III) item C, where off-site parkland dedication is allowed, I wonder how this helps the immediate community, especially if it is a low-income community with insufficient access to parkland being gentrified. Indeed, the topic of funding for parks

§ 415-25. Cash-in-lieu; allocation.

A. Any payment of cash-in-lieu of land in accordance with § 415-24 will be used for the acquisition of new parkland or the improvement of parks and recreational facilities in accordance with the following allocation and the cash-in-lieu allocation policy:

(1) 50 percent for the acquisition of lands for parks and recreation purposes, further divided as follows:

(a) 50 percent to acquire parkland within the district where the funds were generated; and

(b) 50 percent to acquire parkland throughout the City.

(2) 50 percent for the development of parks and recreation facilities, further divided as follows:

(a) 50 percent to develop and upgrade parks and recreation facilities within the district where the funds were generated; and

(b) 50 percent to develop and upgrade parks and recreation facilities throughout the City.

B. Despite § 415-25A, Community Councils may recommend to City Council, through the Budget Committee, the allocation of expenditures of up to 100 percent of the district portion of parks and recreation facility development funds allocated under § 415-25A(2)(a) for the acquisition of parkland within the district where the funds were generated under § 415-22A(1)(a).

§ 415-26. Parkland conveyance; conditions.

C. Where on-site parkland dedication is not feasible, an off-site parkland dedication that is accessible to the area where the development site is located may be substituted for an on-site dedication, provided that:

(1) The off-site dedication is a good physical substitute for any on-site dedication;

(2) The value of the off-site dedication is equal to the value of the on-site dedication that would otherwise be required; and

(3) Both the City and the applicant agree to the substitution.

Figure 4: Excerpt from Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 415

and recreation facilities in Toronto is highly political and the move towards equitable infrastructure requires political will.

Recent Changes to Community Benefit Charges By-law

Recent Provincial legislative changes introduced through Bills 108 and 197 replaced *Planning Act* Section 37 Density Bonusing with a new Community Benefit Charges (CBC) By-law (Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 415 Article VI). Among other changes, the new legislation declares POPS and surface parkland with underlying infrastructure valuable forms of parkland that can serve open space and recreational purposes, and therefore merit parkland credits (Community Benefits Charge Strategy, 2022). One municipal planner expressed concern over the new changes. This participant noted since many categories, e.g., public art, affordable housing, parks, and POPS, are all included in the 4% valuation of the property, the City will receive significantly fewer funds for each category, and this lack of investment likely will result in a poorer quality of life for many communities.

A Staff Report on CBCs explains this deficit:

> Based on an assessment of applications in the City's development approval pipeline and projected land values, it is anticipated that **the changes to Section 37 will result in the City collecting significantly less revenue** than the current Section 37 Density Bonusing approach, notwithstanding that the CBC may apply to a wider range of developments. While the intention of GFTs is that growth should pay for growth, **the four percent cap for the CBC is not sufficient to fully offset CBC eligible growth-related capital costs**. Based on the growth forecast, the City anticipates it will recover an average annual amount of $70 million each year over the next 10 years through CBCs, before the proposed exemptions and transition discussed in the report. However, the CBC Strategy estimates the City will require upwards of $2.3 billion in CBC eligible net costs over the same 10-year timeframe as a result of eligible development. This leaves the City with a remaining funding gap of almost $1.6 billion. (Staff report 2022, p.2)

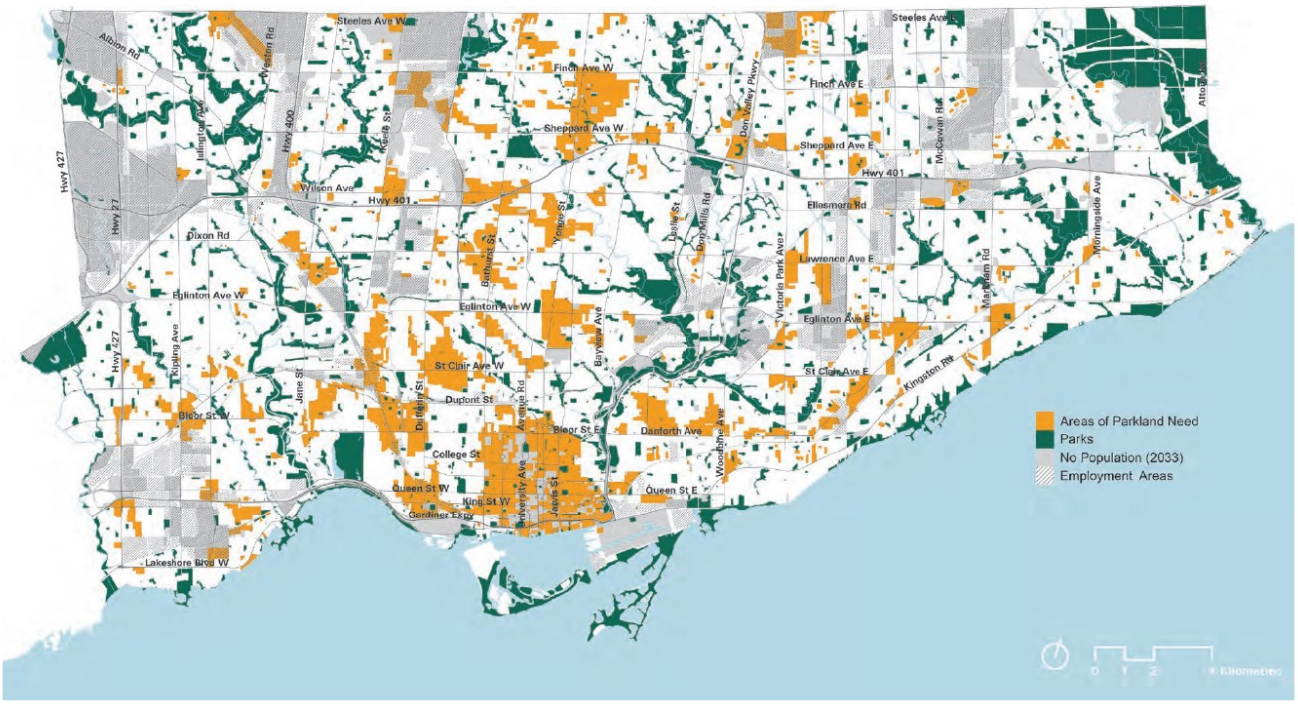
It appears that with the reduced funding received through Community Benefit Charges and the inclusion of POPS as acceptable parkland, growing neighbourhoods will receive less funding towards community facilities and services and less public parkland. The inclusion of POPS in the parkland calculations is also controversial over concerns about public access to POPS and surveillance affecting the authentic use and enjoyment of these spaces by community members.

It is noteworthy that this reduced funding is not limited to the City of Toronto. In the Canadian Parks Report 2023, 83% of larger cities (with populations exceeding 500,000 individuals) have expressed concerns regarding the effectiveness of the recently updated parkland dedication policies. These

policies have been identified as a hindrance to achieving the desired parkland provision goals (Canadian Parks Report 2023, p. 35).

Figure 5: Parkland Study and Acquisition Priority Map in the Parkland Strategy

Priority areas indicate where there is low parkland provision, low park supply, high-growth, and a high percentage of low income residents.



4.3.5 Implications for Studying Green Gentrification in Toronto

Considering the funding structure and how parks are established in Toronto, I agree with many of the participants who noted that parks in Toronto may not be the cause of gentrification, but rather an indication of it. This progression is a result of the pattern and approach to new development and growth in the city. Although Parkland Strategy (O2 Planning + Design et. al., 2019) identifies Parkland Priority Areas in Figure 5, not all of those areas are going to receive investment and/or parks as part of development projects. As mentioned in the interviews, areas with development interest are not evenly distributed across the city. As new facilities may be possible through grants and partnerships, the uneven investment patterns of investment in parks and recreation facilities create a complex economic landscape to track gentrification around park capital projects. In section 5.3 I will discuss how studying park revitalization projects may be a possible avenue in tracking green gentrification in Toronto.

4.4 Perceptions Surrounding Green Gentrification

There were varying attitudes towards green gentrification in Toronto. There was consensus among participants that in the US rapid gentrification around green spaces is more pronounced, and believed less green gentrification happens in Toronto, compared to the US, as a more 'gentle' change. Many mentioned the Highline in New York City and the 606 in Chicago. Some issues expressed were struggling to distinguish what is green gentrification, the difficulty of disentangling the effect of parks from the larger forces, and resistance toward discussing it in fear of criticism. Although most practitioners had difficulty with identifying local green gentrification examples at first, all came up with examples after some discussions of the different ways it could take place.

4.4.1 Difficulty of Distinguishing Green Gentrification

A municipal planner (participant M05), noted that although aware of displacement and gentrification happening all the time, she struggles with identifying where and what has been green gentrification specifically in Toronto. She mentioned that in full communities being developed, such as the Port Lands, it's not just the effects of the Corktown Commons Park. She described it as a neighbourhood-wide gentrification process that resulted from a newfound interest in the redevelopment of the previously overlooked eastern portions of the city, and the desire of homebuyers for access to parkland, bike infrastructure and high connectivity to the rest of the city. As other participants have mentioned the homebuyers' desire for access to parkland, perhaps is another way that green gentrification happens in subtle ways.

Another participant talked about the Highline in New York City:

> "That's the hyper example of that, right? And I was just there earlier this year. And every time I go back, I'm like, oh, another luxury condominium building or high-end rental building that's built along the Highline. That whole community changed. When [the gentrification] was first starting, I actually saw it and talked to some of those people - artists that were in affordable housing and families along the Highline. And I think they're all gone now".
>
> – Participant M01, Municipal Planner

The same participant noted differences in gentrification patterns between Canada and US:

> "I was talking to other staff here [..] about your thesis. We think it's more common in the United States than in Canada to have this gentrification influencing like park design because a lot of American cities start at a different base point than what we have. So they have really run down like lower income challenged communities where smart investors know that there's good value in actually purchasing certain areas. They can get good prices for good quality housing. So they start to move in and then they have certain expectations, high expectations in terms of community services, including parks and that puts pressure on projects to [improve] planting and seating areas and perhaps dealing with their needs."
>
> – Participant M01, Municipal Planner

Although this participant felt that in Toronto green gentrification doesn't happen often, our conversation sparked many ideas for him as possible local examples of this phenomenon. These examples include Barbara Hall Park in Church-Wellesley Village, Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre in Regent Park, York Recreation Centre in Mount Dennis, and Percy Park in Moss Park, which will be discussed in section 5.3.

Another participant, a conservation planner, mentioned Corktown Commons as a possible example of green gentrification but acknowledged the complexities of identifying its contribution, given the conservation initiatives included in the project.

> I'm sure that adding a lot of that new and highly desirable green space would mean that maybe having green space on one's own property might not be so important. So the cost of the square foot may have been influenced by that. However, it's probably quite difficult to parse out what contribution the green space makes to that increase in housing costs when the housing costs have been increasing in cities all over the world exponentially over the last, 20 years.
>
> – Participant C06, conservation planner

One private sector planner (participant P02) noted the benefits of parks for the regeneration and stabilization of neighbourhoods in the context of investment-deprived cities such as Detroit. When asked about possible examples in Toronto, this participant also noted the difficulty of isolating the impacts of one park from other improvements and investments. He mentioned reinvestments in Sorauren Park and Dufferin Grove Park as possible examples that could have led to gentrification in the area, among other factors such as proximity to transit, schools, and walkability. Sorauren Park and Dufferin Grove Park will be discussed further in section 5.3.

A municipal planner noted that it is "difficult to disentangle the effect of a single project or park from the greater forces of development happening in Toronto" (Participant M04, Municipal Planner). He noted that recent park revitalization projects in the city, such as St. James Park, Grange Park, Eglinton Park, and Toronto Island, have typically occurred in areas that have already experienced significant growth. However, it is challenging to determine whether park revitalization projects precede gentrification or encourage growth in other areas. In Toronto, park planning is generally funded by development and the city often struggles to keep up with the needs of its park system and recreation facilities due to ongoing growth, and is constantly "playing catchup". As a result, efforts are focused on addressing existing inequities rather than proactively anticipating future needs. In cases where new parks are being developed, such as West Don Lands or the Port Lands, the process is happening concurrently with gentrification, rather than as a precursor.

This participant explained that gentrification often drives park revitalizations due to increased funds, attention, and political capital, prompting a focus on revitalizing the growing neighbourhoods. He noted, “I would see in Toronto that gentrification spurs park revitalization and those park revitalizations in part can then help accelerate gentrification” (Participant M04, Municipal Planner).

However, this participant made the distinction that new parks and park investments may be part of the gentrification process, but do not directly lead to gentrification in Toronto.

