

# **Working Toward Spatial Justice Through Planning**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the development of Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) and Community Benefit Frameworks (CBFs) in Toronto through the examination of four local case studies—Rexdale-Casino Woodbine Community Benefit Agreement; Jane—Finch Metrolinx Community Hub; Parkdale Community Benefits Framework; and the City of Toronto Community Benefits Framework. CBAs are legally binding agreements between developers and community groups which aim to ensure that local communities can receive benefits from urban development projects. The study sheds light on the role of CBAs in promoting social justice and community empowerment, highlighting their potential significance in marginalized neighborhoods by providing decent work, affordable housing, and spaces for community use. This paper views these case studies through a spatial justice perspective which critically examines the formation, regulation, and the use of urban space with an emphasis on the use-value of space by acknowledging the attachments individuals have to their neighbourhoods. This paper argues that through CBAs—which seek greater community inclusion in the planning and development process—the alienation and displacement of community members can be resisted against. This study contributes to the emerging discussion of CBAs as a planning tool, in addition to the broader scholarly and planning discussions on urban development and social equity, offering insights for policymakers, community advocates, and urban planners. In addition, this paper makes the case for continued expansion of resources dedicated to CBAs as they can serve as a planning tool which can aid in fostering community resilience, reducing the displacement and alienation of people within their own communities, and promoting more equitable development within cities.

## FOREWORD

In October of 2018, as an undergraduate student in the Urban Studies program at York University, I had the opportunity to visit an organization called Green Change. Green Change is a “satellite location of the Jane and Finch Community and Family Centre which connects people, place and nature to realize new possibilities for more equitable and sustainable communities” (janefinch.org, 2019). At this time Green Change was responsible for holding community consultation sessions regarding the future community hub the Jane and Finch neighborhood would receive as a part of the Metrolinx Finch West LRT construction project. I was struck by the idea that a community could potentially benefit from a transit infrastructure project in this way. I suppose I had previously assumed the gentrification of communities would be an inevitable consequence of large-scale developments such as the Finch West LRT, but here was an example of resistance to that notion. This experience, and subsequent research into similar projects in Toronto, inspired my major paper in my undergraduate program around Community Benefit Agreements and this major research paper represents a deeper dive into this topic through a planning lens with a focus on spatial justice.

This paper explores the development of CBAs as a planning tool which seeks to involve local community members, grassroots groups, community leaders and organizers in the changes taking place in their communities. By promoting the involvement of these stakeholders, at the various stages of a development, it is my hope that residents will be able to maintain their sense of place and combat feelings of alienation resulting from the changes taking place within their community.

Through my research I sought to answer several questions: Do community benefit agreements create a path toward more just spatial relations within the City of Toronto? Do the goals of the community inform the terms of the community benefit

agreement, or does the potential of a community benefit agreement inform the goals pursued by the community? Can community benefit agreements provide the individuals who they are meant to empower the tools to protect the aspects of their local community or neighbourhood which are key to their social relations and processes of social reproduction when facing considerable change in their local area? What are the ways of gauging the success of a community benefit agreement?

Through the research process in developing this paper I sought to gain a thorough understanding of where and in what circumstances to apply a spatial justice perspective. It seems to me that, much like the amorphous nature of CBAs, the application of the spatial justice perspective would fit many different contextual examples where spatial justice—as conceptualized by Edward Soja and detailed here later—is being sought.

Some elements which show that there may be an opportunity to mobilize the spatial justice perspective include, obviously, the urban element. In particular, there must be a focus on communities which are comprised largely of marginalized groups, and where significant change, perhaps resulting from large scale development but perhaps not always, is occurring. This is because the spatial justice perspective critically examines the formation, regulation, and the use of space as well as the distribution of the benefits and the burdens of development making it a suitable lens for researchers approaching issues with the aim to understand the perspectives of community members who are experiencing significant changes in their local neighbourhood. These criteria were used in the process of selecting case studies for this paper.

Conversely, in attempting to understand when to apply the spatial justice perspective it became important to gain an understanding of the critiques of the spatial justice perspective with an intent to “fill in the gaps” if and where possible. There is a felt sense in studying spatial justice as a theory in which it seems to give primacy to space in the context of where injustice is occurring, while not acknowledging other

realms in which injustices are occurring as being unique unto themselves- in some way that injustices occur first spatially and the rest follow downstream. In my reading, the spatial justice perspective is intended to be read alongside and amongst other theories seeking to study, understand, and propose methods of changing injustice social relations- it would seem that the criticism of one theory placing their area of study above another is applicable everywhere. Perhaps the most salient critique centers around the significantly abstract nature of spatial justice given its strong theoretical bent, coupled with a lack of concrete real-world examples which explicitly state the tenets of Soja's theory. This critique is accurate as it is difficult to tie the spatial justice perspective to specific movements as the popularity of the theory is small relative to a more established example such as "Right to the City" movements. However, mobilizing this perspective gives one a set of criteria and a set of presuppositions for which to identify issues of spatial justice and in that way is perhaps more descriptive than explanatory, giving one room to study the case through their area of interest or expertise.

Through the research done in developing this paper I sought to determine if the process of pursuing community benefit agreements can be considered an urban resistance movement and in doing so develop knowledge of CBA in multiple contexts locally to Toronto in order to establish a set of effective and best practices for pursuing CBAs. I am reminded of the quote "each time a social group . . . refuses to accept passively its conditions of existence, of life, or of survival, each time such a group forces itself not only to understand but to master its own conditions of existence..." (Lefebvre 2009, as cited in Purcell, 2014 P.147,148) "people increasingly realize their own power" (Purcell, 2014, P.147,148). This quote, for me, encapsulates the drive behind pursuing CBAs- however I will acknowledge that CBAs do not go so far as to bring mastery of their conditions to communities. I offer that CBAs are just one of the first steps, along with contemporary urban movements such as those pursuing land trusts, anti-environmental racism, as well as transit and food justice movements amongst others, in what would conceivably be a long and difficult road toward creating more just urban relations. Through examining the limited number of existing CBA in Toronto, in addition to the proposed frameworks,

it has proved a difficult task to develop a set of best practices. However, some key elements could be considered for such movements. These include: significant early community mobilization including advocacy and religious groups, students, local politicians, and businesses. Likewise, early consultation from these groups with the developers and private planners involved, in addition to municipal planners who can liaise between the various stakeholders and aid in navigating the planning process could prove to be essential in maintaining forward progress toward a CBA. Following these steps, the development of a set of goals—and demands as iterated in some cases—which are to be sought from the CBA and a subsequent method of tracking their achievement. Further elements which may be considered for a set of best practices will need to be tracked and noted as CBAs, hopefully, become more widespread.

This major research paper is submitted for the fulfillment of the MES Planning Program requirements, in addition to the requirements for candidate membership with the Ontario Professional Planners Institute.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous, People of Colour

**CBA:** Community Benefit Agreement

**CBF:** Community Benefits Framework

**CORD:** Community Organizing for Responsible Design

**NIMBY:** Not In My Backyard

**PAT:** Professional, Administrative, and Technical

**PNLT:** Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust

**PPE:** Parkdale People's Economy

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Main Purpose

This paper examines urban movements pursuing spatial justice. Urban movements can be thought of as “struggles for community culture and political self management...capable of transforming urban meanings, and to produce a city organized on the basis of use values, autonomous local cultures” and seeking “decentralized participatory democracy” (Castells, 1983; as cited in Mayer, 2009, p. 364).

Urban movements are often comprised of groups, not necessarily homogenous in their constituencies, which band together to increase their collective capacity in advocating for change. This paper focuses on groups who have been marginalized due to their race, gender, or sexuality, in addition to living in communities which have historically been neglected or passed over by Government leading to a decaying local environment. In particular, this paper focuses on groups seeking to create more equitable and inclusive social relations, distinct from movements organized by groups which seek to maintain a particular set of circumstances which benefit them—currently or historically—such as Not In My Backyard (hereafter NIMBY) groups (Mayer, 2009).

The groups and communities focused on here are, and have been, formed through shared ethnic and social characteristics. These include equity seeking groups including BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour), individuals with disabilities, women, and newcomers to Canada who have formed communities along shared social characteristics. Similarly, non-profit organizations and faith-based groups, amongst other organizing groups in a local area, help define and make up a community. It is worth noting that communities may also be formed through delineated boundaries set out by a municipality or made up of specific districts such as neighbourhood improvement areas (Galley, 2016) or by a set of boundaries

separating a unique set of characteristics in an area from another- consider Chinatown in downtown Toronto being unique from Kensington Market despite their proximity to each other.

This paper examines how movements foreground the use-value of space for local residents over the space exchange—value in the market as a means of resistance to the changing physical, social, and economic make up of their community resulting from large scale development or redevelopment. By foregrounding the use-value of space, and approaching urban issues through the spatial justice perspective, space can be seen not just as a feature of life divorced from social relations and processes of social reproduction, but as a site of resistance and support which has an inherent underlying value not recognized by the market.

