

# The Impact of Transit Development on Racialized Neighbourhoods in Toronto: A Case Study of Little Jamaica

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## **Abstract**

The linkage between transportation planning, gentrification, and anti-Black racism is not sufficiently addressed in contemporary debates about urban development in Toronto. To unpack this relationship and its encompassing effects, this Major Paper examines two urban policies driving urban change in Toronto's Little Jamaica in the context of the Eglinton Crosstown Light Rail Transit (LRT): transit-oriented development and cultural-led revitalization triggering gentrification and displacement.

The Eglinton Crosstown is, to date, the largest infrastructure project in Ontario. With a \$5.3 billion dollar investment over 11 years, it is set to be completed in 2022 by the Provincial transit agency Metrolinx. In theory, the LRT will improve transportation accessibility to low-income communities who historically have not benefited from such investments. In practice, however, the construction of the LRT has exposed anti-Black racism and heightened local socio-economic vulnerabilities, revealing the gentrifying effects of the Eglinton Crosstown's approach to transportation planning and urban policy, particularly, as it has forced the closure or displacement of local Black businesses and currently threatens Little Jamaica's historical Black community. In response, The City of Toronto is in the process of validating the significance of the Eglinton corridor as a distinct cultural district for Caribbean and African immigrants; however, this raises concerns over the commodification of Little Jamaica's Black heritage and culture. This Major Paper documents the irreversible changes that have occurred in Little Jamaica and concludes with policy recommendations to mitigate further gentrification and displacement in the area, and some reflections on lessons for equity planning and urban policy.

## Foreword

This Major Paper project fulfills the requirements set forth by the Master in Environmental Studies (MES) degree with a specialization in Planning. With a case study of Little Jamaica, this research interrogates the implications of rapid transportation development in racialized communities. My Major Research Paper demonstrates all three areas of concentration set out in my Plan of Study: (1) Critical Urban Planning, (2) Spatial Justice (3) Complex Interactions of Urban Development and Policies. As planners intend to have good intentions in creating a city for all, discourse has heavily promoted its contributions to well-established societal goals, like providing infrastructure, amenities, social equity or environmental sustainability.

My major paper explores uncommon discourses in planning, specifically in inequities in transportation planning and urban policy. Throughout my academic experience in the MES-Planning program, I have sought out understanding of how anti-Black racism is manifested in urban spaces and how it subsequently is experienced through exclusionary policies creating barriers to a better quality of life. Similarly, I have sought to understand the ways capital is shaping the city of Toronto, and the political and cultural life associated with it. In doing so, this program has illuminated the ways urban planning has failed to acknowledge the people who were always, and continue to be, excluded from the North American economic, political, and social systems. Canada is a site of active and ongoing colonization; it was built on and continues to profit off the devalued labour and lives of marginalized/ racialized people.

Three objectives in my Plan of Study were met in this process:

1. To develop an in-depth understanding of anti-racist and anti-colonial lens in land-use, gentrification and displacement.
2. To interrogate capitalism embedded in a political and economic system of racial capitalism and its relationship to planning.
3. To develop an understanding of urbanization and the multiple actors that produce urban landscapes.

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## Introduction

“...The geographies of black Canada also tend to be constructed according to narratives of absence or elsewhere... If black geographies are, according to Canadian nationalism and its citizens of white and European descent, irrelevant and elsewhere, then the active production of black spaces in Canada is necessarily bound up with a contradiction: black Canada is simultaneously invisible and visibly non-Canadian. This contradiction demonstrates the subtle ways in which domination shapes what has been called absented presence” of black Canada and black Canadian geographies: black people in Canada are geographically un-Canadian—their bodies (and therefore their histories) tell us so (McKittrick, 2007,99).”

In the mental cartographies of many of Toronto’s residents of White and European descent, Black communities have always existed, as Katherine McKittrick eloquently expresses it in the quote above, in a state of “absented presence”: simultaneously invisible and visibly non-Canadian. In Toronto, this condition of domination shapes the city’s Black geographies-- including Black mobilities-- to the point that Black people and communities are only selectively made visible in public discourse and urban policy when their physical presence (and histories) have been threatened or are already vanished.

This paper examines the linkage between transportation planning, gentrification, and anti-Black racism in Toronto, that, despite the rise of Black Lives Matters activism and other racial justice movements, are yet not sufficiently addressed in contemporary debates about urban development in the city. Scholars have documented how the development of rail transit has sustained racial and class divisions, with rail transit imagined accommodating higher-income white riders, and buses understood as transporting lower-income equity-seeking groups (Bullard 2004, Rayle, 2015; Zylstra, 2011). Hulchanski’s (2010) update to the report *The Three Cities Within Toronto* provides alarming insights in the polarization of Toronto neighbourhoods segregated by income. The city has had a dramatic change since the 1970s, when most of the city’s low-income communities were in the center with access to services and transit lines. The 35-year study period showed the shift to high-income owners and the introduction to affluent neighbourhoods in Toronto’s core, pushing lower income communities further away from access to reliable transportation services. Predicted trends show that by 2025, a total of 60% of the city will be pushed into low- to very low-income (Hulchanski,

2010). resulting in lower income communities pushed to the peripheries with more affordable housing and commercial spaces, but less access to rail transit. Farber (2019) highlights the unequal distribution of land-use and transportation networks compounded with social inequities results in transport poverty, especially in Toronto's suburbs. This Major Paper examines how transportation infrastructure intended to connect underserved communities to the urban fabric and to the wider city, may instead be contributing to displacement and further marginalization of Black low-income communities revealing a broader pattern of racialized dispossession and displacement.

Addressing the uneven distribution of transit in the suburbs, The City of Toronto is wrapping up the largest infrastructure project in Ontario, a \$5.3 billion dollar investment in the Eglinton Crosstown Light Rail Transit set to be completed in 2022. The 19km line that runs through Toronto's east-west artery, and in theory will improve transportation accessibility to low-income communities who historically have not benefited from such investments. As the Province of Ontario and the City of Toronto continue to plan and invest in the largest investment of transportation infrastructure in Canada and subsequent transit-oriented development (TOD) initiatives they must also consider the impacts of gentrification on historically-disinvested Black communities. COVID-19 and the construction of the LRT have further exposed and heightened vulnerabilities in transportation planning and urban policy.

Investments in transportation infrastructure are not solely about mobility. Given the symbiotic relationship between transportation infrastructure and land-use, and most importantly, transit infrastructure and land values, investments made by the government in transit infrastructure are often associated with the "unlocking" of land markets in so-called "opportunity areas," "ripe for development," and intentions to spur further economic development via "revitalization". Providing light rail transit accessibility to a neighbourhood subsequently attracts further investments and redevelopment to enhance and capitalize off the value of land (Molotch, 1976). Furthermore, such investments are also aimed to increase pedestrian traffic from transit riders and other developments surrounding station areas leading to commercial and economic development (Litman, 2017). But research has also shown that the investment of transit alone does not revitalize an area, especially low-income areas unattractive to capital. Transit investments must also include creative and "beautification" strategies to enhance property values, making an area much more attractive for further investments and new publics with more expensive lifestyles (Rayle, 2015). Recent



research shows the investments on transit, and ensuing development, is linked to residential and commercial gentrification resulting in displacement to even less accessible areas and forced closures of small, ethnic-owned businesses (Meltzer & Schuetz, 2012; Ong, Pech, & Ray, 2014).