> I’m not claiming that we're not part of the gentrification process, but I don't see us - the park system in Toronto- being a precursor to gentrification. I see it as part of the gentrification process. But, your specific question is, have you seen a park revitalization then spur development gentrification? From my perspective, I haven't seen that. It may exist in Toronto again. I'm not omniscient, but in my experience, I'm seeing more gentrification leads to park investment and to park revitalization. So it's the inverse of the scenario you're positing.
>
> -Participant M04, Municipal Planner

Similarly, a Major Research Paper Completed by Julia Bevacqua at Toronto Metropolitan University, titled “Exploring Practitioner Responses to Green Gentrification in Toronto, Canada” (2022) found that while most urban planners had limited formal knowledge of green gentrification, they did have a general understanding of the concept. However, they often had difficulty distinguishing between regular gentrification and green gentrification in practice. The perception of green gentrification varied among practitioners, with both positive and negative connotations. Many planners recognized the potential negative impacts and believed that their organization had a responsibility to address these issues.

4.4.2 Resistance Toward Discussing Green Gentrification in Fear of Criticism

Another municipal planner (participant M09) noted that “gentrification and displacement of public spaces is a topic that is probably avoided by staff or not seen in that lens when you're looking at issues like putting bars on park benches. Or seen as like this is meant to be a public park, not a place for people who may be struggling with homelessness” (participant M09, municipal planner).

Participant I10, Professor De Sousa, agreed with this view of practitioners avoiding the topic of green gentrification. He noted that some practitioners who are doing good things for the environment, community, society, and economy, may not accept interview requests by critical theorists and researchers, due to fear of criticism, and being unjustly accused of working towards negatives instead of positives. This participant suggested that this fear may be because critical theory often overlooks the

intentions of those who promote environmental and social justice, and as such critical researchers may only highlight the negatives and offer criticism, rather than working towards a better outcome overall. He further explained that green gentrification literature may become an impediment to brownfield to greenfield projects, since the critical lens may overlook the benefits of these projects.

In interviewing this participant, I initially felt a lot of opposition to the idea of green gentrification. However, as I clarified my intentions, he came on board with the idea of learning about green gentrification to address the social negatives. He agreed with the importance of the awareness of gentrification as a potential negative impact of any development project. However, he expressed his concern with "the green gentrification way of thinking or the gentrification way of thinking" is that although "you want people to be conscious of gentrification as a potential outcome and plan for it, you don't want to stifle investment".

4.4.3 Benefits of Considering Personal Experiences

A few of the participants, when asked for their professional opinion, did not know much about green gentrification in Toronto. However, when explained the phenomena and asked probing questions surrounding their personal experiences in their local parks, examples that seemed to be green gentrification started forming. For participant M01, the conversation sparked many ideas for him as possible local examples of this phenomenon, which perhaps he had not thought about before. Participant M09 spoke of her personal experience living close to Dufferin Grove Park for 10 years. Similarly, participant P03 realized maybe Sorauren Park could be an example of green gentrification when discussing changes seen in his neighbourhood.

In analyzing participant responses and perceptions of green gentrification, another methodology took form, which helped understand the personal experiences of subjects concerning experiencing gentrification. Through this method, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) I added more depth to my analysis and deduced that when discussing their personal experience and their observations in their neighbourhoods over the years, planners with more years of experience were more likely to think of examples of green gentrification after discussing the effects of uneven investment in neighbourhoods, than their peers with less experience in the field.

Thus, I believe that more experienced planners have a more in-depth and holistic view of development patterns in the City, since they have spent more years of their lives equipped with a planning lens to interact with and examine their surrounding built environment.

Another way that personal experiences are helpful in the planning discourse and practice, is by including perspectives of planners from diverse backgrounds, as participant N07 noted.

> When you have diverse planners, when you have planners who come from the background of the lived experience of marginalization, it makes it a more genuine experience. I don't think that's in any specific document or report in the profession.
>
> - Participant N07, nonprofit planner

Similar to my findings in this section, where participants expressed difficulties in distinguishing green gentrification, in the Canadian Parks Report 2023, City staff who were interviewed ranked green gentrification, houselessness, reconciliation, and anti-racism last when asked which urban challenges the parks sector should address (see figure 6). Interestingly, city staff felt least knowledgeable about these issues. These interviews reveal many city personnel identify systemic inequalities as a critical challenge for parks but lack the tools to address them or relate them to their work (see figure 6) (Canadian Parks Report 2023, p. 16).

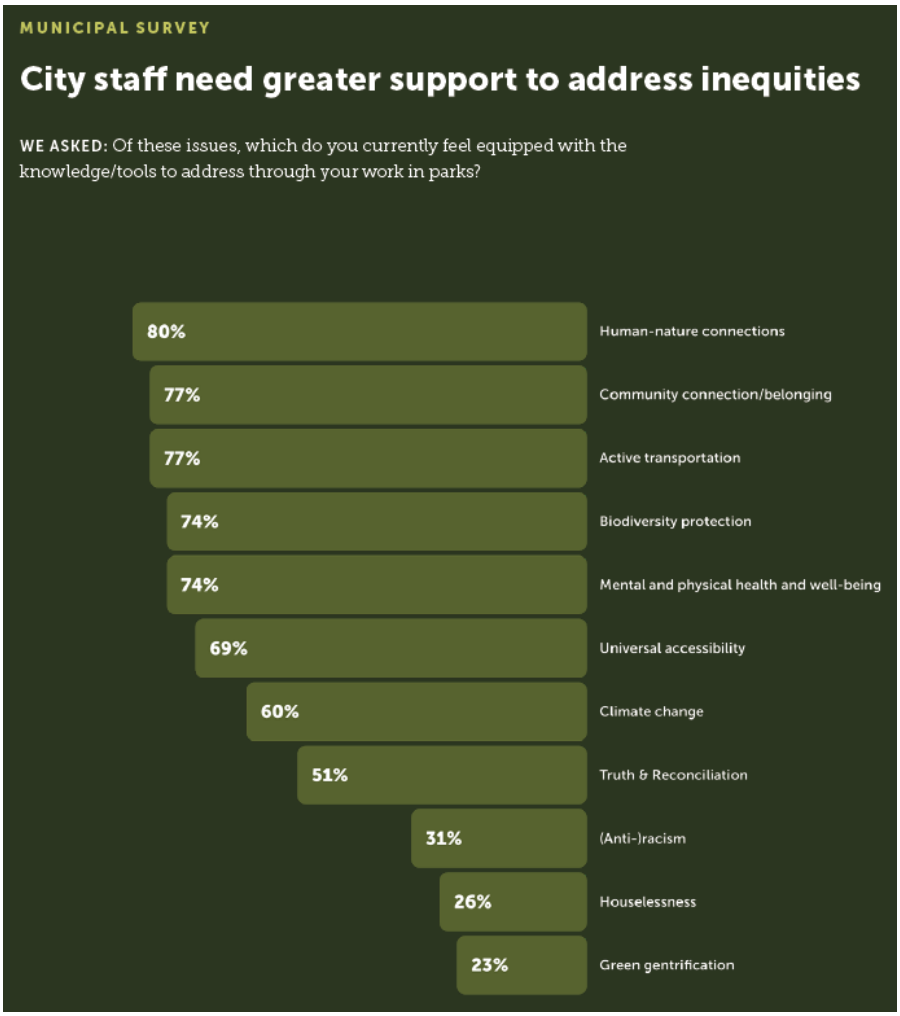


Figure 6: Results of Municipal survey on addressing inequalities. Canadian Parks Report 2023, p. 29

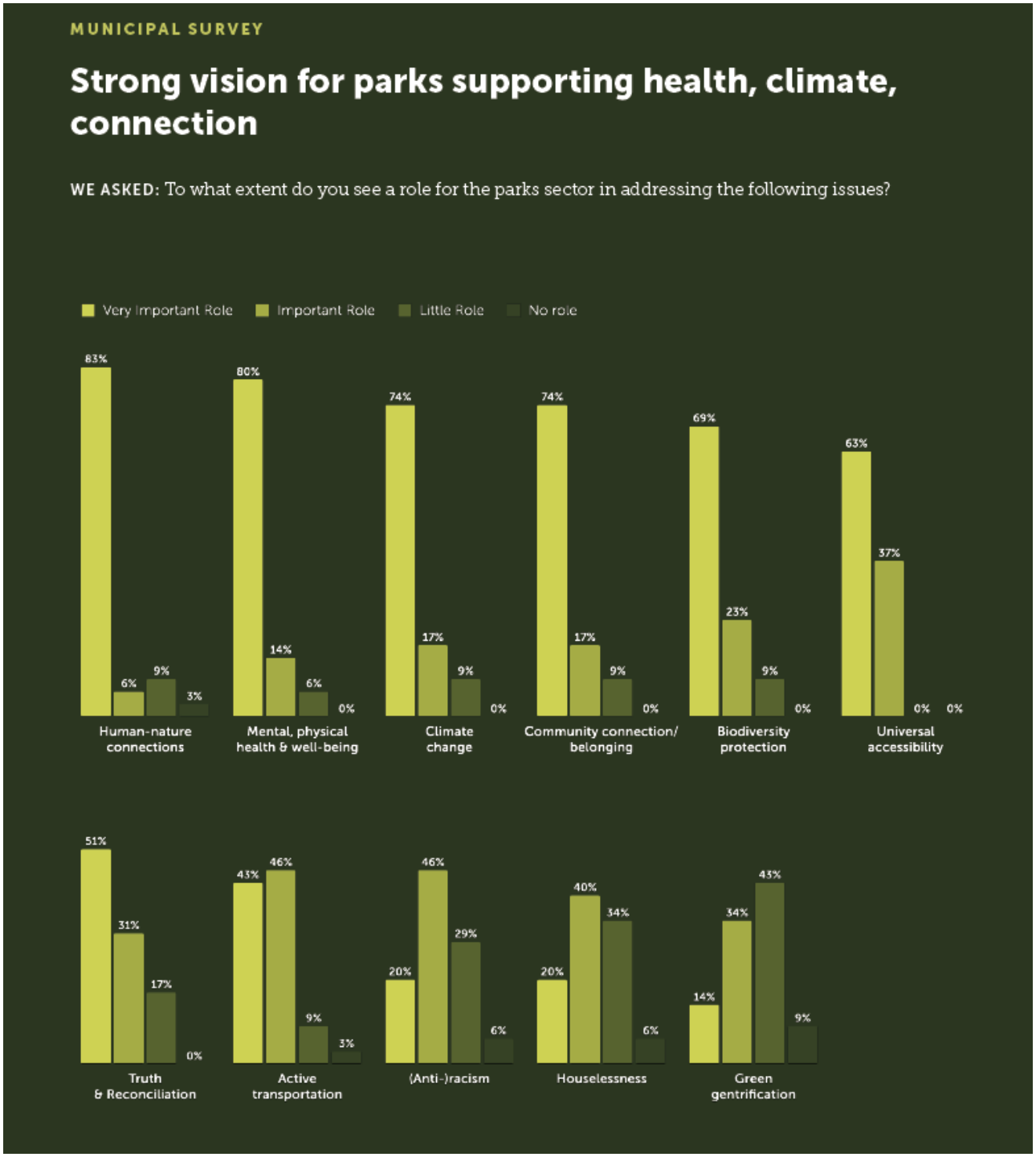


Figure 7: Results of Municipal survey on addressing health and climate. Canadian Parks Report 2023, P. 28

5. EXAMINING TORONTO FROM A BROADER LENS: ECOLOGICAL GENTRIFICATION

The definition of green gentrification that I initially adopted for this research was one used by Quinton et al. (2020, p. 974), where "vegetative green gentrification" is a process in which capital (re)investment and greening create landscape change geared towards a higher class of residents, resulting in the displacement of marginalized households". The authors state that green gentrification is "complex to define, identify, and understand—in part because of the evolution and multiple mutations of gentrification" (Quinton et al., 2020, p. 970). They list the following indicators of green gentrification:

1. Capital reinvestment;
2. Social upgrading of an area by high-income in-movers;
3. Landscape change; and
4. Displacement of low-income groups (p. 970)

Quinton et al. (2020) frame green gentrification as a result of local context influencing greening endeavours, rather than a direct result of these four indicators solely, and encourage researchers to consider the entire experience instead of any one individual indicator (p. 974).

However, upon conducting interviews with research participants, I came across various environmental justice issues surrounding the development and revitalization of parks in Toronto. Not all of these issues necessarily could be contained within the definition of green gentrification I initially adopted. Hence, I propose to examine Toronto from a broader perspective that can address other social justice issues as well as displacement of marginalized people.

5.1 Ecological Gentrification in the Scholarship

Scholars have developed many definitions of green gentrification as the discipline has evolved (Sax, Nesbitt, & Quinton, 2022. p. 373). While some scholars have delved into the intricate connections between urban greening initiatives and the occurrence of exclusion and displacement (Anguelovski, 2016; Curran and Hamilton, 2017), other researchers have embraced a more broad and expansive understanding of the concept, to include various scales of ecological triggers and a range of social impacts beyond displacement. Pearsall (2018, p. 313) has gathered a comprehensive table for various definitions of these phenomena (see figure 8).