The aim of this research is to contribute to the discussion surrounding how a more equitable planning process could be developed, particularly through novel planning tools. Planning is often subject to critiques which question the positionality of the planner relative their area of work, the centralization of decision-making power in planning in the hands of government and government officials, in addition to a history of racism amongst other discriminatory practices. Proposals for how planning could be reimagined as a more equitable system have been made dating back, at least, to the 1960s—evident in Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) for example.

## **Concepts**

### ***Spatial Justice Perspective***

The term spatial, here, refers to the geographic configurations of cities. Additionally, the use of the term spatial considers these configurations as a reflection of social relations, not constructed through value free methods. Justice refers to equality, non-discriminatory practices, to free and fair participation, and involves recognizing the inherent value of

every individual in society. The spatial justice perspective proposes that space is not simply a fixed feature of human life which is neutral and apolitical (Soja, 2009). The spatial justice perspective asks that we look critically to uncover how the formation and regulation, and the use of space are influenced by social factors like racism, class division, heteronormative assumptions such as the classical nuclear family, as well as the primacy of property rights and prioritization of a spaces exchange value (Soja, 1989, 2009, 2010).

### ***Community Benefit Agreement(s)***

CBAs represent a tool in urban planning with CBAs being pursued in many different contexts locally in Toronto and across the globe. CBAs are effective in different contexts because of their amorphous nature, allowing local coalitions to pursue benefits suited to their particular needs—in one context a CBA may provide jobs through the life of the project, in another a CBA may require the development of a local community center, while a different CBA may require the creation of new affordable housing units in the completed project.

CBAs represent one tool which should be further developed and cultivated to be applied where needed within contemporary urban planning systems, particularly if one acknowledges that gentrification at the hands of redevelopment or revitalization projects will continue. CBAs do not, and have never, purported to solve all uneven societal relations, for every marginalized group, at once. CBAs represent place and situationally specific goals intended to benefit a particular community at a particular point in time—representing one starting point amongst other contemporary movements which are working toward creating a more equitable and inclusive planning process.

## **Research Methodology and Methods**

This paper involves examining case studies of urban movements all local to the City of Toronto. These case studies include the Rexdale— Casino Woodbine Community

Benefit Agreement, the Jane— Finch Metrolinx Community Hub, as well as the Parkdale Community Benefits Framework and the City of Toronto’s Community Benefits Framework which is currently being developed. Utilizing case studies allows for an in-depth exploration of complex issues and concepts as they take place in real world settings, allowing researchers to gain an understanding of the real effects of a particular phenomenon on the lived experience of individuals.

This paper examines the networks established in the process of developing CBAs in the case studies- in particular the networks established by advocates and groups. Examining the development of these network will help to “understand who is working with whom, how information is given or acquired, how power is concentrated or shared within an organization, and how special interest groups form and function” (Digitalpromise.org, 2018).

A literature review of scholarly material related to the research topic has been conducted deploying Punch’s (2012) approach of “searching; screening; summarizing and documenting; organizing analyzing— synthesizing; and writing”. A literature review is key to understanding the scope of research and theory which currently exists related to the research topic to understand if there are any gaps, or where any further contributions and interjections can be made. The literature review includes public documents and reports made from the groups (i.e., community groups, private interests, as well as local government), as well as a review of relevant scholarly sources in the urban studies and planning literature connected or related to the research topic.

### **Selection of Case Studies**

With the exception of the City of Toronto’s Community Benefits Framework, the case studies chosen for this study involve coalitions of residents, grassroots groups, community leaders and organizers, as well as other supporters, working to secure particular assets which are determined through consultation with the coalition of

groups mentioned earlier.

The City of Toronto's Community Benefits Framework, currently in the process of being developed, has input from 'ad hoc' groups however it is not stated on the City of Toronto's (Cityoftoronto.ca, N.D) website specifically who these individuals or groups may be.

## **Literature Review**

Urban revitalization and (re)development projects, in addition to large infrastructural and mega-projects, can often be instigators of the processes of gentrification. Often these projects are targeted for areas which have become run down or are considered blighted for a variety of reasons, perhaps due to disinvestment by different levels of government over time or because of poor planning which sought to cure perceived social ills through environmental determinism (James, 2010).

Referred to as "displacement generated by revitalization" and "displacement generated by disinvestment" (Hartman, 1984: 303-304), the people who live in and negotiate these places everyday are often forced out, resulting in feelings of alienation towards the changing physical, social, and economic makeup of the community (James, 2010). As Chester Hartman (1984) in his "influential writing on the different ways that a community might fight legally for their 'right to stay put'" (Hubbard, 2018, P.8) notes: "The distinction between involuntary and voluntary change of residence is, however, crucial... changes of residence that are foisted on people, which they do not seek out or propose, for which they may lack the social and economic coping resources—these are detrimental to the individuals and families involved, and produce social costs." (P.302). Hartman's 'The Right to Stay Put' (1984) is one of the first works to argue that residents, particularly in low-income communities, have a right to remain in their neighborhoods despite pressures from development projects, and challenges the notion that urban development which displaces residents can be considered appropriate in the name of progress. Furthermore, through emphasizing the rights of residents to remain in

their neighborhoods, Hartman's (1984) work supports the notion that development should benefit existing residents, not displace them—a foundational tenet of tools designed to protect communities from displacement. 'The Right to Stay Put' (1984) continues to inspire debates surrounding the effects of development on local community members and the promotion of a more equitable planning process.

One perspective which can help to understand the processes which create such circumstances, and for developing methods of resistance against them, is the spatial justice perspective put forward by Edward Soja (1989, 2009). As Soja (1989, p. 2) iterates, space here refers “unequivocally to the socially produced organization of space and not to their abstract, externalized interpretation... all organized space will be seen as rooted in a social origin and filled with social meaning,” particularly in urban settings.

Spatial justice then, as proposed by Edward Soja:

...refers to an intentional and focused emphasis on the spatial or geographical aspects of justice and injustice. As a starting point, this involves the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them...Spatial justice as such is not a substitute or alternative to social, economic, or other forms of justice but rather a way of looking at justice from a critical spatial perspective. (Soja, 2009, p. 2).

The spatial justice perspective is rooted, in many ways, in concepts developed by Henri Lefebvre such as the “Right to the City” (1968) which has become not only a concept in planning theory, but a uniting slogan for citizens’ rights movements in many parts of the world (Mayer, 2009). Lefebvre’s Right to the City promotes—among many things—the “real and active participation” of citizens within the city, with “inhabitants increasingly coming to manage the production of urban space themselves” so that “urban managers” and “the state” are removed from the production of space in the city (Purcell, 2014, p. 150).

Following on in the spirit of Lefebvre’s Right to the City, a spatial justice perspective

can be utilized to examine, critically, the formation, regulation, and the use of space (Soja, 1989, 2010). In this way spatial justice can be conceptualized as critically examining:

...the set of socio-spatial configurations, in a given place and time, through which the distribution of the benefits and the burdens of development in a given social group is conditioned and established, and the opportunities for access or not to the mechanisms (social, political, economic, among others) for the production or reproduction of these socio-spatial configurations. ([spatial-justice.org/definitions/](http://spatial-justice.org/definitions/))

As Pirie (1983) notes “Conceptualizing space as a social product rather than as a context for society may yield a substantive concept of spatial justice” (p. 465). Approaching urban issues through a spatial justice perspective helps one to understand that space is not just a feature of life divorced from social relations but is a creation, or reflection, of unjust social relations (Soja, 1989).

However, space can also function as a unifying site of collective resistance and support which has an inherent underlying value not recognized by the market. One of the reasons space is important to communities and neighbourhoods is because space becomes imbued with meaning and value to its residents “resulting from long-term interaction and experience with a place that may be passed through generations” (Trentelman, 2009, p. 200). The process of imparting meaning and value transitions on space—a term which may impart geometric or geographic considerations—produces a particular “place” with its own unique cultural and social dynamics (Gieryn, 2000), carrying more sociological considerations. Thus, space can instigate resistance to changes in the physical, social, and economic makeup of an area.

Gieryn (2000) contends that the meaning people extract from unique places—referred to as a “sense of place”—is generated from two elements: from the “material form” and the “interpretative understandings or experiences” (p. 465). Such “symbolic constructions” (Gieryn, 2000, p. 465) when coupled with a sense of place “created through social interactions” (Trentelman, 2009, p. 200) can lead people to the feeling that “this place” is part of my identity; my affiliation with “this place” is part of how I

want others to think of me” (Trentelman, 2009, p. 200). Referred to as “place attachment”, it indicates an “[a]ttachment of a deep though subconscious sort may come simply with familiarity and ease, with the assurance of nurture and security, with the memory of sounds and smells, of communal activities and homely pleasures accumulated over time” (Tuan, 1977; as cited in Trentelman, 2009, p. 200). The idea of a sense of place, bolstered by the resulting place attachment to both the material form and lived experience of a place are two concepts which are important in understanding the resistance to changes in the physical, social, and economic makeup of one’s community.