The promise of light-rail transit and economic growth for the commercial main street of Eglinton excludes small local businesses from growth plans, which are left alienated from the benefits of a prosperous city (Huang, 2020). As of 2020, the construction of the LRT had forced the closures of 140 businesses along Eglinton Avenue (MacDonell, 2020). Among those closures, are a cluster of small-scale Black-owned businesses located in a Black enclave known as “Little Jamaica” running along Eglinton from Allen Road to Keele street, however its greatest concentration is along a 300-metre stretch between Marlee and Oakwood avenues. Behind the displacement of local Black businesses are a complex constellation of state-led gentrification processes working in tandem threatening the survival of a historical Black community in Canada.

Following the announcement of Eglinton Crosstown LRT came the City of Toronto- Eglinton connects City Planning study which anticipates that Eglinton Avenue will be the first in a new generation of main streets in Toronto that will be “dramatically transformed”. However, the current transformation of Eglinton Avenue mirrors historical examples of displaced Black people and Black places across the country. Canada’s history of atrocities against Black people is deeply obfuscated, resulting in the narrative of Black history of Canada to be conflated with the history of recent immigration (McKittrick 2006, p. 96). Displacement and injustices against Black people can be documented as early as 400 years ago, where Black slavery was practiced in Eastern Canada (Milan & Tran, 2004). The rapid disappearance of ‘Black communities’ across Canada by redevelopment plans is evidenced in Amber Valley in Alberta and Hogan’s Alley in Vancouver, British Columbia. Displacement of Black communities in the city of Toronto is evidenced in the Grange neighbourhood, Bloor and Bathurst. More recently, Regent Park has experienced gradual displacement of Black communities through redevelopment and revitalization projects (Gordon, 2018). The Eglinton Connects Redevelopment Plan critically missed the voices of Black residents and business owners along Eglinton Avenue, sparking community concerns over the future of little Jamaica. Community leaders and advocates have called upon the City of Toronto to take measures in preserving the culture and heritage of the area. Black-owned businesses are a vital part in

what makes Little Jamaica a historical cultural hub for Black people globally. As a result, on September 30, 2020, City Council adopted a motion that offered several recommendations to support Black-owned and -operated businesses, and preservation of the cultural heritage of Eglinton Avenue West's Little Jamaica neighbourhood. In the process of validating the significance of the corridor as a distinct cultural district for Caribbean and African immigrants, this Major Paper asks whether such a plan can indeed protect Little Jamaica from gentrification and displacement forces. It also raises a concern of the economic motives behind developing a cultural district in Little Jamaica, as economic advantages have been framed as the driving force of culturally-led redevelopment projects in Toronto. Grundy and Boudreau (2008, p. 352) state that the work of Richard Florida (2004) in Toronto has crystallized the relationship between cultural development, creativity, and economic competitiveness. The City of Toronto has developed several strategies to develop culture as an engine to compete globally. For example, culture-led regeneration is defined in the Creative City Planning Framework (City of Toronto 2008, p. 44) for Toronto as: 'a multi-dimensional approach to the re-use, renewal or revitalization of a place wherein art, culture and creativity play a leading and transformative role' in effort to promote economic development. What becomes necessary, then, is to develop an equity-based planning framework to guide future development with infrastructure dedicated to preserving permanent affordability and accessibility to residents and commercial tenants. This research analyzes how the Eglinton Crosstown LRT transit development is impacting Black lives in Little Jamaica by looking at the relationship between redevelopment and community and commercial change, by:

- Looking at recent developments and proposed developments are well beyond the intended height permissibility zoned for the neighbourhood that are occurring in the study area and the closure of businesses; and
- Analyzing how city solutions to gentrification pressures are economically driven.

## **Purpose and Positionality**

I developed my interests in understanding, demystifying, and rectifying the complex relationship between the social, cultural, economic, and political environment with Black Muslim life and the socio-economic outcomes that result from these interactions on traditional and unceded territory. In my community development work, I have gained a

critical understanding of the effects of on-going neo-liberal restructuring, specifically at the intersections of Anti-Blackness and Islamophobia. Cuts in public spending such as urban amenities, social programs, and narrowed employment programs by provincial governments have led to social and economic exclusions for marginalized populations. Too often, the divides between class, race, and inequalities are reinforced by planners which increases displacement and fails to meet the goals of creating a better quality of life. Racialized families are ignored, living in underserved neighbourhoods that experience neglect, high crime, and poor management. Rather than support these vulnerable communities to improve their quality of life, the communities themselves are blamed and face prejudice, while violently and paternalistically surveilled and policed. Racialized communities have the potential to be safe havens and thriving cultural and economic centers; however, inadequate planning strategies have resulted in stark social stratification, in both overt and covert ways. Racialized capitalism only seems to exacerbate social problems that already exist among racialized communities. These developments have caused a growing polarization of income and wealth.

The recent changes to the neighbourhood have pushed Black planners and urbanists to look at the long-term intensification planned for Eglinton due to transportation infrastructure. Recommendations proposed in the City of Toronto's Eglinton Connects planning study raised concerns for the future of Black residents and local business owners living and operating in Little Jamaica. The lack of proper engagement of the Black community in the study encouraged planners such as Cheryll Case, principal and founder of CPPlanning to conduct a study to capture and properly assess the needs and concerns of Black business owners and residents in Little Jamaica. Cheryll hired me along with other Black planners and urbanists to work on equitably planning for "Black Futures on Eglinton," an 11-month project that ran from September 2019 to August 2020. During this period, I experienced the construction of the Eglinton West LRT, the strained relationship between Black business owners and the Business Improvement Area (BIA), and the lack of investments in infrastructure that are crucial to healthy communities have heavily impacted the vibrancy of the Black community in Little Jamaica.

What has stood out to me the most in this process, is that despite the economic devastation occurring, the Black community is finding ways to leverage urban policies to protect the neighbourhood from encroaching displacement catalyzed by the development of the Provincially-funded Eglinton Crosstown Light Rail Transit. Using a deficit-based approach to

describe Black communities is very common in urban planning language. The use of terms such as “blighted,” “vulnerable,” and “distressed” are not uncommon in planning documents, as it describes the ways in which a community is failing to meet a healthy standard of living (Kelley, 2011). Lisa Bates asks urban planners to be reflexive in “the kinds of tools that we’re using to measure and speak about Black communities are more suited to describing social death than they are to describing life” (USC Price, 2018, 5:19). Public and private strategies of disinvestment have incubated the concentration of despair; even so, the community of Little Jamaica remains resilient. However, the community are the true experts of the inner workings of Little Jamaica. It has been up to the community to shoulder the labour of advancing just a city. My hopes as an emerging Black planner is to plan in a city that practices care for Black and Indigenous people. I leave you with an important question from Lisa K. Bates (2017): “What would your neighbourhood be like, if you felt that your neighbourhood as a space, as a community, loved Black people?”