Table 20.1 Key terms and definitions commonly used in environmental gentrification research

Name of process	Source of definition	Definition	Key Aspects
Environmental Gentrification	Sieg et al. 2004	'significant price increases in communities with large improvements in air quality and price decreases in communities with small air quality improvements. Distributional effects of environmental policies seem to be pronounced with opportunities for the lowest income households to lose because the induced increases in their housing prices are not fully offset by the air quality improvements they can afford to enjoy' (1074–1075)	• Distributional impacts • Class • Market-led perspective
	Banzhaf and Walsh 2006	'in a world where households sort in response to changes in environmental quality, the bulk of the benefits of a policy that successfully cleans up dirtier neighborhoods where the poor live may actually be captured by rich households' (24–25)	• Distributional impacts • Class • Market-led perspective
	Checker 2011	'environmental gentrification builds on the material and discursive successes of the urban environmental justice movement and appropriates them to serve high-end redevelopment that displaces low income residents' (210)	• Distributional and procedural impacts • Class • Market-led and gentrifier-led perspectives
Ecological Gentrification	Dooling 2009	'the implementation of an environmental planning agenda related to public green spaces that leads to the displacement or exclusion of the most economically vulnerable human population while espousing an environmental ethic' (621)	• Distributional and procedural impacts • Class • Primarily market-led perspective
Green Gentrification	Gould and Lewis 2012	'without clearly focused public policy intervention, in situ environmental improvements will tend to increase racial and class inequality, and decrease environmental justice, a process we refer to as "green gentrification"' (114)	• Distributional and procedural impacts • Class and race • Market-led perspective

Figure 8: from Chapter 20. New directions in urban environmental/green gentrification research by Hamil Pearsall. In Handbook of gentrification studies by Lees and Elgar (2018)

Upon pondering various scopes and aspects encompassed, a definition which is perhaps more useful to employ in my research is ‘ecological gentrification’. Dooling (2009) defines the concept of ecological gentrification as “the implementation of an environmental planning agenda related to public green spaces that leads to the displacement or exclusion of the most economically vulnerable human population—homeless people—while espousing an environmental ethic” (p. 630).

In the context of ecological gentrification, the term "ecology" refers to the natural science concept of ecology and the ecological rationality that motivates the greening of urban environments. This ecological rationality is frequently accompanied by an ethical commitment to minimize or eliminate the negative effects of humans on biophysical processes, its flora and fauna, and to cultivate untamed ('natural') spaces for their intrinsic value (Dooling, 2009, p. 630).

Another reason for using the word ‘ecological’ is to challenge the notion that ecology is not limited to non-human organisms. As Dooling notes, recent process-oriented definitions of ecology describe it as “the study of the interrelationships between organisms and their environments, where physical and biological environmental factors influence the survival, reproduction, distribution, and abundance of non-human species” (p. 630). In urban environments, which ecologists progressively refer to as human-dominated systems, the exclusion of humans from notions of ecosystem and environment reinforces the inability of ecologists, environmental planners, and ecologically conscious citizens to recognize the array of social outcomes associated with the preservation and changes of the landscape (Dooling, 2009, p. 630).

Therefore, the term "ecological gentrification" is used to emphasize the contradictions that arise between an ecological rationality and its associated environmental ethics, and the creation of injustices for politically and economically vulnerable people. It challenges the conventional planning approaches that use public green spaces as instruments for advancing social reform and public health objectives, as well as economic development for the benefit of private property owners (Dooling, 2009, p. 630-631). “Ecological gentrification relocates gentrification within the environmental discourses and in the discourses related to the exclusionary aspects of public spaces” (Dooling, 2009, p. 631).

5.1.1 Ecological Gentrification in Roncesvalles

Since my participants had mentioned the role of BIAs in gentrification and had mentioned the gentrification in Roncesvalles, I see it relevant to discuss Parish (2020) who discusses environmental gentrification in Roncesvalles. As ‘ecological gentrification encompasses a greater domain than

‘environmental gentrification’, I have labelled this section ‘ecological gentrification’ for the sake of consistency.

Parish (2020) states the Roncesvalles Village Business Improvement Area (BIA) played a crucial role in advocating for the integration of urban trees in the revitalization of Roncesvalles Avenue. The BIA recognized the opportunity to enhance the street and promote community collaboration with the city during a comprehensive urban development project initiated by the City of Toronto in 2005. Initially, the project did not include street trees and gardens, but the BIA championed their inclusion. The esteemed architecture and planning firm, Brook McIlroy, was commissioned to develop a comprehensive Street Scape Strategy for Roncesvalles Avenue. The BIA facilitated the establishment and growth of two organizations, Roncesvalles Renewed and RoncyWorks, which focused on coordinating volunteer efforts to maintain the gardens and beautify the street. The BIA's efforts in integrating urban trees contributed to the urban renewal of the area and fostered gentrification (Parish, 2020, p. 278).

Parish further explains that the inclusion of urban trees in the redevelopment of Roncesvalles Avenue contributed to gentrification in several ways. First, the presence of urban trees and gardens is often associated with affluent neighborhoods and is seen as a marker of desirability. Second, the BIA's advocacy for the inclusion of urban trees in the redevelopment project was part of a broader effort to enhance the area's aesthetic appeal and attract more affluent residents and businesses. Third, the creation of RoncyWorks and the volunteer labour required to maintain the gardens and engage in other beautification and street cleaning activities contributed to the area's social reproduction by creating a sense of community and shared responsibility among residents and businesses. Finally, the process of "cleaning up" formerly industrial areas of the city in the name of health and environmental justice may also have contributed to negative outcomes for the community, including reduced affordability of housing, increased surveillance and policing, and reduced access to the public sphere and governmental decision making forums that define the 'good', 'green', or 'healthy' uses of space. Thus, the inclusion of urban trees in the redevelopment of Roncesvalles Avenue was part of a broader process of gentrification that transformed the area into a more affluent and desirable neighborhood (Parish, 2020, p. 268).

Parish (2020, p. 268) states that the language of gentrification regarding trees is complex and multifaceted. It involves the production of spaces and bodies through discourses and rationalities about who belongs where and what constitutes a "good" or "healthy" use of space (Parish, 2020, p. 268). She notes that urban trees are valued by various groups for different reasons. Ecologists and planners appreciate their ability to provide ecosystem services such as cooling surface temperatures, regulating

air quality, and absorbing rainfall. Municipalities and business improvement districts value street trees for their contribution to policing and surveillance efforts in urban spaces. Urban trees are also seen as attractive amenities for affluent travellers and "creative class" migrants, as they have been associated with higher property values and increased spending rates in shopping districts. Additionally, urban greening initiatives are valued by municipalities as a response to climate change and the need for climate resilience (Parish, 2020, p. 268).

However, the language of gentrification also involves the exclusion and ownership of urban spaces and natural amenities. The presence and management of urban trees can also perpetuate class and cultural divisions. For example, the decision to plant non-fruiting or strictly ornamental trees instead of fruit and nut-bearing trees can exclude residents who rely on foraging or community gardening for food and medicine. can mark specific urban spaces as belonging to certain class and cultural regimes of ownership and exclusion and as such create distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate uses of urban space, reinforcing ownership and exclusion (Parish, 2020, p. 269).

As such, Parish demonstrates that urban trees and forests are deeply entangled in ecological gentrification dynamics in Toronto. They are often implicated in struggles over displacement and the right to stay, and are used to normalize the violence of speculative development. As gentrification becomes increasingly financialized, urban greening efforts and the trees within them are drawn into the global dynamics of 21st-century gentrification (Parish, 2020, p. 269).

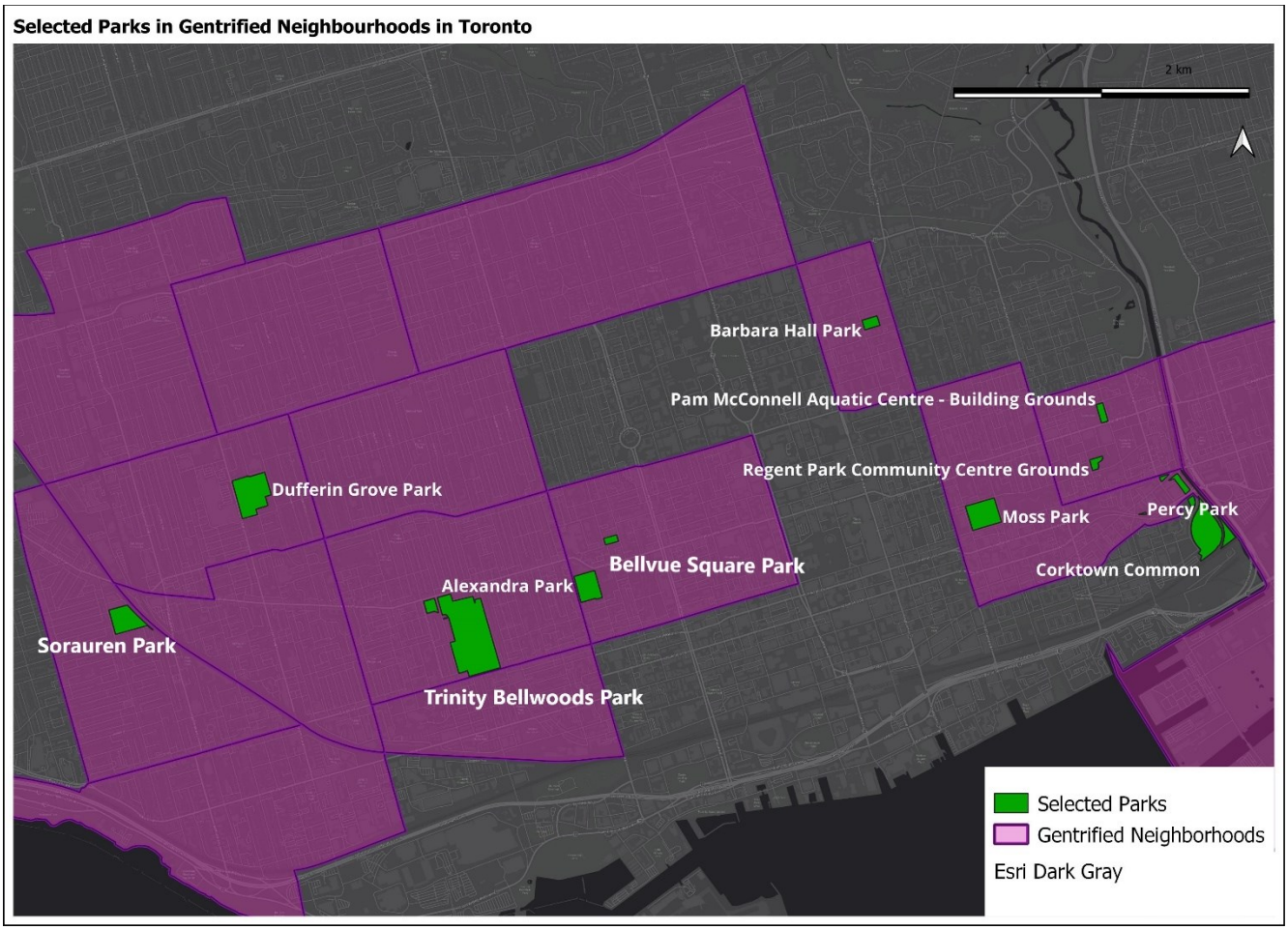


Figure 9: Parks discussed in Interviews

5.2 Brownfields and the Green Space Paradox

This section was born as a result of interviews with two participants: P02 and P03, both planners from the private sector, who mentioned Sorauren Park (see figure 9) as a possible contributor to the gentrification in the Roncesvalles neighbourhood, prompting me to study this location more comprehensively. As I delved into the history of this area, I discovered that Sorauren Park was previously a brownfield, and this fact led me to interview Professor Chris De Sousa Who is an expert on brownfield to greenfield projects.

According to De Sousa (2002) Sorauren Park, previously a brownfield, opened in 1995 as an active and nature park. Before its current use as a park, the land was industrial and included an armaments-manufacturing facility, transit maintenance, and a garage establishment. The revitalization process of these lands resulted in providing active and passive activities in the adjacent mid-density older neighbourhoods. More specifically, Sorauren Park has “tennis courts, a baseball diamond, a small

soccer field, a few “habitat” areas, and several grass play spaces surrounded by residential and industrial buildings, some of which are still abandoned” (De Sousa 2002, p. 187).

Participant I10, Professor De Sousa, noted that brownfield to green space projects can unearth the benefits of transforming former industrial sites into parks. Such projects often attract people back to these areas, leading to rediscovery and a range of positive outcomes. These projects offer numerous advantages, including beautification, economic benefits, and personal health benefits. He referenced an article in which he speaks to park users and surprisingly, contamination concerns are infrequently mentioned, with most people expressing excitement about the transformation and the removal of negative associations. This participant believed that green spaces and parks can raise the value of surrounding neighbourhoods, and benefit homeowners, renters, and the community. He suggested even tree planting and urban gardens can significantly raise property values, even for renters. Brownfield redevelopment projects are typically located in areas near low-income and minority populations since these areas often offer cheaper housing options due to the negative impact of contamination and industrial land use, attracting residents who would accept such conditions.