Resistance to significant change takes many different shapes and forms, for example those seeking partnerships with local municipal governments to legitimize their movement and shift “from protest to program” (Mayer, 2009, p. 364). Mayer (2017) notes that movements which “have inserted themselves into the various municipal or foundation-sponsored funding programs” benefit from a sense of legitimacy, enhanced ability to organize and increased stability while also risking the “danger of institutional integration, “NGOization,” and of pursuing “insider interests,” essentially exposing them to potential co-optation and “instrumentalization” of movements by political interests (p. 299). However, Mayer (2018) also notes that this strategy provides an opportunity to take advantage of “existing opportunities” in the form of “workfare programs or poverty initiatives” in order to “attack and to restrict marginalization and discrimination at the root of the new form of poor people’s movements” (P.301).

Conversely, resistance, coupled with long term frustration over inaction in alleviating or mitigating “patterns, dynamics and structures of exclusion and oppression that have become routine and normalized” can lead to “rage that erupts in uprisings” (Dikec, 2017, p. 3). Dikec (2017) proposes that “urban rage”—characterized by large scale protests and riots—comes in response to transformations of the economic context in western society and states:

For ordinary citizens, especially if they belong to historically stigmatized groups, the

economic context set by these transformations is not one of advantage, but of difficulty; the social context is not one of peace, but of increased tension; the political context is not one of empowerment and equality, but of disenfranchisement and widening inequalities of voice, power and influence. For the many left behind, these transformations do not signal a ‘fresh future taking shape’ in cities, as the UN- Habitat report states, but more hardship to come. (Dikec, 2017, P.13)

The type of resistance which Dikec (2017) discusses are not the type of movements which I intend to focus on, however they nonetheless need to be acknowledged as very real and important methods of disrupting a system which has historically rooted “injustices that have become routine and normalized” (Dikec, 2017, p. 3). What is represented between in the difference between “protest to program” movements (Mayer, 2009, p. 364) and movements expressing “urban rage” (Dikec, 2017) is the split between working within the system and structures that exist versus rejecting that same system and structure—both are valid and yet both have their critiques.

In order to avoid continuing urban rage, especially given the potential extrapolations of what urban rage may represent moving into the future, what are some methods of ‘protest to program’ movements which can aid in affected areas attempting to extract some degree of benefit for themselves from (re)development projects in Toronto? I would propose that community benefit agreements are one such tool that can be utilized to share in “prosperity more broadly and equitably” (Galley, 2016, P.6).

Community benefit agreements are:

[A] strategic tool used in the process of building community wealth. CBAs are negotiated agreements between a private or public development agent and a coalition of community-based groups. This coalition may include neighbourhood representatives, single-issue advocates, labour unions, social service agencies, religious congregations, faith-based groups and others. Together, they give a voice to people in infrastructure planning and land development processes – especially those individuals who have been historically excluded or marginalized from these processes and decisions that affect them.” (Galley, 2016, p. 6)

CBAs represent a tool in urban planning which are being pursued in many different contexts in Toronto and in other parts of the world. CBAs are effective in different

contexts because of their amorphous nature, allowing whichever local coalition to pursue benefits suited to their particular needs. In one context they may provide jobs through the life of the project, in another it could be building a local community center, in another the creation of new affordable housing units in the completed project.

While judging the successes of CBAs may be a difficult task, Gross (2008) notes that a CBA typically “advances accountability by requiring that community benefits commitments are specific and enforceable” (p. 39) in addition to involving four distinct elements:

- A CBA concerns a single development project;
- A CBA is legally enforceable contract;
- A CBA addresses a range of community interests; and
- A CBA is the product of substantial community involvement.

These four elements outline the key focuses which will be used to evaluate the general success in securing a CBA within the case studies discussed in this paper. Beyond this, the success of the CBA can be judged by whether the commitments agreed to by the parties involved have been fulfilled. More work will need to be done in the future in following up with specific individuals who have been involved- such as those who have secured decent work for example.

Criticisms of CBAs often argue that “without a deep and radically oriented organizing strategy, even the reformist goals of CBAs may be unattainable...” and that “CBAs risk being used by governments and developers simply to give an appearance of democratic engagement without conceding any power, or worse, being used as political cover for deepening neoliberal governance” (Nugent, 2017, p. 87). Likewise, the technical elements have been criticized citing a lack of “sufficient monitoring and enforcement mechanisms and for being vulnerable to legal challenges on the basis of proportionality exaction laws,” in addition to “the greater negotiation expertise, resources, and political influence of developers and unions relative to community groups during the negotiation of CBAs” (Nugent, 2017, p. 88).

Largely, criticisms of CBAs often argue that they do not go far enough, or are not radical enough in their conception, and aspirations, to be considered difference making— even proposing that CBAs make residents the gravedigger for their own community. Certainly, if one is seeking a cure-all to the outcomes associated with gentrification, or the many ills of neoliberal capitalism at large, then CBAs will not satisfy you.

However, I would propose that CBAs represent one tool which should be further developed and cultivated to be applied where needed within contemporary urban planning systems—particularly if one acknowledges that gentrification at the hands of redevelopment or revitalization projects will continue, as difficult as that may be to stomach. CBAs do not, and have never, purported to solve all uneven societal relations, for every marginalized group, at once. CBAs represent place and situationally specific goals intended to benefit a particular location at a particular point in time, which represents a starting point to build from.

## CHAPTER 2: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

### Rexdale-Casino Woodbine Community Benefit Agreement

Rexdale is a community located in the northwest area of Toronto. The table below showcases some census data made available through the City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Profile website. The Rexdale area considered for the CBA is generally consistent with the West Humber—Clairville Neighbourhood Profile boundary. The census data shows that the Jane-Finch Neighbourhood has a higher percentage of children than the City of Toronto generally; a higher percentage of individuals whose first language is not English; a higher percentage of immigrants than the City of Toronto; a higher percentage of visible minorities than the City of Toronto generally; and a higher percentage of unemployed people than the City of Toronto generally.

Table 1-Rexdale Neighbourhood Snapshot (City of Toronto, N.D)

Category	West Humber- Clairville	City of Toronto
Male	50%	48.1%
Female	50%	51.9%
Children 0-14	15.4%	14.6%
Working Age 25-64	53.8%	57.3%
Seniors 65+	14.4%	15.6%
Renter Households	31.7%	47.2%
Unaffordable Housing	31.9%	36.6%
Mother Tongue Not English	52.6%	47%
Immigrants	58.5%	51.2%

Visible Minority Population	81.9%	51.5%
Low Income (LIM-AT)	15.8%	20.2%
Unemployment Rate	11.5%	8.2%

The timeline of the CBA in the Rexdale neighbourhood spans a 10—year time period. Beginning in 2006, the developers responsible for what was then known as Woodbine Live, a development of retail, residential, and entertainment spaces within Rexdale, began to introduce their project to the local community (rexdalerising.ca, 2019). However, this project never began in earnest, stalling due to infighting between two stakeholders: Cordish Companies and Woodbine Entertainment Group (Warzecha, 2012).

In 2015, Toronto city council approved the expansion of Woodbine Casino, with certain stipulations including: “amending the “hosting fee” so that the city can receive approximately 2.3% of annual revenue” estimated to be \$29.5 million of \$1.3 billion, “hiring 5% of those on social assistance in the northwest pocket of the city in order to get them off social assistance” (Toronto City Council, 2015) as well as including a section stipulating they work toward agreeing a CBA (Rexdalerising.ca, 2019).

Efforts to agree to a CBA escalated after this decision by Toronto City Council with two groups responsible for advocating for CBA, the Toronto Community Benefits Networks (TCBN) and Community Organizing for Responsible Design (CORD), merging in 2017 and later seeking assistance from the City of Toronto staff to advance their cause. Coupled with an outpouring of activism from community members and groups, the TCBN and City staff were able to negotiate a CBA in April 2018 concluding a decade long process, stating “We have raised the floor for Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) in Canada” (rexdalerising.ca, 2019).

The CBA between the stakeholders involved in expanding Woodbine Casino and the

Rexdale community stipulates, among other elements:

- Investment of \$5 million into the development of a child care centre to support the workers and community in accessing the new jobs.
- Community and labour involvement in the oversight and monitoring of the success of those projects, along with more frequent and detailed public reporting to ensure that the targets are met.
- Hard targets requiring that 40% of new hires come from the local community and equity-seeking groups from across the City, that 50% of the new jobs created will be full time, and that 10% of the apprentices and tradespeople working on construction come from local and diverse communities.
- Requirements for a minimum 10% of annual operational procurement will be through local suppliers or diverse suppliers, in order to support local businesses. (Rexdalerising.ca) (Toronto.ca)

A March 2022 progress update from the City of Toronto stated that “Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of the targets and conditions of the Rexdale-Casino Woodbine Community Benefits Agreement were being met, exceeded, or were on track to being met” and while the pandemic- like in every area of life- has greatly impacted the achievement of the CBA goals “One Toronto Gaming remains committed to meeting the conditions of the Rexdale-Casino Woodbine Community Benefits Agreement” (City of Toronto, 2022).