## **Methodology**

With a literature review, I will begin by unpacking the history of displacement experienced by Black communities is connected to the enslavement of Black people in Canada. The review on Black geographies will broaden my research on theories of racial capitalism as the driving forces of gentrification and displacement through scholarly articles, journals and books. This will build a framework to understand what dispossession of land and labour looks like in the process of transit-oriented development. Providing an understanding of how anti-Black racism permeates in Toronto’s redevelopment and planning processes.

In conducting a case study, I focused my analysis on little Jamaica to illustrate how the investments of transportation infrastructure and transit related developments is directly linked to gentrification triggering the process of displacement. I review primary sources of related documents, provided by municipal planning documents and staff reports, public-private partnership agreements including all related Metrolinx development plans and reports and private sector development proposals. Looking through city planning official documents such as Toronto’s official plan and the province’s growth plan to analyze and identify where density, growth, land-use and accessibility have been planned for and to determine how gentrification and displacement is encouraged in the guidelines. Media reports and news

articles will provide insights as to the perceptions and information provided to the public. Local newspapers analysis will assist in studying the role the media plays in framing the project. Online blogs and community social media groups will highlight community concerns and positions.

The use of qualitative data is crucial to telling the complex story of what is happening at the neighbourhood level. To understand how the development of transportation infrastructure is directly impacting Black people's lives, it was necessary to speak to the Black planners and Black community advocates who have been instrumental in shaping the City of Toronto's collaborative response to conducting a heritage study. I spoke with City of Toronto Senior Planner Sipo Maphangoh to learn more about the City of Toronto's plans to protect Little Jamaica, however the planning department is still in an early stage of feasibility.

I spoke with members of the Black Urbanism TO and Cheryll Case of CPPlanning, as both reports were not only crucial in informing my major research paper but have been instrumental in guiding the current plans to study the feasibility of a cultural heritage district in Little Jamaica.

Planners who are interested in advancing racial equity are not presented with many tools to do so. Black Urbanism TO (BUTO) a non-for-profit organization of Black professionals with a diversity of professions including urban planners in collaboration with CPP Planning are working to advance the needs of the community. Their work in the Eglinton West community has been pivotal in building the capacity of the community to understand the technical jargon on planning processes, historically used as a tool to exclude equity seeking groups from redevelopment plans. Their work in Little Jamaica affirms Black agency and capacity to imagine and their futures, and aims to ensure that the community's voice is reflected in the City's plans for the area.

I spoke with Romain Baker and Dane Gardener from BUTO. They have held several community consultations such as The Future of Housing in Little Jamaica and A Black Business Conversation consultation series in February 2020. These consultations resulted in the production of the report 'A Black Business Conversation: On Planning For the Future of Black Businesses and Residents on Eglinton Ave W' (2020). I was connected to BUTO through an emerging urban planner, Keisha St Louis-McBurnie. Interviewing Black urbanists is pivotal in

transforming planning practices. The recognition of the Black urbanist lens not only due to lived experiences, but also as equal partners in policy development, is crucial to envisioning the future of Little Jamaica that best reflects the needs of the community.

To gain a better understanding of the politics of the planning process I interviewed Canadian politician Josh Matlow, City Councillor member for Ward-12 Toronto-St. Paul. Matlow describes himself as a community advocate who makes informed decisions based on evidence, community consultations to enhance the community he represents on issues such as transit and tenant concerns. In sum, these diverse perspectives provide rich data from where to analyze the urban policies and processes under consideration in this study.

## Chapter 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand the histories and geographies of erasures of Black people and Black spaces, in this chapter, first, I seek to understand how anti-Black racism is a spatialized issue, and how Black geographies are synonymous with exclusion and dispossession. I use the following definition of Anti-Black racism as a guide to understanding the pervasive nature of structural racism embedded in urban policy and planning:

Anti-black racism is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement. In Canada is often subtle and it is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies and practices, such that anti-black racism is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger white society. Canadian anti-black racism in its contemporary form continues the historical practices of racial segregation, economic disadvantage and social division (Morgan and Bullen, 2015 as quoted by Mullings, Morgan, & Quelleng, 2016, p. 23).

The history of enslavement and dispossession further exemplifies the present conditions of Black communities. Traditional planning practices were designed to improve the quality of life through adequate housing, paved streets and parks; however Black people in Black neighbourhoods have historically been denied these same provisions. In the context of Toronto, Hulchanski (2019) found that Black people continue to be disproportionately over-represented in low-income neighbourhoods and under-represented in middle and high-income neighbourhoods (Hulchanski, 2019, Mohamud, 2020). Subsequently, the planned destruction of historical Black communities through urban renewal and large-scale public housing revitalization projects in the Canadian context reflect a larger issue in how current planning policies are harming Black lives in the urban arena. In order to understand how it reproduces itself in urban spaces the chapter concludes with racial capitalism, which provides a strong framework for economic interests of cities, is racialized to observe the changes in little Jamaica.

### 1.1 Black Geographies

The deep disparities in the racial and spatial politics of Toronto are tied to Canada's histories and geographies of dispossession, segregation, and displacement. I look to the work of Scholar Katherine McKittrick to critically engage with Black geography scholarship drawing on

connections to the current displacement of Black residents and commercial tenants in Little Jamaica.

The Black, feminist geographer Katherine McKittrick (2011, 951) illustrates how the complexities of Blackness and the destruction of a Black sense of place, are interwoven in the history of colonial and anti-Black violence. McKittrick call us to acknowledge that “the annihilation of black geographies in the Americas is deeply connected to an economy of race, and thus capitalism, wherein the process of uneven development calcifies the seemingly natural links between blackness, underdevelopment, poverty, and place within differing global contexts”. It is not a coincidence that poor people, people of colour, immigrants, sick, disabled, prisoners, women, sexual minorities and other marginalized groups of people live in bracketed geographies. Analyzing how the historical relationship between capitalism and racism, manifesting in different forms of dispossession, extraction, genocide, cultural appropriation, theft of land, and resources is critical to understanding displacement continuing to today .