The interviewee emphasizes the challenge of addressing the negative impact of contaminated properties on surrounding neighborhoods while avoiding “excessive positive impacts”, which can trigger gentrification. The creation of green spaces revitalizes neighborhoods and can attract new tenants, purchasers, and developers. However, this type of revitalization can lead to the displacement of existing residents.

This participant noted that in the case of Sorauren Park, gentrification was already occurring due to factors like proximity to transit and easy access to downtown. The City had to fight to maintain it as a green space rather than allowing condo development. He added that government priorities often favour the highest and best economic use of land. This includes uses like offices, retail, income condominiums, and industrial properties, which generate high taxes and require fewer municipal services. He suggested that Industrial land use is the highest beneficial use for a city, as it generates substantial tax revenue, requires minimal services, and offers employment opportunities. Parks, on the other hand, although necessary for delivering services such as flood risk reduction, are service-providing entities that do not normally pay taxes, hence they rank second in terms of financial benefits.

In the same vein, Anguelovski (2018) states trying to balance economic growth and protecting the environment in the remediation of formerly industrial sites is challenging. Efforts of locally undesirable land use (LULUs) cleanup, especially brownfield sites can lead to gentrification (Anguelovski, 2018, p.

263). Studies show many cases of environmental cleanup have set the stage for gentrification and displacement of the populations who previously endured the negative effects of industrial development while wealthier homeowners benefit from the increased value of their properties (Banzhaf & McCormick, 2006; Steil & Connolly, 2009; Essoka, 2010; Pearsall, 2010; Eckerd, 2011; Gamper-Rabindran, Mastromonaco, & Timmins, 2011; Curran & Hamilton, 2012; Pearsall, 2013; Anguelovski, 2014; as stated in Anguelovski, 2018). These studies indicate that redeveloping brownfield areas can result in environmental gentrification, which makes certain populations, particularly the elderly, more vulnerable to stressors like being forced to move from their original homes" (Pearsall, 2009; as stated in Anguelovski, 2018).

Participant P03 delved into unintended consequences or negative aspects of these developments surrounding Sorauren Park. The Participant stated that the park was established in what used to be an old factory and a TTC bus yard. In their opinion, the creation of the park preceded gentrification, but it may have contributed to it as more people were attracted to living in the community due to the presence of the park. As such, houses facing the park, which previously faced the TTC bus yard, likely experienced a significant increase in property prices. The participant also acknowledged that the overall rise in property prices was a city-wide trend, not exclusive to this neighborhood.

The same participant's response highlighted the transformation of Sorauren Park in the Roncesvalles area further. He mentioned that although the park was created as green space initially, it was later converted into a fantastic park, becoming the center of the community. In other words, this park has experienced significant development, including plans to convert an old factory into a Community Center. The park hosts various activities, such as a popular farmers market on Monday nights, a skating rink in the winter, and ball diamonds, making it a vibrant and active space. The participant also mentioned that this transformation occurred before gentrification in the area, and it's possible that the park contributed to the increased desirability of the community, potentially leading to more people wanting to live there. This case exemplifies how repurposing old industrial sites into community-oriented spaces can positively impact neighborhoods and potentially influence gentrification dynamics.

Participant P02 highlighted how enhancements to the park transformed it into a beautiful space for the community. The participant considered the situation of revitalization of a brownfield and gentrification as a potential chicken-and-egg scenario, where it's unclear whether the park improvements were a response to an already affluent community or if they attracted affluence to the area. In the case of Sorauren Park, however, it seemed that the affluent community advocated for the changes, rather than

being drawn to the area afterward. The participant noted that similar instances in Toronto were relatively rare.

The arguments of Participants P02 and P03 aligns with what Stanov (2018) argues in “Vacant Land to Park Transformations as a Catalyst for Neighbourhood Change and Gentrification in Toronto, Ontario”. Stanov (2018) discusses that there are some scenarios where the rates of perception of neighbourhood change appear to increase post-park development. However, there is difficulty in drawing correlation between these changes and the factors. For instance, there is a perception that more families, particularly young and affluent ones, are moving into the neighbourhood after park development. Real estate agents frequently promote the proximity to parks as a selling point for potential homebuyers, with Sorauren Park being particularly emphasized in media searches, advertising condominiums and factory loft conversions. In the same vein, the family-friendly programming at Sorauren Park is suggested as a factor attracting young, affluent families to the neighbourhood. Stanov (2018) emphasizes that parks can lead neighbourhood change and gentrification to different extents, but Sorauren Park has fully transitioned, signifying a significant transformation. Indeed, the socio-demographic landscape in Sorauren Park has seen significant changes since pre-park development. Affordable housing, which was more prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s, has largely disappeared. Rooming houses, particularly in North Parkdale, have become scarce. Additionally, the park's community-focused programming has made the neighborhood more attractive to wealthy, young families.

Participant P04, a municipal planner, also mentions the Port Lands and West Don Lands (the Canary District) in Toronto, where the context differs from displacing existing, established communities. These areas are undergoing transformation from historically industrial spaces into residential and mixed-use developments. The interviewee notes that the Port Lands and West Don Lands are examples of new neighborhoods created on previously industrial land. There were no existing formal populations in these areas, although there might have been transient tenant populations. The transformation of these industrial zones into residential spaces was motivated by the need to repurpose contaminated and underutilized industrial land for safe residential development. This transformation also aimed to stimulate economic development and generate revenue for the city.

Unlike scenarios where established neighborhoods are demolished to create new parks and developments, in the case of the Port Lands and West Don Lands, there was no existing neighbourhood in a formal sense. These areas were characterized by shipping yards, studios, and heavily contaminated industries. The development of new neighborhoods in these areas involves affordable housing

requirements, but it does not solely consist of public housing or housing for low-income populations. Instead, it incorporates a mix of housing types.

Considering all participant input and research, it appears that Sorauren Park played a role in attracting young, affluent families while also transforming the socio-demographic profile in Roncesvalles. However, other factors such as subway access, the role of BIA and other greening initiatives (discussed in 5.1), and larger economic forces, cannot be undermined. Also, it appears that balancing the negatives and positives of brownfield to greenfield projects is complex.

Literature on environmental gentrification seems to agree with my understanding of this issue. Equal access to environmental benefits and the prevention of disproportionate environmental burdens often falls on vulnerable populations, especially low-income and minority communities (Maantay & Maroko 2018, p. 13). The notion of environmental gentrification — where improvements in green spaces and the environment can lead to displacement and burdening of existing, less affluent communities — is often seen as conflicting with the goals of environmental justice. Maantay and Maroko (2018) argue "environmental justice seeks to ensure that everyone has equal access to environmental benefits and the means to achieve healthy lives, whilst also preventing some populations from bearing a disproportionate exposure to environmental burdens from noxious land uses" (p. 13). Environmental gentrification where gentrification occurs as a consequence of environmental improvements in lower-income communities often results in benefiting incoming affluent populations while causing displacement of the existing poor and vulnerable residents into worse living environments. It underscores that environmental gentrification contradicts and undermines the mission and potential achievement of environmental justice, with tangible and demonstrable consequences (Maantay & Maroko 2018, p. 13). This conundrum is what Anguelovski calls the green space paradox (2018, p. 462-463).

5.3 Park Revitalization Projects and Ecological Gentrification

5.3.1 Reinvestment and Park Revitalization Projects

From my understanding, there are two avenues to reinvestment in parks and recreation facilities. One avenue is through State of Good Repair (SOGR) funding, which is generally attributed to the maintenance of facilities. The second avenue is reinvestments in revitalization projects that are directed through the Parkland Strategy (O2 Planning + Design et. al., 2019), and sometimes secondary plans and district park plans. In this section, I will discuss these two avenues and then explore various examples of parks and community facilities that emerged from interviews that could have led to gentrification in their respective neighbourhoods.

State of Good Repair (SOGR) funding

The Facilities Masterplan (Moneith Brown Planning Consultants, 2017), defines SOGR as funds that extend the useable lifespan of facilities by repairing problems discovered during asset condition assessments, such as mechanical systems, roofing, structural systems, flooring, and equipment replacement. SOGR does not include initiatives that primarily entail upgrades, such as the extra expenses of barrier-free enhancements or technology upgrades (Moneith Brown Planning Consultants, 2017, p. 58).

In the City of Toronto, an inability to keep up with repairs has resulted in a substantial backlog of state-of-good-repair (SOGR) projects totalling $274.4 million as of 2017 for the facilities covered in this plan (representing 60.4% of PFR's overall backlog of $454.5 million). This backlog is the product of years of neglect in maintenance and repair (Moneith Brown Planning Consultants, 2017, p. 57).

> Many of Toronto's major parks and recreation facilities such as community recreation centres, arenas and outdoor pools were built decades ago, are reaching the end of their lifespans, and are not keeping pace with the needs and expectations of the general public. This reality is impacting PFR’s ability to consistently provide the full range of opportunities at the very time when the general public needs them most.
>
> (Moneith Brown Planning Consultants, 2017, p. 55-56)

Municipal taxes and other kinds of debt funding account for the majority of PFR's annual capital spending and are fairly stable funding sources. Debt funding is typically utilized for SOGR projects that cannot be supported through growth-derived funding sources, such as facility replacements (Moneith Brown Planning Consultants, 2017, p. 81).

Reinvestments in Revitalization Projects

The Facilities Masterplan (Moneith Brown Planning Consultants, 2017) specifies that Development Charge funds are to be used for supporting growth-related capital costs, meaning new facilities and parks, and not revitalization projects. It further states that non-growth-related capital costs (revitalization projects) can be drawn on reserve fund balances from Cash-in-lieu of Parkland under Section 42 of the Planning Act per the City's policy requirements providing that 25% of funds collected can be used to develop and upgrade parks and recreation facilities throughout the city (i.e. on a City-wide basis) and another 25% of funds collected may be used to develop and upgrade parks and recreation facilities within districts (Moneith Brown Planning Consultants, 2017, p. 84).

In interviewing the participants, I learned that this implementation of funding policies results in neighbourhoods with high development activity, receiving more CIL funds in their district reserve funds, hence receiving more funds for reinvestment in parks and facilities, than neighbourhoods with low development activity.

According to participant M04, a municipal planner, the decisions on park reinvestments are guided by the Parkland Strategy, the Facilities Masterplan (Moneith Brown Planning Consultants, 2017), and other strategic frameworks that prioritize investment based on various criteria. City staff can make recommendations on resource allocation; however, the determination of capital budget priorities ultimately involves a discussion on politics and decision-making of the city council. This participant further noted that what has been the pattern is that although staff make recommendations based on needs assessment studies to justify the need for investment, due to a lack of political will and community capacity, and other factors, investment in revitalization projects in neighbourhoods with low development activity is scarce. The current situation has been further exacerbated by 15 years of disinvestment in the maintenance and support of deteriorating infrastructure facilitated by the influence of conservative views and policies that have regulated growth, discussed earlier in section 4.2.2.

Other participants highlighted the complexities of decision-making for reinvestments with City Councillors. One municipal planner (participant M01) mentioned that in the redevelopment of Lawrence Heights in North York into a mixed-income, mixed-tenure community, there was a known need for basketball courts for the existing community. However, the local councillor was older and insisted on including pickleball courts instead. The participant noted that this kind of resistance creates a lot of unnecessary back and forth to ensure there is a good balance of facilities for the needs of the existing and future residents.

Another participant brought up this issue in a similar context:

"…staff recommendations are still subject to the approval of the council. A good analogy is the squeakiest wheel gets the oil". - Participant M09, municipal planner

5.3.2. Ecological Gentrification and Park Revitalization Projects

One Municipal planner (participant M04) noted that the City's major park revitalization projects have primarily been focused on areas of the city already experiencing significant growth. These reinvestments in park spaces have typically occurred after the initial wave of growth, attracting a different socioeconomic category or demographic to the neighbourhood, which in turn has sparked further development and interest in revitalizing the parks. These improvements sometimes precede visible changes in the built environment and demographics. This participant further stated that the city functions as an organic system, where these revitalization projects can have ripple effects that extend beyond their immediate neighbourhoods.

Other participants came up with some examples of park revitalization projects that could have led to ecological gentrification. Examples include Dufferin Grove Park in Little Portugal (which several participants spoke about), and Percy Park in Corktown (see figure 9). Participants also spoke about revitalizations of community centres and facilities, such as York Recreation Centre in Mount Dennis, and Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre in Regent Park, which I will discuss further below.