In a year end review report of the progress made in implementing the CBA the City of Toronto (2024) stated, “The majority of the targets and requirements of the Rexdale-Casino Woodbine Community Benefits Agreement are being met or are on track to being met” (P.1) listing the following key findings as of December 31, 2023 (p. 1):

- Child Care Centre: One Toronto Gaming provided the required \$5 million contribution to the City of Toronto in 2018. A feasibility study to identify the location of the future child care centre was completed in April 2023. The child care centre will be connected to a Toronto Community Housing Corporation building unit located near the casino.
- International Marketing Plan: One Toronto Gaming submitted an International Marketing Plan to the City of Toronto in May 2023.
- Local and Social Hiring (Operations): Of the 2,768 new hires since 2018, 44 percent (1,211 individuals) self-identified as a social hire and nine percent (239 individuals) were local hires. The target for local hires has not yet been

met. Categories for self-identification are not mutually exclusive. Actions to meet this target are further detailed in this report.

- **Local and Social Hiring (Construction):** Of the 2,740 people employed on the construction site since 2018, 28 percent (777 individuals) self-identified as a social hire and two percent (60 individuals) self-identified as a local hire. The target for local hires has not yet been met. Actions to meet this target are further detailed in this report.
- **Full-Time Employment:** Of the 1,734 active employees, 63 percent (1,096 individuals) are employed on a full-time basis and 37 percent (638 individuals) are employed on a part-time basis.
- **Supply Chain Diversity:** In 2023, One Toronto Gaming spent \$87.7 million across 14 local suppliers, representing 32 percent of their total procurement spend. One Toronto Gaming spent \$4.6 million across 10 diverse suppliers, representing two percent of their total procurement spend.
- **Community Access to Space:** Great Canadian Casino Resort Toronto's entertainment venue opened on December 31, 2023. One Toronto Gaming submitted a draft of the Community Access to Space Policy and Procedure to the City in January 2024 and the City is currently reviewing the draft policy and procedure.
- **Responsible Gambling:** All Responsible Gambling measures are being met.
- (City of Toronto, 2024)

Similarly, in April of this year the TCBN (2024) issued a report titled “Rexdale—Casino Woodbine Community Benefits Agreement: 2023 Progress Update” published through the City of Toronto, which acknowledges that “...social and economic outcomes... have been met” although “we feel that there is room for improvement to ensure that all commitments are achieved and in good standing” (p. 1).

Using Gross’ (2008) four key elements discussed earlier, the Rexdale-Casino Woodbine CBA has largely been a success. This CBA covered a single development, with community and equity seeking members becoming involved in several areas of the project such as labour work or hospitality. The advocacy done by the TCBN and CORD, in addition to their other constituent groups, were able to secure a legally enforceable contract with One Toronto Gambling which is in the process of being fulfilled today. Likewise, as discussed prior, the CBA here addressed a range of community interests including a child—care centre, the use of space within the

development for the community created through the development, and the reinvestment of money into the community through the use of diverse businesses in the procurement process. Finally, this CBA was the product of substantial community involvement over the course of many years and would not have been realized if it were not for the significant mobilization of community groups and members, as well as organizations like the TCBN and CORD. Moving forward more research and reporting will need to be done to outline the fulfillment of the CBA, as well as its effect on individual peoples lives who have been involved over the life of the CBA.

### **Jane- Finch Metrolinx Community Hub**

Jane and Finch is a community located in the northwest area of Toronto. The table below highlights some census data made available through the City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Profile website. The Jane and Finch community is made up of two separate profiles—the Black Creek neighbourhood and the Glenfield-Jane Heights neighbourhood. The census data shows that the Jane—Finch Neighbourhood has a higher percentage of children than the City of Toronto generally; a higher percentage of renter households than the City of Toronto generally; a slightly higher percentage of unaffordable housing than the City of Toronto; a higher percentage of individuals whose first language is not English; a higher percentage of immigrants than the City of Toronto; a higher percentage of visible minorities than the City of Toronto generally; a higher percentage of people living under the low-income measure after tax than the City of Toronto generally; and a higher percentage of unemployed people than the City of Toronto generally.

Jane-Finch is generally recognized as “a community where economic opportunities and social services have not developed in pace with need” in addition to “[r]esidents in Jane-Finch deal with higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of income than those in the rest of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and are faced with racism, discrimination and the stigma of being from Jane-Finch” (Graham et al, 2015, P.8). This has sparked a large movement of community advocacy within the Jane-Finch

community culminating in the City of Toronto’s ‘Jane Finch Initiative’ which seeks to “develop an integrate complete-community framework for the Jane Finch area” (City of Toronto.ca, N.D) with significant emphasis placed on resident focused engagement.

Table 2- Jane- Finch Neighbourhood Snapshot (City of Toronto, N.D)

<b>Category</b>	<b>Black Creek</b>	<b>Glenfield-Jane Heights</b>	<b>City of Toronto</b>
Male	46.8%	46.7%	48.1
Female	53.3%	53.3%	51.9%
Children 0-14	21.3%	19.2%	14.6%
Working Age 25-64	51.1%	49.9%	57.3
Seniors 65+	12.6%	15.9%	15.6%
Renter Households	66.6%	48.5%	47.2%
Unaffordable Housing	36.9%	33.1%	36.6%
Mother Tongue Not English	51.6%	53.1%	47%
Immigrants	59%	58.9%	51.2%
Visible Minority Population	80.8%	76.6%	51.5%
Low Income (LIM-AT)	33%	25.7%	20.2%
Unemployment Rate	12.7%	11.5%	8.2%

In a similar vein to the Rexdale— Casino Woodbine case, the pursuit of securing benefits resulting from the development of the Finch-West Light Rail Transit (LRT) for the Jane— Finch community spans nearly a decade, characterized by significant community involvement and advocacy and not without trials and tribulations.

Originally announced in 2010, and later announced again in 2015, the Finch-West LRT was a \$1.5 billion—now over \$2.5 billion (Metrolinx.ca, N.D)—public-private

partnership between Metrolinx, Infrastructure Ontario and private sector partner Mosaic Transit Group which will “run primarily at street level in dedicated lanes down the centre of Finch Avenue West” with “two underground stations on either end of the line (Humber College Station and Finch West Station)” (Metrolinx, N.D). The Finch—West LRT was originally scheduled to open in 2023 having began construction in 2019, however at the time of writing the LRT has yet to open. There are expectations that the LRT will be operational in 2024 (Harvey, 2024; Westoll, 2023).

Advocacy within the Jane—Finch community began shortly after the announcement of the LRT, with an initial Community Benefits Framework Agreement being agreed to in 2014 with Metrolinx seeing that “...benefits targets include hiring local apprentices; providing opportunities for Professional, Administrative, and Technical (PAT) jobs to trained newcomers; and supporting small and medium-sized businesses and social enterprises through the procurement of materials and services; and supporting neighbourhood improvements” (Janefinch.org, 2019). Subsequently, the community learned that Metrolinx would be developing a ‘Maintenance Storage Facility’ (‘MSF’) along Finch Avenue, sparking a further wave of advocacy (Janefinch.org, 2019). Eventually, through significant community consultation lead by the Jane-Finch Community and Family Centre and a local group known as Community Action Planning Group (‘CAPG’), “Participants agreed that a community hub and centre for the arts would be a great use of the site, and that land for a hub should be secured as a community benefit through the development of the Finch LRT” (Janefinch.org, 2019).

Overall:

The as-yet unbuilt Jane and Finch Community Hub and Centre for the Arts, also known as “The Hub,” is envisioned as the new heart of the community—a one-stop shop that will have art studios, a multipurpose gym, community kitchen, childcare, and settlement services. The Hub is also intended to serve as a launchpad for entrepreneurs in the community, and to host an array of mental health services. In many ways it is a collectively dreamt stopgap that makes up for the holes in Jane and Finch’s community service delivery. (Joseph, 2023)

In 2020, Metrolinx would attempt to go back on their agreement in order to sell the land previously dedicated to the community—something Metrolinx could do because the land agreement was never fully formalized (Janefinch.org, 2020; Westoll, 2020). Through more community advocacy, the involvement of local municipal and provincial councilors, and backing from the City of Toronto, the land identified to be used for community purposes was transferred to the City of Toronto for the future development of the community hub (Valentina, 2021; Westoll, 2021; Joseph, 2023).

Though the community hub has yet to be built, it represents a victory for community advocates to reach a point where a formal CBA and land dedication was acquired. Utilizing Gross' (2008) four key elements of a CBA, the process of agreeing to the CBA in this scenario should be considered a success. Similar to the Rexdale- Casino Woodbine example, the CBA agreed to was the outcome of a single development in their neighbourhood, although in this case they were able to secure not only a CBA with similar elements to the Rexdale—Casino Woodbine agreement, the community's advocacy resulted in securing land designated for the development of a dedicated community space despite the attempted renegeing of Metrolinx.