In Katherine McKittrick's essay “Plantation Futures” she traces the geographic workings of dispossession, to contextualize the plantation as a current experience of Black life across global cities and futures. For McKittrick (2013,5), “it is also worth addressing the ways the plantation—precisely because it housed and historicizes racial violences that demanded innovative resistances—stands as a meaningful conceptual palimpsest to contemporary cityscapes that continue to harbor the lives of the most marginalized.” McKittrick's work ties modern urban life to the logic of plantations; the experiences of Black people in global cities mirror life on the plantation. In an address delivered by Daniel G. Hill to the Black History Conference in 1978, he traces slavery in Canada, and according to the Register of the Church of Notre-Dame, a child by the name of Olivier LeJeune from Madagascar was sold by David Kirke, an English privateer for fifty half-crowns. Black men, women and children were legally bought, sold, bartered, and possessed as personal property for 205 years in Canada (Hill, D.G., 1978, pg.11). The enslavement of Black and Indigenous peoples in Canada was critical to the development of public infrastructure, as the nation depended on slave labour for economic growth (Cooper, C., & Henry, N., 2020). Rinaldo Walcott (2021), in his recent book *On Property*, he expands on the hidden relationship between Black people and property. What can be understood from the “plantation is the logic of possession, and how it extends all the way from property to various cultural practices and who possesses the power and



authority in all manner of social relations in our culture (pg.18).” From this we can draw on a key point of the nature of slavery, the codes, management and law-like practices allowed possession to mean more than ownership over the Black body, but that “it also became authority invested in white people to direct all inferiors. This meant that even when a white person did not actually own slaves, he or she still possessed authority over Black people, whether enslaved or not (pg. 18).” This colonial background continues to set the stage for how Black life is treated to commodify into the present day. In “Hidden in Plain Sight,” Dawson (2016) requires us to understand the relationship between capitalism and race, whereby capitalist expropriation thrives off the separation of races into superior and inferior status that was necessary for slavery, colonialism, the theft of land, and genocide to occur. Nicholas Blomley in *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property* produces an in-depth analysis of property relations examining concepts of colonialism/post-colonialism, urban development, urban planning, space and placemaking. The creation of the city is a complicated colonial process, “it is not something that occurs in one time and in one place, but is an ongoing process of dispossession, negotiation, transformation and resistance” (pg.114). The separation of races and displacement of Black people has been traced in Canada by Katherine McKittrick (2006), who explicitly cites the racist practices of urban renewal programs destroying Black communities in major urban cities like Vancouver and Halifax. The extensive history of anti-Blackness in Canada has, for the most part, occurred alongside the disavowal of its existence. Black individuals and communities remain “an absent presence always under erasure” (Walcott 2003:27, Maynard 2017:4)

## **1.2 Racial Capitalism**

The concept of racial capitalism as defined by political scientist Cedric J. Robinson (2000, 26) demonstrates very clearly that “capitalism was not to homogenize or standardize but to differentiate or set apart - to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into racial ones”. Capitalism has always been a racial project and continues to operate as one through the exploitation of labour. Thus, capitalism depends on racism, and capitalistic structures actively renew, renovate and entrench racial hierarchies, feelings, and practices (Toews 2018, 18).

Jodi Melamed (2015: 77) explains:

Capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups — capitalists with the means of production/workers without the means of subsistence, creditors/debtors, conquerors of land made property/the dispossessed and removed. These antinomies of accumulation require loss, disposability, and the unequal differentiation of human value, and racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires.

In other words, North America is a site of active and ongoing colonization; it was built on and continues to profit off the devalued labour and lives of marginalized people. Specifically, North America functions on the systematic displacement and attempted genocide of Indigenous peoples and the legacy of Black slave labour. Thus, slavery should be understood as a fundamental core to understanding capitalism. The wealth of North America has been accumulated through violent means of slavery, settler colonial dispossession, racialized indentured servitude and the exploitation of immigrant labour (Danewid, 2019: 298).

Racial capitalism is manifested in the urban arena through spatial control and restructuring. The forced evictions and removals for urban renewal caused by gentrification-induced displacement were highly visible and a much more obvious violent process. Today, it is slower, less visible, and masked policies and planning strategies are presented in ambiguous forms (Rayle, 2015). It has been more than a century since Fredrich Engels referred to planning in capitalist cities as “hypocritical” his study of Manchester revealed that planning is merely “hiding from the eyes of wealthy ladies and gentlemen with strong stomachs and weak nerves the misery and squalor which are part and parcel of their own riches and luxury” (Engels, F., Henderson, W.O., Chaloner, W.H., 1958, pg. 54-6). Evidently, Engels understood and predicted that class-based spatial segregation will be replicated by way of the middle classes’ better access to rapid transit completely bypassing the misery and squalor of racialized communities pushed to the peripheries. The stark and dramatic disparity between the rich and poor clearly illustrate that racialized and non-racialized people are not on equal footing. As Howard Zehr (1980) puts it, North American capitalism has always functioned to privilege few and marginalize many. However, the violent ideologies of meritocracy and free market capitalism have woven so completely into the collective North American consciousness that it feels innate and natural, even though it is constructed. The hypocrisy of city planning is not to put blame on the city itself, but instead on capitalism's production of uneven

development of infrastructure. The neoliberal rhetoric of hyper-individualization serves to dissuade critical and historically-informed engagement with causes of marginalization. Racial capitalism is an attempt to articulate the violent injustices of capitalism impacting Black communities. North America's capitalism's systematic devaluing of "certain" human lives, an example of this systematic devaluing is Red Lining. An explicitly racist American practice in which banks would refuse to offer mortgages in neighbourhoods with a high Black population or refuse to lend Black bank clients capital to buy a home in predominantly white neighbourhoods. Red Lining meant that intergenerational accumulation of property was next to impossible for the Black community, and these practices have had complex ongoing effects for decades. To have a complete understanding of how infrastructure transforms communities, red lining is a perfect example. Red lining, not only the way that contemporary cities are racially divided, but also in the infrastructure or institutions built in these purposefully racialized, segregated, and ghettoized neighbourhoods (Ta-nehsi Coates, 2014). Canada's history of economic segregation can be dated back to the 1840s. Legal Scholar Constance Backhouse documents that Black Canadians were forced into all manner of segregated social life. She uses the reference "colour-bar" tactics to describe the practice of racial segregation that infested the country. Access to land grants and residential housing was customarily denied to Black Canadians, it wasn't until the 1940s that statues against racial segregation were put into place (Backhouse, 1999, p. 119; Walcott, 2021, p.19). This was a set of societal barriers that prevented Black Canadians from accessing the same rights and opportunities as White Canadians.

Black geographies and racial capitalism highlight the unequal power over land that renders Black and Indigenous groups dispossessed while shaping oppressive institutions to monopolize the spatial urbanized landscapes. The uneven development in low-income communities followed by rapid development through state infrastructure on stolen lands is a systematic devaluation of racialized people. The theories presented above are seminal to understanding the racialized systemic nature of capitalism to view Black people and Black places as disposable and expendable. The development of Canada has historically disregarded the existence of Black and Indigenous communities. While Black working class are not afforded a right to the city, surely their labour force is what rules and produces the city of the Toronto, and yet are still excluded, signaling a broader pattern of racialized dispossession and displacement. This logic serves to frame why present residents and businesses are at risk in

finding Little Jamaica a viable option to live in, causing them to be displaced from the once-vibrant neighbourhood they produced.

## **Chapter 2. THE MAKINGS OF LITTLE JAMAICA**

The neighbourhood became known as “Little Jamaica”, not only as a result of a large immigrant wave from the Caribbean, largely Jamaican, but also through local aspirations in establishing a place for Black people in the City of Toronto. This chapter provides a brief historical background of Little Jamaica including its boundaries, immigration patterns, development, and demographics of the study area. Followed by the history of transit planning along Eglinton Avenue and the implementation of the Eglinton Crosstown Light Rail Transit (LRT).