Dufferin Grove Park in Little Portugal

From what I heard from two participants, the relationship between the revitalization of Dufferin Grove Park, and gentrification is complex. The park was initially in a state of disrepair and had a bad reputation and safety concerns, which may have deterred potential gentrifiers. However, through grassroots efforts to improve the park and make it safer, it became more attractive to homebuyers. The improvements in the park, such as the expansion of the playground and the addition of a pizza oven, fire pits, and farmers market created a sense of community and catered to higher-income residents, which also reflected the changing demographics and preferences of the neighborhood. Several participants expressed that these improvements to the park may have contributed to the gentrification of the surrounding area, but acknowledged that other factors such as housing affordability, the proximity of the park to amenities like the Bloor subway and retail areas also contributed to the overall gentrification of the neighborhood.

> They also have fire pits that you can use, organized by the parks community. […] you have to have a fairly affluent and organized community to allow that kind of development in a park. And I imagine that while you can have a fire pit that is organized by a community which will come and have volunteers that deliver sand and water. […] You

> can book [the fire pit only] online. It serves a community that has to know how to access those services, and it's not obvious. And it's not advertised. So, who's using these community fire pits? I'm sure it's no one that makes less than 50k. The fire pit thing is probably pretty interesting. Because I don't think that would be allowed in other contexts, and by other communities of users. […] so while [these improvements] are terrific for creating community and allowing the use of parks, on the other hand, it also really drives up the value and appreciation of those spaces by certain socioeconomic classes of people.
>
> - Participant M09, municipal planner

Percy Park in Corktown

A municipal planner noted that investments in Percy Park may have been one of the factors contributing to the desirability for homebuyers and as such the gentrification of the surrounding neighbourhood. “I think it led to gentrification, perhaps not at the same scale as the United States, but it did lead to some regeneration” (participant M01). He further noted that this park was part of the King- Parliament Secondary Plan.

As I looked into it further, I read that Percy Street Park in Corktown transformed in 2007 thanks to the efforts of Tricon Films and their HGTV renovation show, Green Force. The chosen location for their episode was Percy St. Park, a neglected half-acre plot at the end of Percy Street. The park, previously marred by graffiti, old swings, and litter, has now been revitalized into a stunning botanical sanctuary. The Green Force team, recognizing the potential of the space, offered to remodel the park free of charge and document the process. The residents of Percy Street eagerly embraced the project and actively participated in its execution. Construction commenced in August 2006 and was completed within two weeks. Tricon and Green Force sponsors generously donated $300,000 worth of landscaping materials and labour for the project (Gadsden, 2006).

The park's renovation has resulted in the creation of three distinct outdoor "rooms." These areas are adorned with raised flower beds, elegant cedar arbours, and majestic mature trees. Additionally, a designated gathering space has been established, perfect for neighbourhood barbeques and socializing. At the western end of the park, an interlocking brick path leads to Sumach Street, guiding visitors through a beautifully sculpted garden featuring seagrass and seating rocks (Gadsden, 2006).

5.3.3 Ecological Gentrification and Recreation Facilities

Two participants mentioned that community centres can contribute to gentrification by promoting the development of underserved areas and attracting investment that can lead to changes in the built environment, such as the addition of transportation and retail options. Two examples mentioned were

the York Recreation Centre in Mount Dennis and the Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre in Regent Park, which I will discuss below.

York Recreation Centre in Mount Dennis

One municipal planner, participant M01, mentioned that at the intersection of Black Creek and Eglinton, there was previously open space consisting of baseball diamonds and seating areas along Black Creek. However, the district planners recognized the need for community improvement and decided to build the York Recreation Centre and enhance the parkland in the area. He believed that this investment helped spur gentrification in the neighbourhood. He also noted that the influence of Eglinton Crosstown could be a contributor as well, which results in demographic changes and housing changes.

Regent Park

Two participants mentioned improvements in Regent Park may have led to further investment and resultant gentrification in the neighbourhood. One participant specifically mentioned the Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre, which is designed with Muslim women in mind, and added that community centres "probably have a more significant impact than just open space like parkland or passive parks" (participant M01, municipal planner).

Additionally, the impacts of Community centres on gentrification in Toronto neighborhoods such as Moss Park have been discussed by David J. Roberts & John Paul Catungal (see: Roberts & Catungal 2018), exploring which is outside the scope of this paper.

5.3.4 Considerations for Studying Ecological Gentrification

A planner from the non-profit industry (participant N08) stated that in any of their projects related to transforming public spaces, including improvements to parks and active transportation, community members express concerns about these improvements causing gentrification, and pricing them out of their homes.

Another planner from the non-profit industry (participant N07) noted that it is important to consider the social development needs of individuals within the community, such as support for newcomers and language training programs, and capacity building in the community. Focusing solely on the built environment without addressing the individual needs of community members can create gaps in services and potentially harm those affected by gentrification. Some tools that were noted for providing these services to communities, were social development plans and community development plans.

Similarly, a planner from the private sector (participant P02) stated that if parks are improved without considering the needs of existing or vulnerable residents, the same challenges as gentrification are accepted and further promoted. The access to these parks will be primarily enjoyed by those who can afford it unless measures are taken to counteract this. The investments made may not necessarily benefit the intended recipients. To ensure equal distribution of benefits, investments should be made evenly and accompanied by counteracting measures such as pairing with social services or affordable housing, or providing income support. If investments are made without addressing gentrification, it will contribute to the displacement process.

As I have learned from these participants, as urban planners, it is crucial to consider the potential impacts of public space improvements on gentrification in neighbourhoods and the displacement of vulnerable community members. Simply focusing on the physical aspects of the built environment without addressing the social development needs of individuals can create gaps in services and perpetuate inequality. To ensure equal distribution of benefits, investments in public spaces should be accompanied by measures such as affordable housing, social services, and income support. By taking a holistic approach that considers both the built environment and the needs of the community, we can create inclusive and sustainable public spaces that benefit all residents. Perhaps utilizing tools such as social development plans and community development plans will assist in this pursuit.

5.4 DISPLACEMENT OF USERS BY (RE)DESIGN

5.4.1 Park Design: by Whom, for Whom?

When reading literature on parks, one cannot help but wonder, who are parks for? Are they to cater to the adjacent neighbourhood, or are they for the use of everyone in the city? In addition, who should design our parks? Who gets to choose the programming, and the activities that take place in parks? These are some questions that were not originally thought of but were discussed in interviews, by the token of talking about equity in parks. Below I will discuss some of the topics that participants discussed. A municipal planner mentioned that sometimes international competitions are held for designing local parks. He believed that these competitions can be problematic at times due to the lack of familiarity of the designers with the historical, social, environmental, and political context of the site, and hence tend to deliver "a more gentrified type of design" for the park (participant M01).

This participant further noted that the usage of parkland can vary between homeowners and renters. Homeowners, especially those with single detached houses, often have their own open spaces and gardens, reducing their reliance on local parks. On the other hand, renters, depending on the design of their rental building, may have limited access to green space. This lack of private amenities can lead to overcrowding in public parks, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to consider these factors when planning and providing adequate green spaces for residents.

Another municipal planner also highlighted considering the needs of the local community. She noted that understanding the travel patterns and needs of existing communities is crucial for planners. Rather than simply providing sidewalks and directing people to parks, it is important to consider how existing residents navigate their surroundings. Displacement can occur if planners fail to recognize existing shortcuts or alternative routes that people use to save time and feel safer. It is essential to comprehend the daily routines and needs of the community to avoid excluding them from sites important to their livelihoods (participant M05).

On the same topic of meeting community needs, a non-profit planner noted that perceptions of vibrancy in policy and practice can be problematic, as 'vibrancy' usually refers to at-grade retail and not the inclusion of community facilities. As urban spaces are redeveloped, and services are continuing to be structured, the City aspires to maintain uninterrupted functionality while allowing communities to express their authentic selves. Parks and recreation spaces often have programmed activities, but it is important to recognize that people also need unprogrammed areas to freely engage in their own desired

activities. However, the presence of community centers or libraries adjacent to parks can create a dilemma, as the need for a quiet office environment clashes with the desire for people to be noisy and expressive. This participant emphasized that urban planners must understand the operational dynamics of community spaces to avoid negatively impacting communities and limiting their livelihoods (participant N07).

A municipal planner (participant M05), expressed that there has been an increase in the presence of POPS (Privately Owned Public Spaces) in Toronto due to the rise in condominium developments. POPS are subject to stricter monitoring as they are located within the condo blocks. This has resulted in different access to green and open spaces, as POPS can serve as such spaces. In comparison, areas like Oakville predominantly consist of townhouses and houses with their own community parks, where activities are not monitored and individuals have more freedom. In condos, however, open spaces are typically regulated by the condo corporation, which may impose restrictions on certain activities. This monitoring aspect can deter people from utilizing these spaces, thereby influencing how public and private spaces are perceived and used. This participant highlighted the importance of considering this nuance when evaluating the benefits of POPS, as developers may highlight their positive aspects while overlooking the impact of monitoring on public space usage.

On this topic, participant N07, a non-profit planner, noted that the securitization and surveillance of space, along with the operational control of space, will result in the disbandment of communities and the disempowerment of individuals, hindering their ability to be responsive to their community.

Participant M05, a municipal planner, expressed a similar sentiment about surveillance. She noted that security cameras can deter some users from using park spaces. That is why it is important to understand that residents preferences of existing residents. By not creating that space, some marginalized community members are displaced, for the benefit of white, middle – to high-class parents. She highlighted this example as a way of displacing people through the design of spaces.

The topic of equitable and context-specific design often came up as well. Participant M01 noted that:

> What creates a red flag with me is when I see a non-flexible design that seems to be trying to design out certain people using a space, whether it's skateboarders or a homeless population; when I pick up a program scheduled for a park or a recreational complex and it just seems like it's all catering itself to a white, middle-income population that that's a red flag for me. To me, there's a disconnect here between the population that is surrounding this park or recreational facility and what's getting programmed.
>
> - participant M01, municipal planner

This participant further advised that the suitability of programming with the surrounding community should be checked and evaluated continuously. It is necessary to periodically assess and challenge it. The design process should always be cyclical, where implementation is followed by assessment and evaluation to identify what is working and what is not. This information helps inform improvements and tweaks in the design. Sometimes, pilot projects for certain uses or facilities in parks can be beneficial, serving as a role model before making significant investments. This approach prevents reactive responses from the public when expensive designs are not modified. Design and risk management should be carefully considered in the overall thought process.

Various participants expressed the need for parks to cater to a range of ages. Particularly, participant M01 noted that the needs of seniors are not always reflected, as the focus tends to be on accommodating families and active recreation facilities. Constraints and priorities must be considered when designing parks in areas with increasing populations. He mentioned examples such as Eglinton Park and Baycrest Park which demonstrated the challenges faced in accommodating various needs and balancing objectives.

5.4.2. Park (re)design in Action: Examples from Toronto

Participant M01 spoke about College Park as an example of a great park design that caters to the local community's needs. It contains POPS that add to the perceived area of the park, without being distinguishable to the public eye, and has stratified ownership; a private parking lot operator is underneath the park which has a board that assists in the maintenance of the park.

The participant mentioned that the park had social problems such as drug dealing and gang activity, and was not well-utilized by children. To enhance the functionality of the park, a consultant from Project for Public Spaces in New York City was brought to redesign and program the park, to provide multiple functions in one space. “it's not just coming up with spectacular design. It's providing a design so that you can have 10 different functions happening in a park” (Participant M01). He added that extensive consultation was conducted to ensure the park met the needs of local users and did not lead to gentrification. The park now includes water elements, a skating area, a speaker's corner, a play area, a dog area, seating areas, and raised planters. The success of College Park can be seen in the increased usage by children and seniors from the surrounding buildings.

Participant M01 mentioned Barbara Hall Park in Church-Wellesley Village as an example of a failed attempt at redesigning a space to displace houseless individuals. ”As a planner, your role is to check

that and contain it so that it's not just about meeting one user's needs or a new park or a re-design. I think that's important to do."

This participant further mentioned Pop-up Parks, such as the ones in Wexford Heights Plaza in Scarborough and Jane-Finch, as excellent examples of meeting local needs through a bottom-up approach to park design. These parks focus on smaller-scale initiatives that cater to the community, and are not likely to lead to gentrification. A study done by Winter, S. J. et. al., (2020) found that pop-up parks, not only improved users' physical and mental health but had positive impacts on community building and businesses in the neighborhood. I agree that these pop-up parks are great examples of tactical urbanism that can greatly benefit the community. I initially encountered the one in Albion and Islington and learned that these projects are completed by an initiative called Plaza POPS, which is funded by the City of Toronto's Main Street Recovery and Rebuild Initiative.

5.4.3 Considerations of Park Size, Quality, and Amenities

Park Size

Participant M09 explains that the size of a park determines its intended purpose and the communities it serves. Parks in the city are quantified based on their size and the radius of the community they can accommodate. The larger the park, the wider range of uses it can permit. Pocket parks may not have the capacity to accommodate playgrounds due to limited accessibility for people with mobility issues and strollers. Playgrounds are typically found in larger parks, while splash pads are in even bigger parks to serve a greater number of users. The City's Parkland Strategy outlines the specific quantification and allocation of park uses. Having worked in other municipalities, she added that Toronto is considered progressive in this regard and strives to distribute park uses evenly across the city; still, the implementation is largely dependent on Council support.