Furthermore, the CBA here addressed a range of community interests through gaining "...benefits targets include hiring local apprentices; providing opportunities for Professional, Administrative, and Technical (PAT) jobs to trained newcomers; and supporting small and medium-sized businesses and social enterprises through the procurement of materials and services; and supporting neighbourhood improvements" (Janefinch.org, 2019) in addition to the future development of the future community space which "is envisioned as the new heart of the community" (Joseph, 2023). As has been discussed in this section, the CBA and future community hub were realized through the substantial community mobilization and engagement by Jane-Finch Community and Family Centre and CAPG which will culminate in a physical space representative of their efforts. Although, more work will likely need to be done in seeing through the creation of the future Hub.

## Parkdale Community Benefits Framework

Parkdale is a community in downtown Toronto’s west end bordering the Queen Elizabeth Way. Characterized by the many apartment dwellings which frame Jameson Avenue, the neighbourhood has been a hub for “low-income people, newcomers, and people with mental health and addiction experiences...thanks to accessible housing” (Barmash et al, 2024).

The table below offers a snapshot of the neighbourhood utilizing census data made available through the City of Toronto’s Neighbourhood Profile website. The table showcases that the South Parkdale neighbourhood has a significantly higher renter household percentage than the City of Toronto generally; has a higher proportion of unaffordable housing than the City of Toronto generally; and a higher percentage of people living under the low-income measure after tax than the City of Toronto generally.

Table 3- South Parkdale Snapshot (City of Toronto, N.D)

<b>Category</b>	<b>South Parkdale</b>	<b>City of Toronto</b>
Male	49.7%	48.1%
Female	50.3%	51.9%
Children 0-14	10%	14.6%
Working Age 25-64	69.1%	57.3%
Seniors 65+	10.2%	15.6%
Renter Households	86.6%	47.2%
Unaffordable Housing	49.2%	36.6%
Mother Tongue Not English	42%	47%
Immigrants	43.2%	51.2%
Visible Minority Population	48.1%	51.5%
Low Income (LIM-AT)	30.5%	20.2%
Unemployment Rate	8.5%	8.2%

Unlike other neighbourhoods in Toronto, Parkdale has been targeted by developers for revitalization and redevelopment (Whyte, 2020; Ceolin, 2023) prompting local activist group the ‘Parkdale People’s Economy’ (PPE) to preemptively adopt novel methods of maintaining the affordability of housing in the area. This includes initiating and developing the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT) to maintain the affordable housing stock within the Parkdale neighbourhood. The PNLT describes itself as an organization which “owns land and assures it is used to meet the needs of the community by leasing it to non—profit partners who can provide affordable housing, furnish spaces for social enterprises and non-profit organizations, and offer urban agriculture and open space. Also, PNLT promotes community participation in guiding how land is used to benefit the community and keep it affordable and diverse” (PNLT.ca, N.D). Additionally, the PPE has conducted several planning studies dating back to 2016 which outlines the community members priorities as it relates to development- in a highly participatory process which “engaged with over 400 community members, 50 local businesses, and 30 community organizations through a three—phase participatory planning process” (Barmash et al, 2024).

Amongst these studies and the development of the PNLT, the PPE developed the Parkdale Community Benefits Framework (CBF) (2018). The CBF—in part inspired by the REXDALE-CASINO WOODBINE CBA—has been informed through coalition building and consultation with “over 30 community-based organizations, 3 local anchor institutions, and 650 community members” (Parkdale People’s Economy, 2018) to preemptively develop a set of principles and targets and benefits, which the community would receive in return from the development process.

The CBF iterates that:

[D]emands listed in this framework can be selected by the community coalition based on the type of development they are engaging with, and translated into legally-binding agreements through deep collaboration. The framework also provides guides on how to accomplish the goals through partnerships, programs, and policy change. ( Parkdale People’s Economy, 2018, p. 12)

To use the CBF's language, the community's demands are based around five key principles:

- **Equitable Process:** We support developments that benefit existing residents by meeting and prioritizing the needs of community members at risk of displacement. Development without displacement can be achieved by following a transparent and fair process that ensures historically marginalized community members can share power and meaningfully participate in the development process through participatory planning and direct democracy. In order to ensure accountability, developments can mitigate the risk of displacement through tools such as Equity Impact Studies, Inclusionary Zoning, and Community Benefits Agreements.
- **Affordable Housing:** We support developments that address housing justice by guaranteeing permanently affordable, accessible, and adequate units. We champion this as a key component to housing as a human right. We seek the creation and preservation of key targets of affordability, and encourage the government to implement stronger housing and rent control policies in order to prevent and reduce the harm of displacement.
- **Affordable Commercial:** We seek the creation and preservation of affordable commercial space for community agencies and locally-serving small businesses that reflect the character of Parkdale. We support the growth of greater community control by building and preserving units through collective ownership models
- **Decent Work:** We support developments that address economic justice by creating decent work opportunities for equity-seeking community members in Parkdale. We call for the protection of Parkdale's employment and industrial lands, and encourage the integration of social procurement in developments to build community capacity through training, education, and supportive programs.
- **Community Assets:** We support developments that serve community needs and enhance community wellbeing by supporting community space and resources, health and food security, and social and natural infrastructure. We seek projects that invest in sustainable infrastructure to enhance clean and renewable energy. (Parkdale People's Economy, 2018)

The CBF's principles aim to ensure that new developments in Parkdale benefit existing residents, particularly those at risk of displacement, by promoting inclusive and sustainable growth. The PPE's CBF goes a step further, however, and seeks "more accountability, transparency, and collaboration" with the Parkdale community in order to not "lead to the detriment of the social fabric of a neighbourhood"

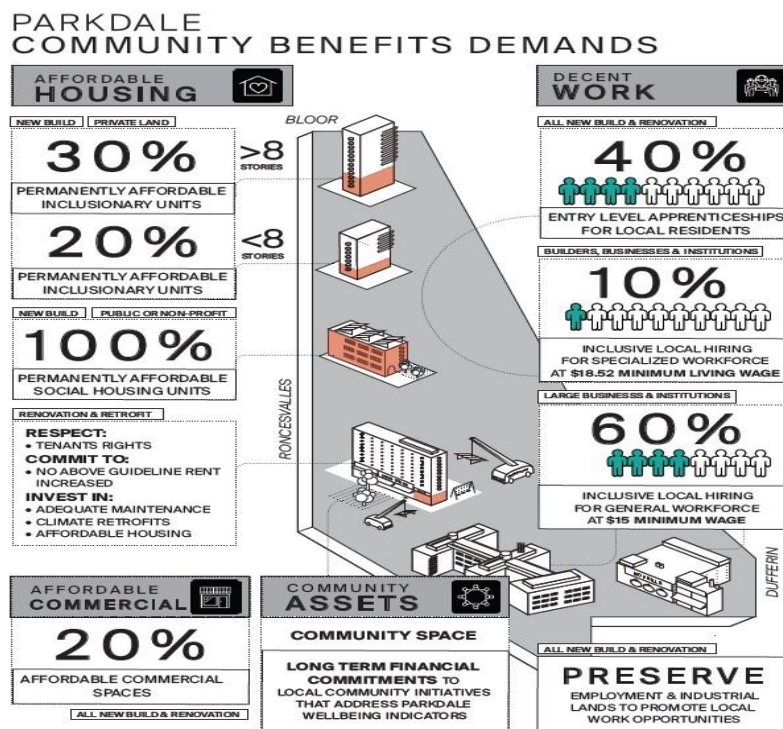
(Parkdale People' Economy, 2018, p. 20). Aside from the benefits sought from developers (see the image below), the PPE's CBF seeks in the planning process, through the backing of the City of Toronto:

- Accessible Consultations: providing more notice and planning materials for community consultations;
- Equity Impact Statements: policy tool that allows the public to review the impact of a development and create a formal process for considering the public costs and benefits of future projects;
- The creation of Community Planning Boards: would provide a wide representation of community members, leveraging the knowledge and expertise of equity-seeking residents and local professionals; and
- The preemptive installment of CBAs in the development process.”

(Parkdale People's Economy, 2018, p. 22)

Generally, the above principles and demands align with the prior CBAs discussed earlier—albeit with much more forceful language. Through these demands, the PPE hopes to achieve particular targets through their CBA process as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1- PPE's CBA Demands (Parkdale People's Economy, 2018)



The PPE's CBF is a strategic initiative aimed at ensuring that future developments in the Parkdale neighborhood benefit its local residents, with a particular focus on the communities marginalized communities. Utilizing Gross' (2008) framework one can see that the creation of the PPE's CBF is representative of the four key elements of a CBA. Developed by the PPE through extensive community consultation, the framework sets out a novel, creative, and proactive response to the rising development pressure in the neighbourhood by seeking to integrate community benefits into new projects in order to prevent the displacement of residents, secure decent work for Parkdale community members, secure permanently affordable and social housing units and provide community assets and spaces.