Daniel G. Hill’s thesis about Toronto’s growing Caribbean community in 1960, details that in the 1950s they “primarily yearned for two things a distinct Negro district in Toronto, complete with its own businesses, institutions and social life, and open immigration for West Indians desiring to come to Canada” (Kofi, 2021). Hill (1978), describes the small but noticeable presence of Black people in Toronto, in the 1950s, there were only about 20 Black businesses and institutions, with no significant concentration to one neighbourhood (pg.11). The City of Toronto is well known for its pockets of neighbourhoods. It is often described as the “city of neighbourhoods” highlighting the distinct character of varying neighbourhoods across the city (Hulchanski, 2011). Of those neighbourhoods, Little Jamaica has historically been characterized as a lively commercial district providing a place of belonging for Jamaicans and other Caribbean communities, a realization of what the Caribbean community yearned for.

### **2.1 History**

#### **2.1.1 What are the boundaries?**

Little Jamaica is in the York district of Toronto, Ontario. Oakwood Village, is bordered by Eglinton Avenue West to the north (Briar Hill-Belgravia), Dufferin street to the west (Caledonia-Fairbank), St.Clair Avenue West to the south (Corso Italia and Bracondale Hill), and Winona Drive to the east (Humewood-Cedarvale) . To date, there is no consensus about the boundaries of Little Jamaica, however it is understood to be on the northern border of

the area, situated on the south end of Eglinton Avenue West between Oakwood and Marlee Avenue.



Figure 1. Little Jamaica Boundaries. Source: Black Business and Professional Association (BBPA)

### 2.1.2 Black People in Little Jamaica

According to Natasha Henry, president of the Ontario Black History Society, the neighbourhood has had an influx of Caribbean migrants since the 1960s. The Federal government passed the West Indian Domestic Scheme in 1955, which recruited young, single women to work as domestic workers in Canadian homes. In the late 1960s, Canada's immigration policy changed significantly. The discriminatory policy based on race was changed and instead a point-based system was used. This system shifted to accept people based on occupational skills, education, and knowledge of official languages (Stats Canada, 2019). By the 1970s and 1980s, a large wave of more than 100,000 Jamaicans created the largest enclave of Jamaicans in a city outside of Jamaica globally, rivaling cities like New York and London (Roman et al, 2020, Spurr, 2018).

Historically, Toronto has been the hub for new immigrants in comparison to other Canadian cities, due to its stock of rental housing, economic opportunities, established ethnic enclaves, and a developed system of social service infrastructure. Immigration patterns have been key to shaping the changed landscape of Oakwood Village. Gordon (2018), identified the segregated settlements patterns of racialized immigrants in Toronto with high concentrated neighbourhoods around Bathurst area before prior to gentrification, Jane and Finch Avenue area, where gentrification pressures are growing with recent LRT developments, Danforth area and Eglinton Avenue West. The high concentration of people from the Caribbean regions along Eglinton Avenue West in Little Jamaica may also be attributed to the result of racially-charged housing discrimination, a common theme found in the development of residential areas of concentration. For example, the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority has been questioned about their methods for allocating housing, where placement systems have been found to concentrate Black residents in the least desirable buildings (Gordon, 2018, Henry, 1994, pg. 275, Murdie, 1994, Mohamud, 2020)

The Black Futures on Eglinton Planning Report found that 11% of the total population is Black, 2% higher than the total 9% found in the City of Toronto. To date, there are more than twice as many Black people per km<sup>2</sup> in the neighbourhood, compared to outside the neighbourhood. Within the neighbourhood, the population density is 914 Black residents/kms, three times higher than the 382/km<sup>2</sup> average for the rest of the city. This high concentration of Black residents is not coincidental, in the ethnicities and visible minorities of the 2001 census, the report shows that Oakwood Village has the highest percentage of visible minorities and Black people (Gordon, 2018).

### **2.1.3 Development**

Eglinton Avenue West mainly consists of “mainstreet” buildings that generally range from two to four storeys in height, often with retail and office uses at grade and commercial or residential uses above. Larger low-rise commercial buildings are located to the north along Dufferin Street. Beyond these main streets, the surrounding areas are mostly low-rise residential neighbourhoods. The tallest existing buildings, up to 16 storeys in height, 1801-1807 Eglinton Avenue West, residential/mixed-use building, owned and operated by Toronto Community Housing located at the intersection of Eglinton Avenue and Dufferin Street.



Little Jamaica's highest concentration of Black businesses run along a 300-metre stretch between Marlee and Oakwood Avenue. The Caribbean-owned businesses are a part of the local cultural heritage landscape, varying from restaurants, juice bars, grocers, barbershops, fashion retailers, recording studios and music stores, and civic, creative or art-focused institutions. The high settlement of Caribbean's in the area has played a role in the production of the identity and culture to its built environment. Entering a space like Little Jamaica signifies the foods, tastes, memories, smells and practices that influence the communities' culture and lifestyle. There are more than 80 Black businesses, the highest concentration in the city and the "businesses that serve the community are key to site-specific cultural practice and production (Gordon, 2018)."