Participant M01 expressed concern about the trend in other municipalities where investing in large regional parks that require driving is prioritized and small neighbourhood parks are neglected. HE argued that this approach limits access to only those with cars and suggested that investing in smaller parks would be more impactful and reflective of local needs. The participant emphasized the importance of proper consultation processes to ensure parks are more accessible and desirable for the community to support their physical and mental health.

Participant I10 agreed with this sentiment, noting that to maximize benefits from parks, they must be built in a fair and balanced manner throughout the city. This strategy will aid in addressing the limited

availability of park spaces, particularly in densely populated areas such as downtown. Rather than focusing on destination parks, the emphasis should be on creating community spaces. This participant added that we can attract local residents rather than people from far away by building smaller, more localized parks, such as repurposing former corner gas stations. Investing in numerous small-scale parks rather than large-scale park developments can help mitigate the negative effects of gentrification, which is already occurring due to factors such as immigration and economic pressures. While some sites, such as the Toronto Portland area, may necessitate larger investments, beginning with micro-investments in pocket parks can be a viable solution.

Green gentrification literature demonstrates that large urban parks in a 500-meter radius around residential neighbourhoods contribute to rising property values (Anguelovski, Connolly, & Brand, 2018, p. 421). Thus, as the above participants agree, it is perhaps better to prioritize investment in small to medium-sized parks to balance the negatives and the positives.

Park Quality

Perhaps just as park characteristics such as quality of vegetation cover, presence of birds, presence of a body of water, walking paths, adequate lighting, maintenance, and other characteristics that quantify quality in various studies (Annerstedt et. al., 2012; Cox et al., 2017; Francis et al., 2012) have shown to improve mental health, they also have a positive effect on the appeal of the parks on the “marketing of the neighbourhood” to the new, higher income population that move into newly developed areas.

Several studies have examined the associations between park characteristics and park use, which can indirectly influence the marketing of neighbourhoods to potential residents. Dyck et al. (2013) found that lower-income families were less likely to visit parks, suggesting that the presence and quality of parks may be more appealing to higher-income populations. Similarly, Banda et al. (2014) found that park environments influenced park use in southern US communities, indicating that well-maintained and attractive parks may be more appealing to residents.

In addition to the physical characteristics of parks, the social and environmental factors surrounding parks can also influence their appeal. Zhang et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review of the associations between the physical environment and park-based physical activity. The review identified several park environment characteristics, such as paths/trails, lighting, and park safety, that were associated with park-based physical activity. These characteristics can contribute to the overall appeal of parks and attract residents who value outdoor physical activity. Therefore, the quality of neighbourhood parks in itself can be another context-dependent indicator of green gentrification.

As the literature on park characteristics and mental health benefits demonstrates, larger urban parks tend to show a higher rate of improvements in participants' psychological well-being (Annerstedt et. al., 2012; Cox et al., 2017; Francis et al., 2012). Perhaps it is the art of the park planner to find this intricate balance between addressing the community needs, maximizing mental health benefits, and minimizing the risk of green gentrification.

Park Amenities

Participant M01 put it eloquently that the ideal park design incorporates multi-functional facilities that can be adapted for various uses. He added that as an example, a basketball court can easily be transformed into a tennis court or even an outdoor dance floor. By prioritizing adaptable designs, parks can accommodate different sports and recreational activities, ensuring a vibrant and inclusive space for all. He added, “I think you would have less concerns about gentrification if you have more multiple programming and flexibility in terms of designs so that facilities can actually get modified, to accommodate different users for different sports and recreational activities” (Participant M01).

I believe this is a lesson learned from the pandemic. I read an article on this topic in 2021 by Oliver Hartleben, Director of Placemaking at Arcadis (2020). Hartleben notes that public space needs to be designed as “an isotropic space”; it should serve multiple uses either consecutively or at the same time, including those which may not yet exist. Public space should be spacious enough to be adaptable to evolving needs and provide access, circulation, and servicing from multiple locations to be resilient (Hartleben, 2020).

Discussing various park amenities, other interview participants talked about nuances of incorporating various amenities into park (re)designs; items such as community gardens, benches, washrooms, walking paths, and choice of vegetation were discussed. Below are the highlights of these conversations.

Community Gardens

Participant M09 noted that community gardens in the park are highly valued by some local residents. However, some municipal planners view them as an inefficient use of park space. It can be argued that these gardens cater to a small number of individuals compared to the overall population, and it might be worth considering reallocating the land used for more popular amenities.

However, participant M01 had a different view from the previous participant. He noted that urban agriculture, such as community gardens, is an important aspect of park design. It meets the local needs

of residents, particularly seniors, and helps to keep people engaged and connected to their neighbourhoods. He believed that removing community gardens from parks can have negative consequences, as gardening is a significant pastime and hobby for many individuals. Therefore, it is crucial to prioritize and preserve these frontline uses in park design to ensure the well-being and satisfaction of the community.

Another participant (participant M05) expressed a different view on community gardens. She noted that the perception of community gardens being associated with less affluent individuals is a common misconception. In reality, these gardens attract people who have a passion for gardening and a need for green spaces. It is crucial to consider the significance of infill parks that are created by community members rather than the city. Although some may not view this as gentrification, the success of these parks can add to the desirability of the area.

It appears that views on community gardens are highly varied and hence a potentially controversial topic for communities. As gardening is a hobby and hobbies tend to be age-specific, perhaps the varied opinions expressed here were due to the varied ages of the participants.

> *Park amenities—their presence, absence, type, location, condition, and so on—have a significant impact on how people experience their local park, or even if they visit it at all.*
>
> *39% of city residents said that a lack of amenities, like washrooms and seating, is a barrier to visiting parks.*
>
> *(Canadian Parks Report 2023, p. 18-19, 35)*

Benches

Participant M09 noted that some GTA municipalities implemented park benches with a bar in the middle to prevent sleeping on them, which is a problematic decision considering the issue of homelessness. This design choice aims to encourage individuals to seek shelter in other neighbourhoods rather than sleeping on benches. This approach may be similar to what Toronto incorporates in its seating area designs.

Washrooms

Participant M09 also spoke about the contested nature of placing washrooms in parks. She said that the majority of GTA municipalities believe that public parks should not be used as places for individuals experiencing homelessness to sleep or use the facilities, as it may prevent others from enjoying these spaces. This perspective often leads to the removal of public bathrooms from parks, as they can be seen as attracting individuals struggling with homelessness and drug use to the neighbourhood. However, it is important to recognize that public facilities, such as bathrooms, are essential for all individuals, including those without stable housing. Providing accessible and well-maintained public bathrooms in parks can ensure that everyone has access to basic amenities without having to leave the area. While concerns about homelessness and drug use are understandable, it is crucial to find a balance that addresses the needs of all community members and fosters inclusivity in public spaces, without displacing anyone.

Bellevue Square Park in Kensington

The article, written at the height of the pandemic in March 2021, notes that homelessness, as well as alcoholism and drug-related deaths, are on the rise in Toronto. At the same time, as families are spending more time outside, public restrooms have become essential in parks. To address this demand, the number of public restrooms has been significantly increased during the winter season (Humeniuk, 2021).

The article states during the winter, public restrooms have become a vital resource for the homeless, but they are frequently occupied by drug users, creating a persistent problem.

> The City of Toronto has called drug-taking and homelessness “incompatible uses” of the green spaces. That was in 2016; now look outside. It arouses a more general question: what is the point in spending money on revitalizing parks and increasing bathrooms when nothing can be maintained? It’s a problem. A big problem. And even the experts are scratching their heads and shrugging.
>
> -Michael Humeniuk, The National Post (Mar 24, 2021)

It appears that, to design out houseless users and drug users, the bathroom at Bellevue Square Park in Kensington Market was renovated in 2018 with the City of Toronto investing $3.35 million in the project. Community consultations and focus groups were held during the design process, but concerns about drug use in the restrooms were raised early on. Despite the obstacles, it was decided to provide bathrooms for families and revitalize the park. Tim Scott, the bathroom's architect, faced design challenges in balancing the needs of different user groups and preventing facility abuse. Various design options were considered, such as Parisian-style pissoirs or pay-to-go services, but they had limitations. The architect tried to alter the design to limit drug use, however, he stated that any attempt to create a

deterrent compromises another legitimate use. The author of the article believes that the desired approach was not hostile architecture that restricted public use. He further argues that the issue of drug use in public restrooms is complicated, and efforts to discourage drug use may jeopardize other legitimate uses. The presence of supervised consumption sites nearby provides drug users with limited options, but they are not always accessible and do not permit smoking. Staffing the restrooms in Kensington Market's Bellevue Square Park could be a viable solution, but it is fraught with difficulties and conflicts with the neighborhood's values. The current state of parks in Toronto raises concerns about the city's green spaces' future (Humeniuk, 2021).

It is evident that the Bellevue Square Park revitalization project in Kensington is an example of displacing users through (re)design. As many participants spoke about the issue of the houseless population living in many parks in Toronto, I decided to dedicate a section to discussing this issue further. Section 5.4.4 will discuss participant views and some research on the topic.

5.4.4 Considerations on Houselessness and Parks

Participant M04 noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the issue of homelessness, particularly among vulnerable populations who have resorted to living in park spaces as temporary housing. This has led to the displacement of these encampments, often through physical and violent means. It is important to recognize that these discussions cannot be separated from conversations about gentrification, housing insecurity, and the lack of investment in social support for those who have no other choice but to live in parks. Additionally, we need to examine access to shelter and government services that can provide housing for those who are evicted or unhoused due to various factors. Park spaces have become a focal point for discussions on gentrification and its impact on homelessness.

> *[Some City Staff] felt lost in the logistics. Some mentioned feeling unsatisfied with the effectiveness of their interdepartmental collaboration structures, overwhelmed by the volume of public complaints, and unsure how to support front-line parks staff handling mental health concerns and burnout. Due to the politically sensitive nature of encampments, there is little information-sharing between municipalities, leaving many parks departments with a sense of isolation and uncertainty in navigating this work.*
> *(Canadian Parks Report 2023, p. 18-19)*

Participant P02 also noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the emergence of encampments in parks. He added that this has created a complex situation where parks, besides affecting gentrification, have become spaces where people live informally. This participant added that perhaps a more dire issue is the need for a more nuanced approach to homelessness, moving away from dismantling encampments on short notice and instead implementing rules regarding distances from certain uses and managing the situation more positively.

National Protocol for Homeless Encampments in Canada

Participant N08 referred me to the Protocol for Homeless Encampments in Canada (Farha & Schwan, 2020). which serves as a guide for all levels of government to understand their responsibilities regarding homeless encampments and human rights. It emphasizes the importance of adhering to international human rights laws and presents eight principles that should inform government actions towards encampments. The protocol acknowledges that it cannot cover every possible situation or challenge that may arise within encampments, but it urges governments and stakeholders to apply the principles outlined in the protocol to each case, ensuring the recognition and respect of the rights, dignity, and inclusion of encampment residents (Farha & Schwan, 2020. p. 6).

The development of this protocol involved consultation with various experts, including individuals with lived experience of homelessness, urban Indigenous leaders, community advocates, researchers, lawyers, and human rights law experts (Farha & Schwan, 2020. p. 6). The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, in collaboration with lead researcher Kaitlin Schwan and other experts, has developed the Protocol, outlining eight Principles to guide governments and stakeholders in addressing encampments in a rights-based manner (Farha & Schwan, 2020. p. 2).

The report discusses homeless encampments as a breach of human rights, particularly the right to shelter. Living conditions in these encampments frequently fail to meet international human rights standards, resulting in health problems, insecurity, and overall poor well-being for residents. Those who live in encampments are also subjected to criminalization, harassment, violence, and discrimination. These encampments violate both the human rights of those who are forced to live in them and the right to housing. As the number of encampments in Canada grows, governments must address them in a way that respects human rights. (Farha & Schwan, 2020. p. 2)

It asserts, while encampments are not a long-term solution to homelessness, governments must protect encampment residents' basic human rights and dignity while they wait for adequate and affordable housing solutions that meet their needs. (Farha & Schwan, 2020. p. 2)

I believe this national protocol should be consulted and incorporated into park planning and operation policies to prevent displacement of users in the design, planning, and maintenance and entire lifecycle of parks. Park planners should familiarize themselves with this protocol and promote its use in their municipalities for a more inclusive greenspace system. For further literature on this topic, see the report titled *Policy And Planning Tools For Urban Green Justice* by Anguelovski and colleagues (2021b), a valuable resource that examines a total of 50 tools and regulations available to planners and policy-implementors to support housing equity and equitable green development.