Again, although specific CBAs have not yet been established within the Parkdale neighbourhood the framework provides a pre—emptive, structured, and community informed approach for developers, policymakers, to work through when considering proposing development in this area of Toronto. By setting standards for local employment, affordable housing, and community assets, the framework aims to ensure that development in Parkdale is equitable and beneficial for all its residents.

It should be noted that a proposal is currently in the pipeline which would develop a 'Community Hub' for the Parkdale neighbourhood driven by CreateTo, a relatively new City of Toronto division which manages the City's real estate portfolio with the view of reimagining under utilized properties in order to "tell a story of untold possibility for our city" (CreateTo, N.D). This development has been conducted through significant community consultation and may represent a future case study which would fit alongside those discussed here, however it is not the focus of this paper.

## **City of Toronto's Community Benefits Framework**

Adopted in 2019, the City of Toronto's (the City) Community Benefits Framework (CBF) is a "umbrella framework" with the goal of the CBF being "to maximize

social and economic impacts when the City buys, builds, or provides financial incentive for construction or remediation.” (City of Toronto, P.10, 2019). It is important to note that the CBF does not apply to private developments taking place within the city (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 5).

The CBF is informed through consultation with a multiplicity of stakeholders (see below table) both internal to the City and external. This consultation process included “80 City staff representing various City Divisions, Agencies, and Corporations. Additionally, at least 35 participants represented a range of external stakeholder organizations” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 21).

**Table 4: CBF Stakeholder Groups** (City of Toronto, 2019)

<b>Internal Stakeholders</b>	<b>External Stakeholders</b>
Affordable Housing Office	Atkinson Foundation
Central Eglinton Community Centre	Building Up
Children's Services	Carpenters' District Council of Ontario
City Planning	Carpenters Local 79
CreateTO	City of Vancouver
Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre	Dina Graser, Graser and Co.
Economic Development and Culture	East Scarborough Storefront
Environment and Energy Division	General Contractors Section Toronto
Exhibition Place	Gillian Mason Consultancy
Fair Wage Office	Greater Toronto Sewer and Watermain Construction Association
Information and Technology	Heat and Frost Insulators Local 95 Ontario
Legal Services	Heavy Construction Association of Toronto
Major Infrastructure Capital Coordination	Infrastructure Ontario
Municipal Licensing and	Ironworkers Local 721

Standards	
Parks, Forestry and Recreation	Labour Education Centre
People, Equity and Human Rights	LiUNA Local 183 and Local 506
Purchasing and Materials Management Division	Metcalf Foundation
Resilience Office	Metrolinx
Shelter, Support and Housing Administration	Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
Social Development, Finance and Administration	Mowat Centre
Strategic Communications	One Toronto Gaming
Strategic and Corporate Policy	Ontario Construction Secretariat
The 519	Ontario Road Builders' Association
Toronto Community Housing Corporation	Parkdale Community Economic Development Project
Toronto Employment and Social Services	Power Lab
Toronto Police Services	Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario
Toronto Public Health	Residential Construction Council of Ontario
Toronto Transit Commission	Southdown Builders
Transportation Services	TACC Construction Ltd.
Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre	The Daniels Corporation
Yonge and Dundas Square	Toronto Community Benefits Network United Way Greater Toronto
	West Neighbourhood House

Likewise, the City seeks to use its various connections to engage a range of stakeholder across industries who may have the knowledge and infrastructure, or who may benefit from being involved in CBAs, to understand and establish opportunities for collaboration. These stakeholders include municipal and provincial

Government ministries and organizations, charities and non—profits, labour unions and trade schools, and private companies (City of Toronto, P.16, 2019). These connections can be key to informing and establishing CBAs as a typical City objective when “the City buys, builds, or provides financial incentive for construction or remediation.” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 10).

The CBF states that the City, through its framework, will focus upon “1) inclusive workforce development, 2) supply chain diversity, and 3) other community identified priorities” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 5). The City does this through supporting communities in their own advocacy—as evidenced in the case studies discussed prior—while also developing their own initiatives. The City lead initiatives include:

- The Social Procurement Policy and Program—which creates opportunities for inclusive workforce development and supply chain diversity;
- The Imagination, Manufacturing, Innovation and Technology Program—a grant program to incentivize development in targeted sectors and uses across Toronto;
- The Rexdale–Casino Woodbine Community Benefits Agreement (as discussed previously);
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation—which implements a community economic development mandate on all neighbourhood revitalization sites;
- AnchorTO- which is a network of public sector institutions in Toronto working together to embed social procurement and other inclusive economic development practices in their operations, including Humber College, Metrolinx, University of Toronto Scarborough, York University. (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 8)

While this paper does not seek to heap praise or attribute the success of CBAs upon the City, the role of the City in formalizing these agreements should not be underestimated considering the City controls a significant portion of the development process in the case studies mentioned prior. In the prior cases studies, the City was able to assist community advocates through their inherent leverage to achieve a legally binding CBA. Similarly, the City of Toronto has taken it upon themselves, as noted within the CBF’s “Develop and Implement a Community Benefits Data Tracking System” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 14) to make public the achievement and fulfillment of CBA elements, such as publishing yearly reports on

the Rexdale- Casino Woodbine CBA.

Returning to Gross' (2008) four elements of CBAs, one can see that much like the PPE CBF—despite having been involved in only one formal CBA to this point—the CBF is infused with the elements which make CBAs valuable. This is evident in their consultation with a significant number of stakeholders in the development of the City's CBF.

However, more work needs to be done to continue to fully flesh out the City's role in establishing CBAs as a planning tool. In a 2021 report titled "Advancing the Community Benefits Framework," the City acknowledges it currently lacks some of the "background infrastructure" (p. 11) in order to "set appropriate hard targets, support them to be met, monitor progress or enforce compliance" (p. 11) mainly due to a general lack of appropriate staff and requisite time to fully study and organize the administrative work. The report even mentions that the "Community Benefits Framework is comprised of one full—time equivalent staff resource" (City of Toronto, 2021, p. 21). While this paper does not attempt to delve into the under resourcing of community spatial justice initiatives, it is obvious that if CBA are to have staying power more resources will be required in the future to support community advocates.

## CHAPTER 3: DISCUSSION

### Network Analysis

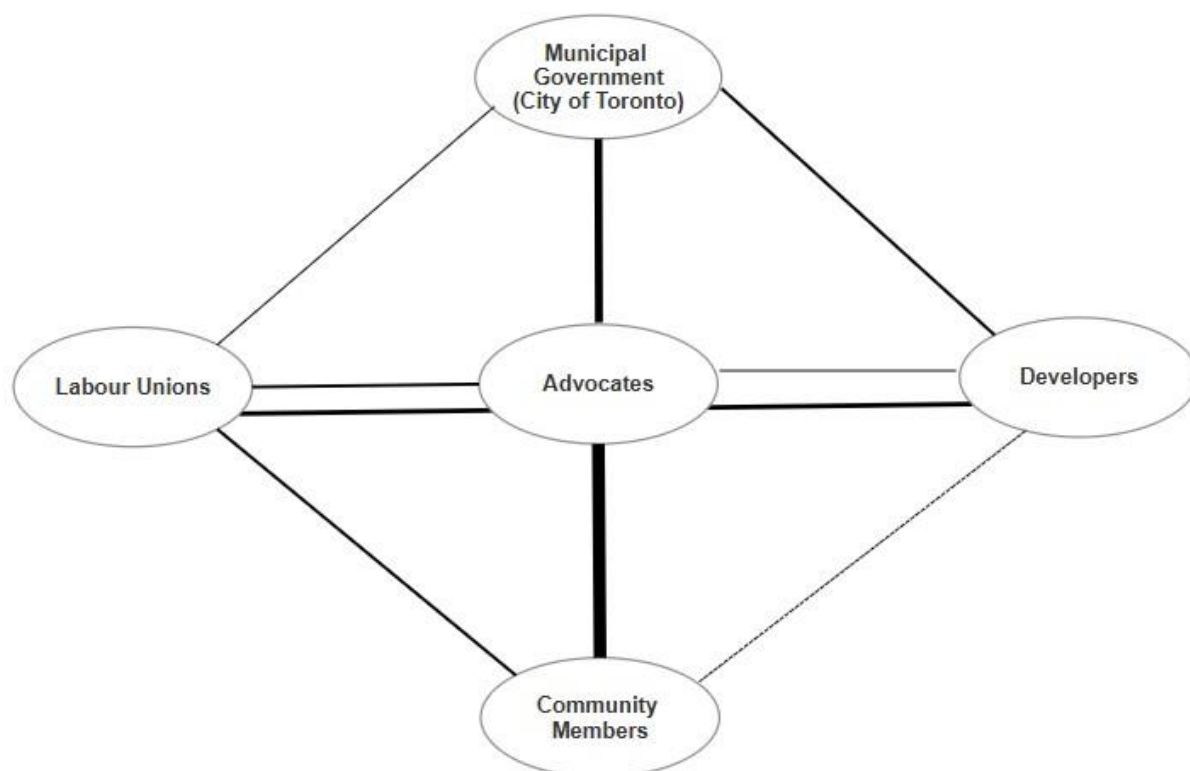
To understand the formation of CBAs it is important to understand the role the different actors play and their connection to each other. This section explores the formation of networks in the case studies by establishing a narrative which is descriptive. Utilizing a narrative description of the formation of networks, their goals and achievements through advocacy, is bolstered by utilizing the spatial justice perspective which “encourages and offers tools to the urban scholar for studying and reflecting on the architectural and built environment of cities and its production” (Farias, 2009, P.4). This perspective challenges traditional sociological theories that which give primacy to human agency and downplay the role of material objects in shaping social interactions and structures (Farias, 2009).