## 2.2 Transit Development on Eglinton

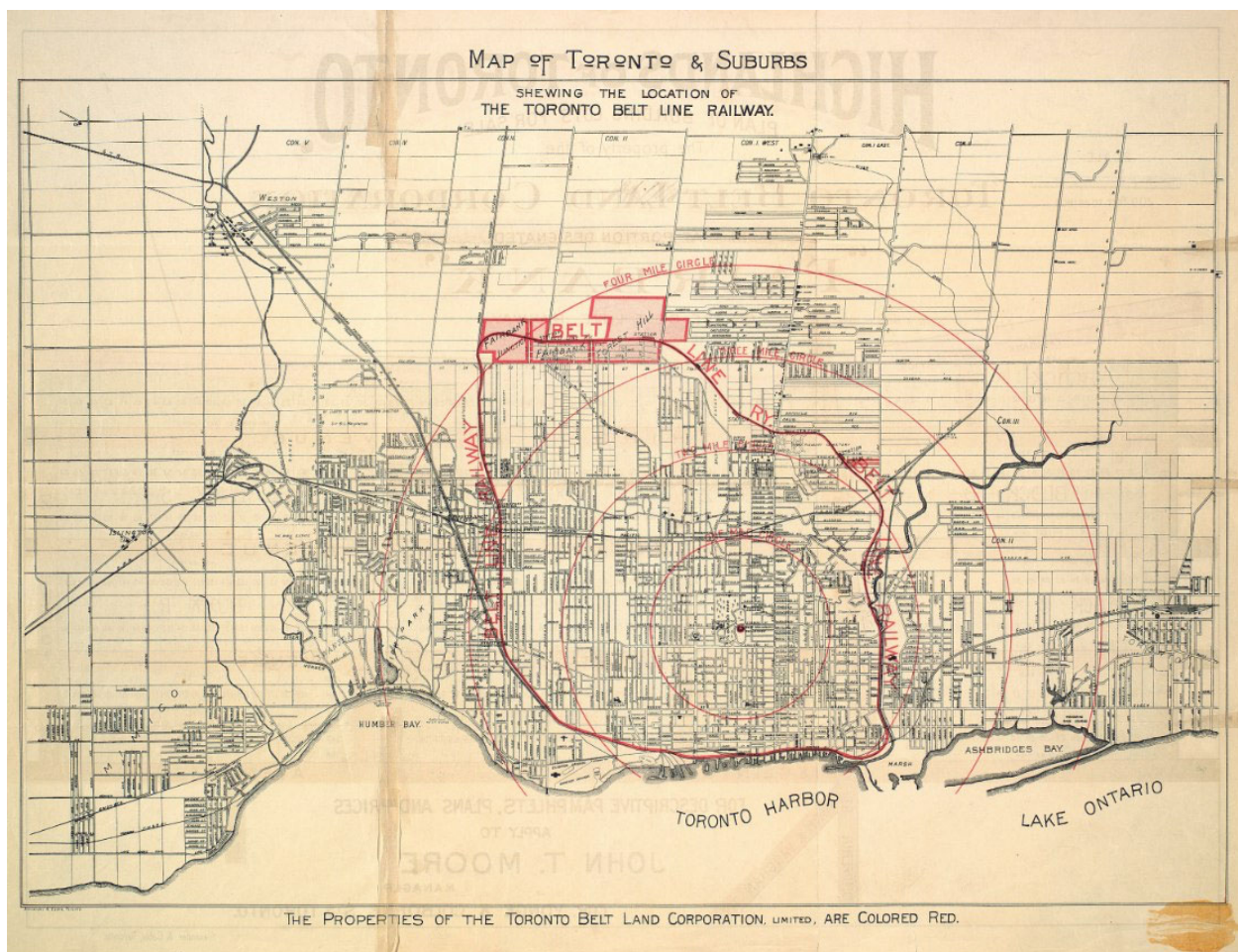


Figure 2. Map of Toronto & Suburbs Shewing the location of the Toronto Belt Line Railway. Published by Alexander & Cable, Toronto. Image courtesy Toronto Public Library.



### 2.2.1 Brief History of Transit on Eglinton West

The Belt Line Railway was Toronto's first commuter rail service, launched by investors led by James David Edgar on March 23, 1889. As development was slowly on the rise along Eglinton Avenue with the support of commercial strips and developing neighbourhoods, the railway services intended to support this growth while remaining profitable. The line connected the Eglinton area to Toronto's Union Station. Paralleling Chaplin Crescent through Forest Hill, the line turned west and paralleled Eglinton Avenue a few blocks north before turning south at Caledonia. After an unanticipated real estate crash, the beltline was unable to make a substantial profit due to lack of ridership resulting in passenger service ending in 1984. In 1924, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) began the Oakwood streetcar service, which ran east along Eglinton and south on Oakwood.

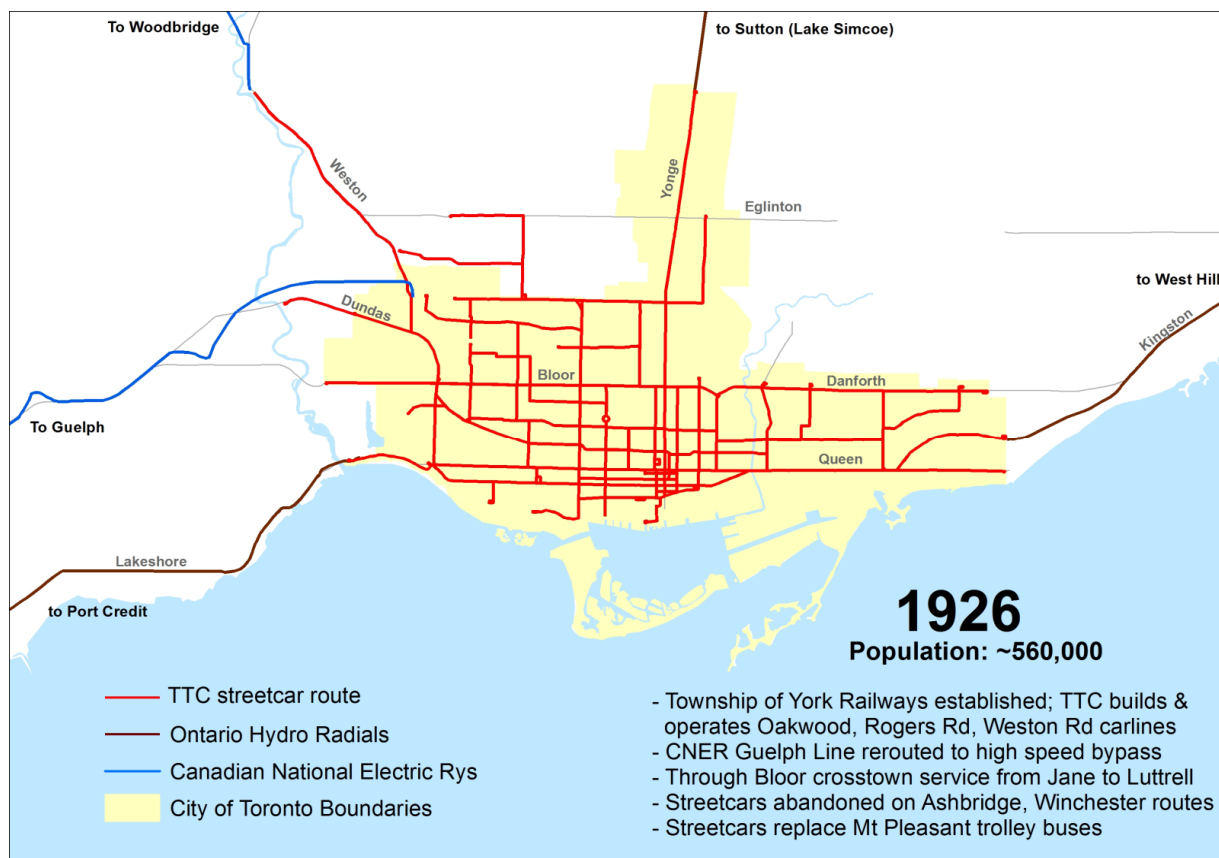


Figure 3. Toronto Street Railway. Source: Sean Marshall

By 1936, the Eglinton West bus services were operating between Yonge Street and Oakwood Avenue. Eglinton Avenue played an important role as a main street as suburban growth sprawled in Toronto, an increase in commercial development and residential development continued into the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. The TTC provided the streetcar on private right of way as mode of transportation in mid-to-low densities, however city managers, planners, and politicians eager to position Toronto as a global city advocated instead for mega-project rapid transit. Between the 1960 to 1980s, 135 kilometers of rapid transit services were introduced per decade. By the 1960s, rapid bus-way transit was proposed along Eglinton Avenue, and by 1984 the TTC released the Network 2011 proposal for subway development. However, the plan was stalled up until 1994, and by then the plans evolved into a subway system (Metrolinx, 2008, pg.11). Just a year later, when provincial political powers changed, the Eglinton West subway line was cancelled, meaning all underground tunnel work was filled.