5.4.5 Working Together for Equity

Participant M05 highlighted the importance of adopting an intersectional lens in catering to community needs. She noted that planners must consider the needs of Black, Indigenous, and equity-deserving communities separately in community engagement. Understanding their cultural needs and the impacts of colonialism requires an intersectional lens. Indigenous communities may have different indicators than white, able-bodied people. Accessibility is another important factor in making infrastructure safe for wheelchair and scooter users. She added that community inter-relational tensions must also be addressed; some groups' gang affiliations or colours prevent them from using public spaces. Thus, creating a sense of safety and inclusivity is essential because even if the community is nearby but feels unsafe, we fail at creating public space for them.

The literature agrees with this sentiment, emphasizing that when the needs of the community are not addressed, residents are psychologically displaced, and their social access is reduced. Jelks, Jennings & Rigolon (2021) note the critical nature of considering all community members' needs and preferences, especially in gentrifying areas. Parks and greenways should not only cater to affluent newcomers, but also to long-term low-income residents' desires. Residents must be involved in the design process early and consistently to ensure that their voices are heard and that green spaces are created to meet their needs. Recreation programs in these areas should be tailored to the cultural preferences and financial resources of diverse and low-income communities, while also meeting daily needs (Jelks, Jennings & Rigolon, 2021, p. 18).

Participants noted other ways that various bodies working together could bring positive changes and promotion of equity in park planning. Participant M05 noted that “a willing developer” will assist in providing equitable access to parks and affordable housing, such as in the case of the Downsview Lands Framework. Additionally, Participant M01 noted that partnerships in funding and stratified

ownership of parks, such as in cases of lands with underground parking beneath, could ease the burden of investment and maintenance.

Community Consultations

Participant M09 expressed that the success of public consultations is influenced by the involvement of the local council, and not solely a decision made by park staff members. The opinions and preferences of council members and residents who are vocal about the use and development of green spaces often have a significant impact. She noted further that the budget approval process is also influenced by the council, and the areas that receive the most attention and development are often those that have the most vocal advocates.

Participant M01 agreed with this sentiment, highlighting the importance of ensuring that consultation processes are inclusive and representative of all voices. He added that one challenge in consultation is that in-person meetings may attract a specific demographic, such as middle to upper-income individuals or seniors (the gentrifying demographic). These meetings may focus on the preferences and needs of this demographic, such as requesting upgraded playgrounds or higher-end seating. However, it is important to consider the perspectives of other populations, such as the homeless or children, who may not be able to attend these meetings and whose preferences may be very different. City planners should actively reach out to these communities and ensure their voices are heard. Perhaps, new ways of engagement are needed to address these issues.

Innovations in Addressing Equity in Public Engagement for Park Planning

At the 2023 OPPI conference, I attended a seminar presented by the City of Mississauga Park Planners. I was impressed to learn that the City of Mississauga implements creative community engagement practices that have a sharp focus on inclusivity.

One example is Lakeview Village Park engagement, which is the site of a former coal plant that has been transformed into a park. The city utilizes online platforms to capture feedback from park users, ensuring that a wide range of voices are heard. To improve accessibility, a translation tool is available to facilitate communication with diverse communities.

For the Port Credit revitalization project, called Inspiration Port Credit, to bridge the gap between perceived and actual park users, engagement materials are distributed through mailings as well as displayed in the park itself. The city also organizes pop-up engagement events, which have proven to be successful in attracting a larger turnout. Additionally, efforts are made to engage youth through

partnerships with school boards, while working with recreation departments to target other demographics.

In community engagement for new parks in Brightwater, which is a 72-acre mixed-use development on the waterfront, the City circulated engagement surveys through the developer to the new homeowners, to get feedback from the future residents (see figure 10).

For regional parks, city-wide advertising methods are employed to reach a wider audience. To ensure maximum participation, registration is not required as it can act as a barrier, and the use of IP addresses is not blocked to accommodate multiple participants from the same household. The website they utilize is called Engagement HQ, which provides translation services for surveys and the website, and while comments are not publicly visible online, staff members provide a summary to the public.

Figure 10: The Brightwater Development in Mississauga

6. CONCLUSION

In this major paper, I explored the phenomena of green gentrification in the context of the City of Toronto, in Ontario, Canada. Through a literature review, I examined the various scales of mechanisms that contribute to gentrification in the historical, social, political, and environmental context of Toronto. Then, insights from local city planners in various capacities were collected through semi-structured interviews. These insights resulted in a new understanding of the vastness of the issues surrounding displacement in and around green development in Toronto, and led to adopting a broader term to explain the phenomena. The term ecological gentrification was selected as it encompasses a wider domain of displacements that can overlap with environmental justice concerns such as displacement of marginalized communities surrounding brownfield to greenfield projects, and displacement of houseless individuals from parks due to city by-laws and park redevelopment. This definition enables a more nuanced approach to studying gentrification surrounding green development projects in Toronto. I have concluded that urban phenomena such as gentrification do not occur in the same scale and intensity in every city. With Toronto as my focus, I learned that ecological gentrification is complex, nuanced, and context specific. Considering the funding structure of parks Toronto, I agree with many of the participants' remarks that parks in Toronto may not be the cause of gentrification, but rather an indication of it. This progression is a result of the pattern and approach to new development and growth, with areas with development interest not evenly distributed across the city. The uneven patterns of investment in parks and recreation facilities driven by growth-driven funding create a complex economic terrain to track gentrification around park capital projects. These findings were the product of conversations with planners in the field and gaining insight into their lived experiences within the urban fabric and observations from various city neighbourhoods. This is why planning “on the ground” is so important, especially since gentrification patterns are ever-evolving, in tandem with the larger economic, social, and political forces at play. As such, as urban scholars and planners, we must consider the local context in studying such phenomena, adopting a place-based approach.

As evident in the chapters herein, ecological gentrification may have occurred in various locations around Toronto, namely, surrounding Dufferin Grove Park, Sorauren Park, Percy Park, and other facilities mentioned in chapter 5, due to various mechanisms, namely uneven investment in revitalizations, conversion of land uses, and redesigning park and facilities. This paper concludes with a conceptual framework for future scholars to act as a springboard for their leap into studying ecological gentrification in Toronto, to examine these possibilities more closely, and to expand on this research however they see fit.

Future research directions in understanding green gentrification should focus on engaging with individuals who have experienced green gentrification. As suggested by Quinton et al., (2020, p. 976), this can be accomplished through interviews and surveys to gather valuable insights into the motivations and preferences of long-term residents. It would also be beneficial to examine the role of community engagement and participation in green gentrification projects. Furthermore, scholars in this domain should investigate the relationship between park quality and amenities and the decision-making process of gentrifiers by conducting interviews with individuals who have recently moved to gentrified neighbourhoods. This research can provide insights into the specific aspects of park quality and amenities that are important to gentrifiers and their overall perception of the neighbourhood. Lastly, future research should explore the potential of eco-friendly 3D printing technologies as a solution to the housing crisis in Toronto, including their scalability, cost-effectiveness, environmental impact, and social acceptance.

7. A PLACE-BASED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING ECOLOGICAL GENTRIFICATION – LESSONS LEARNED FROM TORONTO

In this section, I offer a place-based conceptual framework for studying ecological gentrification. I have drawn on my findings and lessons learned from Toronto to create a conceptual framework for studying green gentrification, as a conceptual framework is a method best suited for understanding social phenomena, and offers an interpretive and indeterminist approach to studying social reality (Jabareen, 2009, p.51). Unlike a model, a conceptual framework is rather flexible and has the capacity for modification based on the context (Jabareen, 2009, p. 58). My hope is that this framework may be applied to any city and allows expansion and exploring beyond it.

Figure 11: A conceptual framework for studying ecological gentrification

My recommended conceptual framework has five categories, each of which offers questions for stimulating investigation and conversation. I imagine this framework to be used by future researchers as a guide and springboard to ignite ideas and discussion.

1. Park Planning and Development Policies

- How is new parkland secured by the governing body (municipality)?
- For whom and what functions are the new parks designed?
- have local histories and social equity been considered in designing public spaces?
- how are the budget and distribution of park improvement projects governed?
- how does planning and development policy shape park development?

2. Gentrification and Displacement Patterns

- what mechanisms have contributed to local gentrification patterns?
- how do various levels of planning and development policy shape displacement mechanisms?
- has development affected housing tenure, and demographic makeup of the neighbourhood?
- What other indicators could be important to look at? Scholarship and interviews with professionals in the field could provide insight.

3. Economic Development and Neighborhood Stabilization

- have new parks played a role in attracting businesses and improving housing markets?
- have park improvements impacted transformations in the neighbourhood?
- Have there been recent investments in facilities such as community centres?
- Are investments in parkland and facilities distributed fairly evenly across the city, or is there a “spikey” pattern?
- can factors beyond parks, such as schools and transportation explain gentrification patterns?
- Have there been brownfield to greenfield projects in the neighborhood? Have they impacted housing costs?
- Have entities such as Business Improvement Associations (BIA) or Cultural District designations had an impact on gentrification?

4. Community Engagement and Inclusivity

- how effective has been the community involvement in park development and redevelopment projects?
- are the new parks inclusive to all users, or only to some?
- Is the tree and shrub species selection telling of exclusions? Are fruit and nut-bearing species excluded?
- Are amenities such as benches, shade trees, washrooms, and community gardens being deliberately omitted from parks?

EPILOGUE

My entire experience of unstable housing through the master's program at York University is a testament to the realities of housing in Toronto. From the not-so-safe neighbourhood of Emeryville to the affordable but unlivable graduate housing at the University, experiences of which haunt me to this very moment, to rooming houses by Downsview Park, I have been displaced far too many times. The reality is that being in proximity to a park or not, there is a far larger problem in Toronto: lack of affordable and attainable housing.

As I am losing my “right to stay put” (as used by Kern 2022, p. 110) for the 7th time in two years, I make fascinating observations searching through various online websites to look for a roof over my head that I can afford as a recently employed urban planner. I see that the most affordable units that are also livable, meaning the building is of reasonable age, and the price is reasonable and proportionate to the space provided, tend to be the walk-ups above stores. The same units that many of my interview participants mentioned no rental replacement policy protects. What is ironic in this situation, is that my work now deals with reviewing development applications around the new subway stations on various line extension projects. Many of these stations are designated PMTSAs. However, I have yet to come across one development application that has included affordable units in their proposal. What I believe is missing is for various levels of government to incentivize the inclusion of affordable units so that more developers are inclined to provide affordable housing in their projects in Toronto.

As if I am to perpetually observe and withstand
the havoc shadowing the city;
my hopes of finding a remedy in books
dissipate by the dismal reality
that I am too negligible
to even pull in
a single ray of light.
It is time for the blind men
walking on clouds
to step down,
feel the reality of the ground,
and push the dark clouds aside.

Elika Zamani

APPENDIX A: LITERATURE REVIEW MATRIX

Articles on Gentrification in Toronto

Paper title	Authors	Published Year	Neighborhoods	Time period	Indicators of Gentrification	Mechanisms	common themes 1	common themes 2
Artists, Aestheticisation and the Field of Gentrification	David Ley	2003	Yorkville, the Annex, and Don Vale, Riverdale, Queen Street West, and Parkdale	1970s to 1990s	location quotient of artists	movement of districts from a position of high cultural capital and low economic capital to a position of steadily rising economic capital; the power of the aesthetic disposition to valorize the mundane; and the appropriation of cultural capital by market forces.	leveraging profit potential of landscape identities to valorize real estate	
Ethnic Packaging and Gentrification: The Case of Four Neighborhoods in Toronto.	Hackworth, J., & Rekers, J.	2005	Corso Italia, Little Italy, Little India, and Chinatown	1970s to 2005	commercial re-investment, flux in real estate values and mean rents, relation of produced identity and gentrification, household income	ethnic packaging through formation of BIAs., ethnic commercial spaces produced to valorize real estate markets, and the promotion of residential areas reliant on a fabricated cultural identity aimed at attracting a specific target audience	leveraging profit potential of landscape identities	Municipal policy: BIA
Toronto's Culturally Driven Gentrification: The Creative Class of West Queen West.	Hracs, B.	2007	Parkdale, Little Portugal	1980s - 2005	(qualitative) 'big money' renovation projects like the Drake, the influx of artists, and the capital embodied by the creative class	Municipal-managed gentrification: through policies and strategies aimed at attracting members of the creative class back to the downtown area, i.e. offering a diverse range of cultural and entertainment experiences that appeal to the creative class; implementing policies that benefit real estate developers and the creative elite, while neglecting the needs of the broader population (Hracs 2007, p. 36)	leveraging profit potential of landscape identities	Municipal policy: general
All aboard? Women working the spaces of gentrification in Toronto's Junction.	Leslie Kern	2013	the Junction	recent	(qualitative) influx of artists, changes in store types, "hipification", cultural capital	availability of still-cheap real estate; the influx of young, artsy residents; and the transformation of the commercial landscape of the area: opening of new "quirky" businesses often run by women or recent immigrants; dynamics of precarious work. strong BIA	leveraging profit potential of landscape identities	Municipal policy: BIA
Gentrification in large Canadian cities: Tenure, age, and exclusionary displacement 1991-2011	Walks, A., Hawes, E., & Simone, D.	2021	inner city neighborhoods	1991 - 2011	changes in tenure, housing stock, and age-tenure cohorts, household income, demographic age changes	exclusionary displacement; declining investment in social/non-market forms of housing and by a decade of rapid house-price inflation		Municipal policy: declining investment in social/non-market forms of housing
Rise Overrun: Condoization, Gentrification, and the Changing Political Economy of Renting in Toronto	Grisdale, S., & Walks, A.	2022	many inner city neighb	1990s to 2020	proportions of tenants, proportion of rental housing, flux in rents and land values, and the social status of residents (average incomes), labour force employed in construction;	condoization leading to new build gentrification; the shift towards a more market-oriented approach to housing policy has led to the privatization of public housing and the promotion of homeownership and private rental housing, which has contributed to the rise of high-rise condominiums and the displacement of low-income renters ; securitization and financialization of housing: downloaded responsibility for producing social affordable units to municipalities resulting in reliance on developers to provide rental stock; selective zoning and land use policies has led to changes in the demographic characteristics of these neighborhoods		Municipal policy: zoning, land use, and downloaded responsibility for social housing
Gendering Reurbanisation: Women and New-Build Gentrification in Toronto	Leslie Kern	2010				Diversification of gentrification into industrial or commercial areas in 1980 /deindustrialization		Municipal Policy: intensification policies target certain demographics