As discussed, prior space can be viewed as a social product (Pirie, P.465, 1983) and it follows that individuals then become tied to a sense of place both from the “material form” in addition their “interpretative understandings or experiences” (Gieryn, 2000). This sense of place functions as a motivating factor for many of the movements which have been discussed prior in this paper—community members seemingly felt an impending dread at the changes which would take place in the neighbourhood and were not willing to be left or out, or behind, in the process. Networks are then developed around preventing or, in the case of CBAs, seeking to extract benefits from these processes.

It is proposed that actors individually develop their sense of place attachment to their neighbourhoods- forming a personalized network with the neighbourhood environment. Confronted with the problems of future development, a larger network is formed based upon the shared experience of individuals then expressed in the formation of advocacy groups, for example. Further networks, both social and

administrative, are developed expanding more widely to confront the variety of issues faced by advocacy groups. The connections between these networks are not equal with certain groups maintaining closer connections in support, or opposition, of each other. The below figure provides a visual representation of this, with thicker lines representing the deeper association which networks have as shown in the case studies.

**Figure 2- Visualizing the interplay of networks**



In the Rexdale-Casino Woodbine example, two main groups—the TCBN and CORD—were responsible for the organization of a coalition of community organizations, grassroots groups and social enterprises, unions, construction trades training centres and workforce development agencies, in addition to consulting with the community residents.

In the Jane—Finch example, the Jane-Finch Community and Family Centre and CAPG were responsible for the organization of considerable consultation with

community residents across multiple years which informed their project in seeking to develop the ‘Hub’.

In the PPE CBF example, the CBF was created through the PPE engaging “with over 400 community members, 50 local businesses, and 30 community organizations through a three—phase participatory planning process” (Barmash et al, 2024). The PPE benefits greatly from their deep ties owing to their prior successful advocacy.

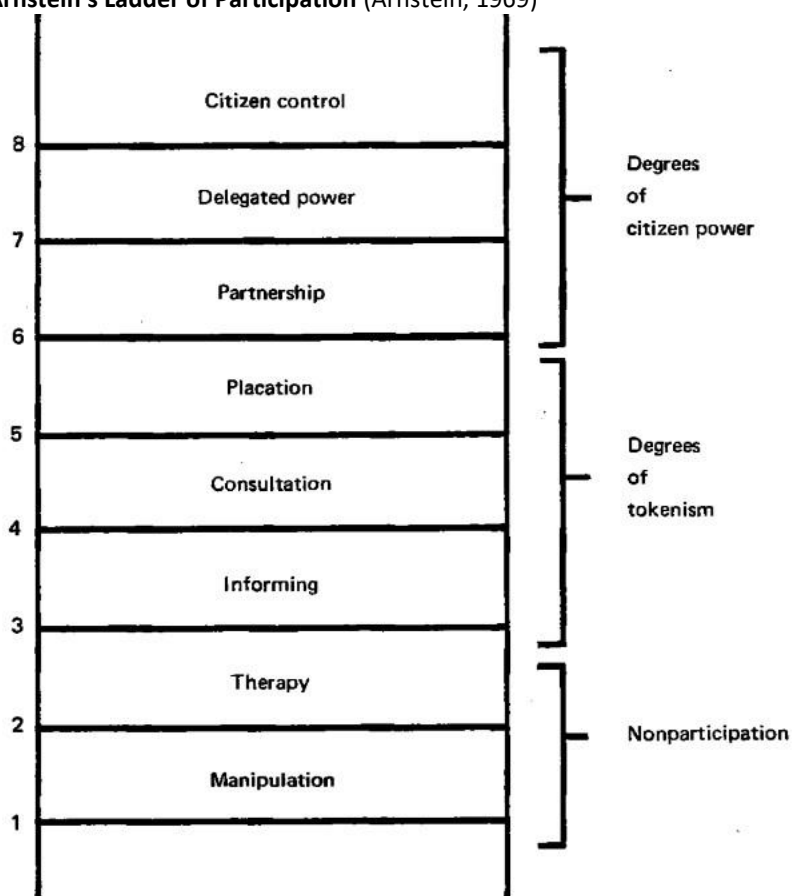
In the City of Toronto CBF example, the framework was developed through the experience of the Rexdale-Casino Woodbine CBA. The CBF builds on that experience adding the depth of the City’s connections to inform the consultation process which include approximately 40 internal and external stakeholders.

The strength of these networks, and the success in pursuing CBAs or developing CBFs, are likely dependant upon the frequency and quality of interactions within the network of advocates and community members, as well as mutual trust and good faith, and the shared conviction in pursuing their shared goals. The success of CBAs can be judged in several ways: if a CBA meets all four of Gross’ (2008) criteria— A CBA concerns a single development project; A CBA is legally enforceable contract; A CBA addresses a range of community interests; and A CBA is the product of substantial community involvement. As Gross (2008) notes “CBAs that satisfy the above definition promote the core values of inclusiveness and accountability” making the agreement, once finalized, a measure of achievement in itself given the resistance from particular actors such as Cordish Companies, Woodbine Entertainment Group, and later One Toronto Gaming in the Rexdale-Casino Woodbine example, and Metrolinx in the Jane—Finch example.

Another method of gauging success would be to utilize Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) which offers a critical scheme for examining the level of citizen participation within a particular setting— here being the planning process from proposal to development through to use (See Figure 4 below). While dated, being

published in 1969, Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation remains an accessible, easy to comprehend, descriptive, and evaluative criteria for detailing citizen participation in the planning process— particularly for non— planners and non— academics. The below figure is the original ladder from Arnstein's article from 1969, aiding in the visualization and demarcation of where a particular community consultation fits within Arnstein's critique.

Figure 3- Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (Arnstein, 1969)



As one ascends Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (1969) they encounter greater degrees of participation with the ultimate goal of "Citizen Control". The lowest rung, "Manipulation", is characterized by "the distortion of participation into a public relations vehicle by powerholders" ( p. 218) referred to by Arnstein as "illusory" or a "sham" (p. 217); the middle rung, "Consultation", is characterized by "attitude surveys, neighborhood meetings, and public hearings" with the general sentiment

being that citizens “have “participated in participation” and “that they have gone through the required motions of involving “those people”” (P.219); the highest rung, “Citizen Control”, is characterized by citizens being “in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to negotiate the conditions under which “outsiders” may change them” (P.223).

Though perhaps simplistic and lacking some nuance, Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) offers an easy to comprehend outline which gives one a sense of direction in seeking increased citizen participation. Evaluating the CBA case studies via the ‘Ladder’, it is evident they do not ascend to ‘Citizen Control’ with a considerable amount of work being required to push CBAs forward.

CBAs seem to fit best between “Placation” and “Partnership”, at the lowest level of the “Degree of Citizen Power” grouping. Within the ‘Placation’ rung citizens “begin to have some degree of influence though tokenism is still apparent” (P.220) while more powerful stake holders “the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice” (P.220). Arnstein notes that “The degree to which citizens are actually placated, of course, depends largely on two factors: the quality of technical assistance they have in articulating their priorities; and the extent to which the community has been organized to press for those priorities” (P.220).

The ‘Partnership’ rung is characterized by citizens being able to “share planning and decision-making responsibilities through such structures as joint policy boards, planning committees and mechanisms for resolving impasses” with “some form of give-and-take” between the different groups involved, and methods of ensuring that agreements “are not subject to unilateral change” (P.221). Likewise, in the ‘Partnership’ rung “where power has come to be shared it was taken by the citizen, not given by the city” (P.222).

In the case studies discussed prior, work was done by the advocacy groups and citizens who sought to be involved in the planning process at more than a ‘illusory’

level. Similar to what was noted in the ‘Placation’ rung, networks were formed to give more weight to the concerns and demands being brought forward to the City of Toronto in seeking their assistance, and ability to leverage their inherent power, in seeking to agree to a CBA with One Toronto gaming or Metrolinx for example. Through this, citizens were able to ‘advise’. However, through the formation of these strong networks, citizens were able to go a step further and ‘take power’ by securing legally binding agreements to receive benefits (decent work, community space, affordable housing) going a step beyond placation and moving towards partnership.