### 2.2.2 Eglinton Crosstown LRT

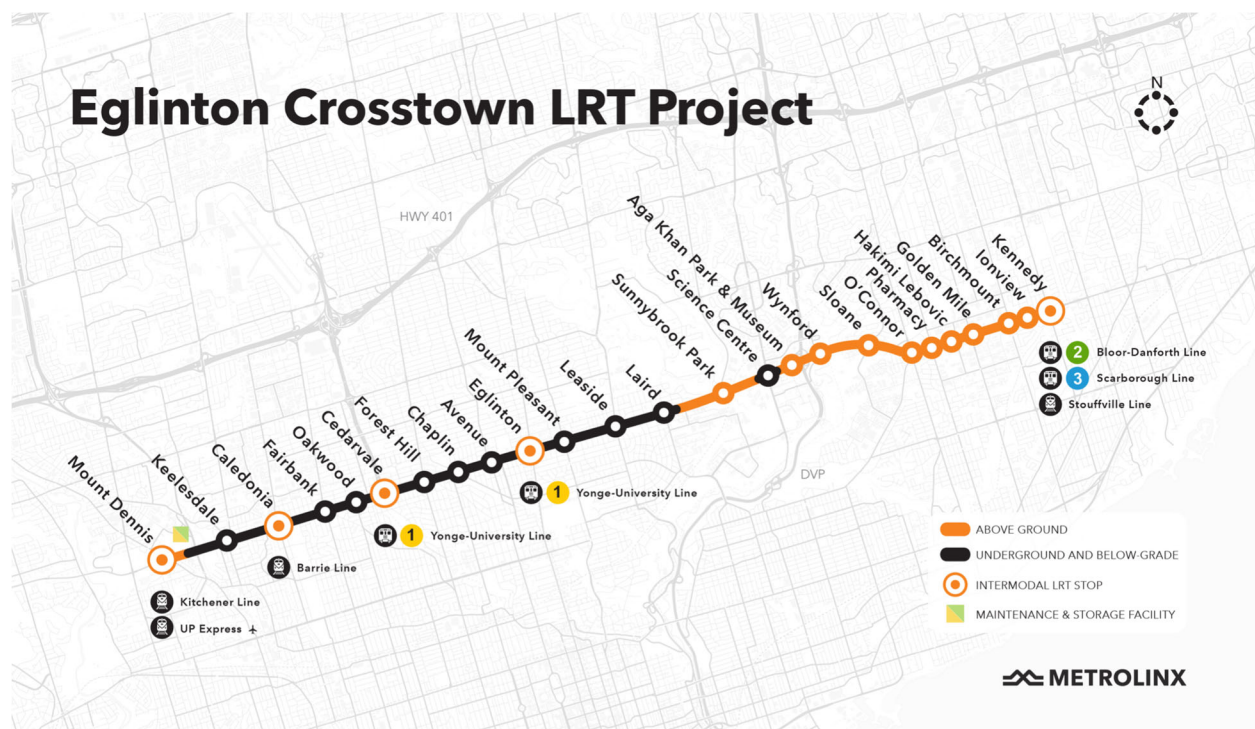


Figure 4. Eglinton Crosstown LRT. Source: Metrolinx.

The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is experiencing one of the largest waves of rapid transit development in a generation in the GTA. All levels of government are involved in massive investments in transit, contributing to a pandemic recovery strategy to create jobs, lower

greenhouse gas emissions, and improve equity, including in access to high quality transit (Siemiatycki & Fagan, 2021). These major investments include light rail transit such as the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. In 2005, the provincial government set forth the Places to Grow Act, focusing on the development of urban growth centres. On March 21, 2007, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) approved the plans for an Eglinton LRT to run from Mississauga to Kennedy Station in Scarborough. This announcement was later followed by the line's integration in the Metrolinx's transit plan a year later and funding announcements from the Province of Ontario in 2010. The Eglinton line was later revised in 2011 and construction began in 2016. After 70 years of planning a major line along Eglinton, construction of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT began in 2011. In the process of establishing one of these urban growth centers, we are introduced to the first phase of the light rail transit line. The Crosstown is approximately 19km in length running from the future Mt. Dennis GO / SmartTrack station in the west, Eglinton West and Yonge- Eglinton stations on the Line 1 Subway, and Kennedy station on the Line 2 subway in the east. 10km of Phase 1 will run underground, from Keele to Laird stations providing more accessible transit to Toronto.

## Chapter 3. PLANNING POLICIES AND GENTRIFICATION

This chapter provides an examination of current policies guiding gentrification as an economic strategy in Toronto. I build on Neil Smith's (1979) theory on gentrification to unpack socio-spatial restructuring through an understanding of how "rent-gaps" are formed.

Neighbourhoods are deliberately left for years in disrepair so that the profit margin is higher upon redevelopment. The more a space is disinvested, the more it creates a rent-gap and becomes profitable to invest, transform and gentrify. The larger the gap, the higher the chance it would gentrify (Moskowitz, 2017, p. 38). This is the basic concept of free-market economics: capital will go where the rate of potential return is the highest in order to make a profit. As I will argue, policy goals calling for such reinvestment through intensification, for example, such as higher densities along rapid transit station areas- along with municipal economic development strategies focused on creative and cultural resources, aimed to reorient the scope of development to attract larger capitals, publics, and lifestyles, thus, they are a form of economic cleansing of lower-income communities.

### 3.1 Gentrification in Toronto

The term gentrification was coined by Ruth Glass (1964) to refer to residential rehabilitation of London by middle classes uprooting and displacing working-class residents. However, gentrification is a process that takes many forms affecting communities similarly beyond property rehabilitation to a transformation of economic and social spaces. In Stein's (2019) most recent work, he defines gentrification as a political process as well as an economic and social one. He refers to gentrification as the process in which capital is reinvested in urban neighborhoods and poorer residents and their cultural products are displaced and replaced by richer people and their preferred aesthetics and amenities. What we understand from the process of capital accumulation is that the working class poor need to be replaced because their use-value is not generating enough profit. In the case of Little Jamaica, profitable land becomes obvious near transit lines, especially light rail. In order to attract the "creative class" or people with money, several processes become intertwined with each other in order to increase the tax base in that area. This process makes gentrification complex and insidious, but also predictable (Moskowitz, 2017, p.140-141).