Articles on Green Gentrification

Paper title	Abstract summary	Authors	Year	Main findings	cities discussed
Ecological Gentrification: A Research Agenda Exploring Justice in the City	The ideological constructions of home, homeless, and public green space produce and perpetuate injustices experienced materially and spatially in the daily lives of homeless people living in urban green spaces.	S. Dooling	2009	• Ecological gentrification is the implementation of an environmental planning agenda related to public green spaces that leads to the displacement or exclusion of the most economically vulnerable human population - homeless people - while espousing an environmental ethic. • A robust pluralism of home and public green spaces is necessary to renegotiate concepts of justice in urban areas. • Strategies for resisting the displacement, exclusion and expulsion of homeless individuals from public urban green spaces require a re-imagined practice of urban ecological planning.	n/a
Wiped Out by the "Greenwave": Environmental Gentrification and the Paradoxical Politics of Urban Sustainability	Environmental gentrification subordinates equity to profit-minded development.	Melissa Checker	2011	• This essay examines the intersection of environmental justice activism and statesponsored sustainable urban development, and how environmental justice activism is enabled or disabled in this context. • The process of "environmental gentrification" is identified, which builds on the successes of the environmental justice movement but subordinates equity to profit-minded development. • This process offers a new way of exploring the paradoxes and conundrums facing contemporary urban residents as they fight to challenge the vast economic and ecological disparities that increasingly divide today's cities.	NYC
Just green enough: contesting environmental gentrification in Greenpoint, Brooklyn	Residents and business owners of Newtown Creek in Brooklyn, New York are advocating a strategy called "just green enough" to achieve environmental remediation without environmental gentrification.	Winifred Curran, Trina Hamilton	2012	• Visions of the green city often prioritize park space, waterfront cafes, and luxury LEED-certified buildings, leading to concerns about the exclusion of industrial uses and the working class. • The case study of Newtown Creek in Brooklyn, New York, shows how neighbourhood residents and business owners are advocating for a strategy of "just green enough" to achieve environmental remediation without environmental gentrification. • Urban sustainability can be used to open up a space for diversity and democracy in the neoliberal city, challenging the presumed inevitability of gentrification.	Brooklyn, NY
Different futures for different neighborhoods: The sustainability fix in Detroit	Cultural workers used their ties across cities and countries to fight the fix.	Alesia F. Montgomery	2015	• Growth elites use cultural workers to rebrand old industrial cities as ecological delights. • Cultural workers have a long history of fighting against the market appropriation of their utopian vision. • There is a conflict between economic and cultural capital to control the spirit of capitalism and its relations with society and nature.	Detroit
From urban scar to 'park in the sky': terrain vague, urban design, and the remaking of New York City's High Line Park	The redesigned High Line preserves the site's transgressive spirit through purposeful design elements.	Nate Millington	2015	• The High Line Park has become a popular tourist destination, but has been criticized for its role in gentrification and real estate development. • Critics have argued that the park's redesign has rejected the creative potential of the site's accidental landscape. • While the park's designers have argued that the redesigned park preserves the site's transgressive spirit, critics should be cautious of the idea that abandoned urban spaces offer an implicit critique to neoliberal urban governance.	NYC

1	Paper title	Abstract summary	Authors	Year	Main findings	cities discussed
8	**Uneven development of the sustainable city: shifting capital in Portland, Oregon**	The urban core of this paragon of sustainability has become more White and affluent while its outer eastside has become more diverse and poor.	Erin Goodling, Jamaal W. Green, N. McClintock	2015	• Portland's sustainability successes are unequally distributed, with the urban core becoming more White and affluent while the outer eastside becoming more diverse and poor. • Green investment in the city's core has contributed to the demarcation of racialized poverty along 82nd Avenue, a major north-south arterial marking the boundary of East Portland. • Portland's advances in sustainability have come at the cost of East Portland's devaluation.	Portland, OR
9	**Sustainable for whom? Green urban development, environmental gentrification, and the Atlanta Beltline**	Large-scale sustainable urban development projects can transform surrounding neighborhoods.	Dan Immergluck, Tharunya Balan	2018	• The Atlanta Beltline has resulted in a 17.9-26.6% increase in housing values within a half-mile of the project. • These increases in housing values have the potential to lead to environmental gentrification and displacement of low- and moderate-income households. • These findings raise important policy questions about how to ensure sustainable urban development projects are accessible to all.	Atlanta, GA
10	**Brownfields to Greenfields: Environmental Justice Versus Environmental Gentrification**	Gentrification is a growing concern in urban areas, causing displacement of lower-income and vulnerable populations. Environmental or "green" gentrification, often accelerated by neighborhood greening projects, can lead to displacement of stewards and neighbors. A study in Brooklyn, New York, found that proximity to community gardens in lower-income	Juliana A. Maantay and Andrew R. Maroko	2018	•The authors found that while community gardens can contribute to greening efforts and improve access to fresh produce, they can also be a factor in the displacement of vulnerable populations in gentrifying neighborhoods. •Contrarily, community gardens are just one of many factors that influence gentrification, and that they may also help to ameliorate or slow down the negative impacts of gentrification while providing environmental benefits to the existing community. •The authors suggest that more research is needed to for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between community gardens, gentrification, and environmental justice. •Suggests potential solutions such as community land trusts and policies to protect affordable housing.	NYC
11	**Rewilding Parkdale**	The mundane, quotidian non-work of living in/with/for capitalism becomes a site of privilege and a luxury pursuit for more affluent residents.		2020	• The labour of caring for urban trees is entangled with both gentrification processes and the social reproduction of settler colonial space. • The presence of urban trees serves to privilege and provide a luxury pursuit for more affluent residents. • The raced, gendered, and colonial micro-politics of urban ecologies are transformed in the service of an anti-democratic vision of the city as a space of leisure and luxury.	Toronto
12	**Hidden drivers of social injustice: uncovering unequal cultural ecosystem services behind green gentrification**	The social-cultural associations with green spaces are the ecosystem services framework formulates.	Amorim Maiaa,b,*, Fulvia Calcagnia,b, James John Timothy Connollya,b,c, Isabelle	2020	• 85% of photos taken in parks associated with green gentrification depicted built infrastructures rather than ecological features. • Parks that experienced green gentrification were significantly associated with "aesthetics" and "recreational activities". • Parks that did not experience green gentrification were significantly associated with "cultural identity" and "social activities".	n/a
13	**Locating the green space paradox A study of gent**	New parks in wealthy neighborhoods were more publicly accessible than parks in gentrifying neighborhoods.	Hamil Pearsall, Jillian K Eller	2020	• Public green spaces may anchor gentrification processes. • New spaces in wealthy neighborhoods were more publicly accessible than parks in gentrifying neighborhoods. • Private management and surveillance strategies, including cameras and security personnel, were more common in parks located in gentrifying neighborhoods.	Philadelphia, PA

1	Paper title	Abstract summary	Authors	Year	Main findings	cities discussed
14	**Measuring and mapping displacement: The problem of quantification in the battle against gentrification**	The quantitative study of displacement remains difficult.	S. Easton, L. Lees, P. Hubbard, N. Tate	2020	• Quantitative evidence of gentrification-induced displacement is lacking, making it difficult to fight against it. • Researchers have attempted to measure displacement using a range of statistical and mapping techniques, but these often struggle to provide meaningful estimates. • Novel data sources and emergent methods, such as participatory GIS, can help to infer patterns and processes of displacement.	n/a
15	**Gentrification pathways and their health impacts on historically marginalized residents in Europe and North America: Global qualitative evidence from 14 cities**	Gentrification is experienced as a chain of physical and emotional community and individual traumas for historically marginalized groups.	Isabelle Anguelovski, Helen V. S. Cole, Elaine O'Neill, F. Baró, P. Kotsila, Filka Sekulova, Carmen Pérez del Pulgar, Galia Shokry, Melissa García-Lamarca, L. Argüelles, James J. T. Connolly, J. Honey-Rosés,	2021	• Qualitative data analysis indicates four main concurrent processes of gentrification impacting the health of historically marginalized residents in 14 cities in Europe and North America: threats to housing and financial security; socio-cultural displacement; loss of services and amenities through institutional gentrification; and increased risks of criminal behavior and compromised public safety. • Gentrification is experienced as a chain of physical and emotional community and individual traumas, resulting in an overall shock for historically marginalized groups due to permanent pressures of insecurity, loss, and state of displaceability. • These findings suggest that gentrification has a range of negative health impacts on historically marginalized residents, and that these impacts are experienced differently in different cities.	1. Barcelona, Spain 2. Berlin, Germany 3. Boston, Massachusetts, United States 4. Chicago, Illinois, United States 5. Los Angeles, California, United States 6. New York City, New York, United States 7. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States 8. San Francisco, California, United States 9. **Toronto, Ontario, Canada** **10. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada** 11. Vienna, Austria 12. London, United Kingdom 13. Paris, France 14. Stockholm, Sweden
16	**Grassroots mobilization for a just, green urban future: Building community infrastructure against green gentrification and displacement**	The social, economic, and political capacities of residents must be built in order to fortify the material and immaterial components of community infrastructure.	E. Oscilowicz, Isabelle Anguelovski, Melissa García-Lamarca, Helen V. S. Cole, Galia Shokry,	2023	• Grassroots community activists are organizing to address housing and greening simultaneously in order to achieve justice in greening neighborhoods. • Justice-driven strategies and tools are supported by the formation of multi-sectoral coalitions which strengthen community infrastructures. • Community infrastructures must be built amongst residents in order to fortify the material and immaterial components of community infrastructure.	10 cities: Dallas, Denver, Seattle, Washington DC, San Francisco, Portland, Cleveland, Boston, Atlanta, and Philadelphia.
17	**Greening plans as (re)presentation of the city: Toward an inclusive and gender-sensitive approach to urban greenspaces**	Social and gender equity are being considered in urban greening plans and projects at the local level.	Amalia Calderón-Argelich, Isabelle Anguelovski, James J. T. Connolly, F. Baró	2023	• Urban greening governance often lacks a holistic vision that considers social inequities and gender concerns. • Barcelona is a pioneer in implementing crosscutting equity and gender policies at the municipal level. • Three action areas of inclusive, gender-sensitive urban green planning practices have been identified: incorporation of inclusivity and care, urban design for different uses and perceptions of greenspaces, and awareness and expertise from municipal staff.	Barcelona (Spain)

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please tell me about your experience surrounding the planning of urban parks and green spaces.

2. In your experience, have there been instances where you have observed gentrification taking place over time in a neighbourhood in Toronto that you are familiar with? If so, please elaborate on the process: what factors do you think were the major drivers of this phenomenon?

3. In your experience, have there been instances where gentrification has taken place in response to the development of parks/ greenspaces? If so, please elaborate on the process.

4. In your opinion, what general socioeconomic indicators are important to scrutinize if one is to track displacement and gentrification in general? What about in the context of gentrification in proximity to urban parks?

5. Researchers have found that local nuances are imperative to determining displacement mechanisms. One prominent researcher in the field of green gentrification, Anguelovski (2018) completed a study in Barcelona, where the homeownership rate is high and tracking displacement is difficult; therefore she also considered demographic changes to learn that “one key indicator population of displacement was the elderly living alone who are likely to be among the only populations that would be inclined to move because of rising costs and changing demographics in their area” . What local nuances (e.g. demographics, policies) do you think can apply in the context of Toronto?

6. Are you familiar with any precedents for policy tools that have worked well to minimize displacement/gentrification in general? How about any precedents for policy tools that have worked well to minimize displacement/gentrification around urban green spaces?

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