A third method of evaluation would be the fulfillment of the goals and targets agreed to within the CBAs, as discussed in the reports published by the City which update the Rexdale- Casino Woodbine CBA. As the City of Toronto stated, “The majority of the targets and requirements of the Rexdale-Casino Woodbine Community Benefits Agreement are being met or are on track to being met” (P.1) which was backed up by the TCBN’s own statement that “...social and economic outcomes... have been met” (TCBN, P.1). The reporting of the fulfillment of CBAs is an important aspect which more attention will have to be paid moving forward—particularly with the Jane-Finch ‘Hub’ case, as well as in the Parkdale Community where the PPE’s CBF may come into play.

What these case studies illustrate is that through the establishment of strong networks, local advocacy groups and their constituents can be involved in the changes taking place in their neighbourhoods—particularly through shaping types of benefits negotiated through CBAs. These case studies show that individuals, particularly in neighbourhoods made up of historically marginalized groups, are seeking “real and active participation” of citizens within their neighbourhoods and city attempting to push towards the ability to “manage the production of urban space themselves” (Purcell, 2014, p. 150). These efforts align with Lefebvre's (1991) vision of a more inclusive and participatory urban space, where marginalized communities have control and influence decisions that effect their everyday lives.

This cannot be done individually or in isolation however, local advocacy groups must form considerable networks with their fellow constituents to gain influence in advocating for ‘real and participation’. These networks efforts are crucial for ensuring that the benefits of development are equitably distributed and that the voices of those most affected are heard- particularly from those have historically been excluded from the decision-making process.

Through seeking “real and active participation” in the changes slated for their respective neighbourhoods, the advocates are attempting to utilize space to alleviate social inequities— or atleast begin to— while also “claiming an active presence in all that takes place in urban life” (Soja, P.96, 2010). Soja notes that urban spaces are “consequential, not merely the background onto which our social life is projected or reflected” (Soja, P.104, 2010) which is understood, and perhaps not always explicitly stated, by the groups who have pursued

Moving forward it will increase the staying power of CBAs if these networks are able to facilitate the redistribution of resources, knowledge, information, and opportunity. In doing so, CBA can begin to contribute to creating a multi-scalar approach to seeking spatial justice- which is not solely about addressing inequities within specific localities— such ones own neighbourhood- but also about making broader changes to the spatial relations that shape and influence these inequities (Soja, 2010). If so, CBAs may represent a start down the step towards more equitable and just urban development, amongst other contemporary movements.

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

### Achieving Spatial Justice through CBAs

If we take it as a given that development projects—particularly large-scale development projects—will continue to target areas which have suffered from disinvestment and are largely made up of historically marginalized groups then it is likely that “displacement generated by revitalization” and “displacement generated by disinvestment” (Hartman, 1984: 303-304) will continue to occur as well. If we take it as a given that “urban rage”—characterized by large scale protests and riots— (Dikec, 2017) is not a desirable urban condition in the long term then methods will need to be sought to aid the people who may be forced out, and to aid in resisting the resulting feelings of alienation and anger towards their changed community (James, 2010). One such method may be to foster and develop urban planning tools which can allow for the ‘real and active participation’ of citizens in the planning process, through from the beginning proposal stages, to involvement in the actual construction process, into the long—term use of whatever is developed. This paper proposes that CBAs could be one of the many tools which will be necessary to achieve this.

In evaluating CBAs, and the CBA Frameworks discussed in this paper, Arnstein’s Ladder (1969) and Gross’ (2008) four criteria were used. Arnstein’s Ladder (1969) although dated, offers important and easily conceivable descriptive and evaluative critiques of citizen involvement in the consultation process and can be useful for visualizing how one, and one’s constituency, are being treated. Similarly, Gross’ (2008) four criteria for evaluating CBAs offer a simple way of evaluating whether or not a CBA can legitimately be considered CBA. While both Arnstein and Gross methods can offer insight into evaluating the community consultation aspects of CBAs, and Gross on what can be considered a CBA, these methods lack insight into the specific perspectives of the individuals involved across the entire timeline of the CBA process. I am of the opinion that a successful CBA will not only meet the technical requirements and measurable goals outlined within the legal document, but also can help in kicking off a movement in which “a social group . . .

refuses to accept passively its conditions of existence, of life, or of survival” and which can begin the— very long— process of a community coming “to master its own conditions of existence” (Lefebvre 2009, as cited in Purcell, 2014 P.147,148). By doing so, I believe that forward progress can be made towards seeking spatial justice and developing the “real and active participation” (Purcell, 2014, p. 150) of local communities in the planning process so that people are not left feeling dissociated and alienated from the spaces with which they have developed a deep sense of place.

For planners, consideration and knowledge should be had regarding CBAs— whether or not one will encounter them in their professional career. For municipal planners, assisting in the liaising between stakeholders while honestly representing local communities and their needs will be a significant element in aiding in creating a more equitable planning process which does not exclude, or seek to simply ‘placate’, individuals with real concerns from the planning process. Likewise, for private sector planners, while one may never encounter a CBA in their career, having knowledge of CBAs will serve to remind planners that there are real and tangible consequences on everyday people resulting from developments which greatly reshape their local communities. While a community may have technical borders or be represented through demographic charts, people often develop a deep attachment to their local communities which characterizes aspects of their personality and personal experiences— which should not be glossed over in pursuit of the notion that change is necessarily progress.

This paper has explored several case studies of CBAs and CBFs in Toronto (Rexdale-Casino Woodbine Community Benefit Agreement; Jane-Finch Metrolinx Community Hub; Parkdale Community Benefits Framework; and the City of Toronto Community Benefits Framework) in addition to discussing the development of advocacy networks which are seeking ‘real and active’ participation in the production of space in their communities. Through establishing closely tied networks which can engage and motivate the local community, and by consulting with these community members to understand their frustrations and their needs, and by using this strength to convince powerful stakeholders like the City of Toronto of the value the community can provide, it is evident that ‘real and

active participation' is an underlying reality of the formation of CBAs.

While criticisms of CBAs will assert that they are not radical enough to be considered difference making- I would propose that CBAs do not attempt to solve all uneven urban societal relations, for every marginalized group, at once. CBAs represent place and situationally specific goals intended to benefit a particular location at a particular point in time and represent a starting point to work forward from. CBAs seek to promote social justice and community empowerment, through providing decent work, affordable housing, and spaces for community use amongst other aspects. They also represent a real-world example of the spatial justice perspective in practice. This perspective approaches urban issues by assuming that space is not just a feature of life divorced from social relations but is a reflection of a history of unjust social relations (Soja, 1989) which must be corrected through the creation of a more equitable and just planning system.

### **Future Research**

There is a considerable amount of future research which will need to be conducted as CBAs and CBFs become more commonplace in the City of Toronto and beyond. Likewise, the spatial justice perspective will be tied to movements like CBAs as it will require more case study examples and research, as well as theoretical discussion to see if it can be informed by real world examples, or how it can inform real world movements. There is an opportunity for more research to be done to bring other urban movements under the umbrella of the spatial justice perspective as, and if, they strive for similar goals with the underpinning of seeking more just urban relations.

Future research will need to be done to keep tabs on the City of Toronto's progression of their CBF. As they note in the report titled "Advancing the Community Benefits Framework" (2021), the development of a CBA is a highly resource intensive activity. The

City notes several important aspects which may hold back the progression, and use, of CBAs in Toronto. The City of Toronto (2021) notes the following technical elements which will need to be developed moving forward:

- Coordinated systems approaches to local and social hiring pathways that connect employers, job seekers, employment agencies, training programs, unions, and community partners.
- Monitoring and evaluation framework that guides disaggregated data collection and analysis on common outcomes, outputs and socio-economic impacts to be tracked across all community benefits initiatives.
- Community benefits implementation “How to” protocols and processes for key stakeholders.

Additionally, this report notes a severe lack of staff dedicated to CBAs and the City’s CBF, even stating “Community Benefits Framework is comprised of one full—time equivalent staff resource” (City of Toronto, 2021, p. 21). Furthermore, the development of the City’s reporting system for CBAs will need to be studied in order to create easier access to information. More work will need to be done to understand if any progression has occurred.

Further research may need to be conducted into the effects the CBAs have on the individuals who are hired through the CBA goals. It may be of research interest to understand if skillsets and experience were developed which can translate into careers for those who were employed in the trade positions—its been reported that union membership is rising slightly overall, with a considerable rise in black union members, although more opportunities need to be provided given the demand for union membership is increasing (Shierholz et al, 2024). Likewise, interviews with community members involved in the advocacy elements may need to be conducted to understand their feelings toward the CBA following its completion, as well as areas where improvements may need to be considered. The establishment of a system of information and knowledge sharing regarding CBAs for all stakeholders may need to be researched and developed.



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