The process of gentrification that illustrates a new consumption, a deliberate process of the middle class is known as gentrification aesthetic. Sharon Zukin explains this as a process of “Re-urbanizing unattractive land-uses in a capital driven city does not occur without the liaison of government”. We see this occur through discretionary zoning, tax incentives, and centralized infrastructure investments that are instrumental for reducing regulations for reinvestments into disinvested suburbs. There is a turning point in the gentrification process occurring right now. The aesthetic of gentrification in this context is a kind of gentrification that commodifies racial and ethnic diversity. Gentrification, thus, turns the culture of a neighbourhood into a relevant facet, drawing in consumers to drive up the economic value in real estate (Modan, 2007). The urban development processes have a predominant role in planning as Toronto seeks to promote itself as a creative and competitive city on the world stage. Friedman and Wolff (2006) outline the impacts of neoliberal policies on urban planning and the restructuring of cities, explaining that neoliberalization is manifested in multiple ways: through urban governance structures chasing capital, next through investors, multinational corporations, and large global developers powerful influencing spatial patterns, and lastly, through infrastructures that largely cater to urban-based professional workforce. These powerful actors exert their power through planning policies dictating urban development and transportation patterns in the City of Toronto. The policies of gentrification are intertwined with “capital market processes, public sector privatization schemes, globalized city competition, welfare retrenchment and workfare requirements, and many other threads of fabric of neoliberal urbanism” (Lees & Slater Wyly, 2013, pg. 165).

### **3.1.1 Toronto’s Urban Policies: Ethnic Commodification Meets Transit Planning**

The City of Toronto’s Official Plan provides a guiding plan for the city’s growth, projecting that by 2031 the city will be home to 3.19 million people. The overarching theme of the plan is to promote and accommodate growth-essential for Toronto’s ability to compete for capital (Lintern, 2019). The City of Toronto has been working towards becoming a ‘competitive city’ through various levels of government employing neoliberal strategies through a restructuring of planning and economic policies (Kipfer and Keil, 2002). What is happening in Toronto is not an anomaly; in fact, it is a replicated blueprint for competing cities. A strategy in establishing a political system that would allow for faster approvals of development in the City of Toronto was to restructure municipal borders through the official amalgamation of Toronto. Thus, the Official Plan in 2002, was modified to accommodate speculative real-estate development.

The following section discusses the common types of commercial gentrification that are working together.

### **3.1.2 Commodification of Ethnic Enclaves**

Ethnic concentrations are spatially segregated across the City of Toronto, socially, culturally, and economically dominating areas. Qadeer and Kumar (2006) define ethnic enclaves as “neighbourhoods dominated by persons of an ethnic background, particularly of visible minorities.” The National Household Survey identifies 200 ethnic groups in Canada, and describes the emergence of formal and informal institutions and symbols such as ethnic stores, services and places of worship as a process resulting in a neighbourhood categorized as an ethnic enclave. Hackworth and Rekers (2005) research in ethnic neighbourhoods illuminates the deliberate use of business improvement areas to package the ethnicity of neighborhoods for consumption. The authors document the displacement of the historical local ethnic residents, grocery stores and restaurants replaced with vibrant new restaurants to suit the tastes and aesthetics of visitors. Lehrer and Wieditz’s (2009) work on condominium development and gentrification in Toronto provides a detailed analysis of the policies and reports that have been guiding urban development and making gentrification and displacement possible. The Creative City Planning Framework (2008) states that “[a]n authentic and creative city has tight and dynamic use of land and weaves density, design and originality into the fabric of its neighbourhoods and public spaces” notably highlighting the way Toronto uses local neighbourhoods as place marketing strategies to compete on a global scale.

### **3.1.3 Art Districts**

Zukin’s 1982 classic *Loft Living* details how politicians, developers and planners have discovered the artists’ role in cultural rebranding development projects for larger investments and attracting the wealthy. The relationship between promoting culture through art districts and gentrification processes cannot be ignored in Toronto. The conversion of cultural capital into economic capital is a global urban strategy that Toronto participates in through creative city strategies. For example, Lehrer and Wieditz (2009) reference the City of Toronto’s long-standing relationship with non-profit organizations such as Artscape “which has

become a veritable developer of arts districts and live/and work experiences for artists over the past twenty years and which is currently one of the most pronounced voices of the creative city approach, constitutes Toronto's own local version of creativity-inspired gentrification as a new global urban strategy" (p. 143). Richard Florida (2002), whose naming of the 'creative class' in Toronto inspires and supports the city's urban strategy to use creative art hubs in order to attract capital investment, tourists and 'creative workers.' Florida states that "while the Creative Class favours openness and diversity, to some degree it is a diversity of elites limited to highly-educated, creative people. Even though the rise of the Creative Class has opened new avenues of advancement for women and members of ethnic minorities, its existence has certainly failed to put an end to long-standing divisions of race and gender" (Florida, 2002, p. 80). Certainly, Florida fails to elaborate on how it intensifies the displacement of racialized communities, an inevitable force of compounded economic and social disparity in the city, something his work and the impact of his work can be criticized for.

#### **3.1.4 Commercial Gentrification**

Davidson and Lees (2005) argue that the lens for analyzing gentrification needs to be widened, especially in its third wave. For example, several studies of gentrification remain narrow and focused on residential. However, this research provides a story of commercial gentrification, the gentrification of commercial premises or commercial streets or areas, (Lees & Slater Wyly, 2013, pg. 131). A dominant form of gentrification to describe urban change occurring, emphasising the many mutations of contemporary gentrification. Rankin & McLean (2014) looked at commercial spaces in Mount Dennis, a neighbourhood in Toronto with a high immigrant and low-income population poised for change due to the construction of a transit hub serving the Eglinton Crosstown transit line, a major east-west light rail line. They discussed the negative impact associated with the introduction of upscale businesses, such as a high-end grocery store. Firstly, the products sold in the store were expensive, which negatively impacted the accessibility of goods for the existing immigrant residents. Secondly, the grocery store only attracted a more affluent population and did not carry culturally-specific goods (Rankin & McLean, 2014, p. 217).

### 3.1.5 Transit Oriented Development

Peter Calthorpe describes Transit-Oriented development as the sum of regional planning, city revitalization, suburban renewal, and walkable neighborhoods. It uses multiple approaches to development, and it can offer a new range of development patterns for cities to spur growth (Dittmar and Ohland, 2004, p.13). There is a large push for Transit-Oriented Development to be merged and centered in community principles. In Ontario, the government's investments in public transit are supported by a policy framework that underlines the coordination of transit development with community development. This shift in the province to Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC), follows the Transit-Oriented Communities Act. Matti Siemiatycki and Drew Fagan explain that “the act’s lack of detail - it is just six brief sections long - raises questions about the act’s intent, including the fact that it includes no definition of what might constitute a transit-oriented community beyond saying that it is a development project “of any nature or kind” connected to the planned transit lines” They raise important questions of the Act’s impact and vague nature to facilitate faster and further development equitably and at a uneven pace. They also raise the concern about the Ontario government “pushing for dense development at transit stations. The province is especially interested in using such development to help to fund the cost of expensive infrastructure and increasingly is using its planning powers to expedite and boost the scale of development”. This enhanced control of development projects near transit can also be understood under the context of the Transit Oriented Communities Act, providing the province with regulation-making authority to enter private partnerships, or what the province calls it as streamlining, as well as expedite and accelerate development and completion of transit projects.

The pandemic has pushed the interests in TOC as a placed-based strategy, as there are many benefits to doing so. TOCs are high-density, mixed- use developments that are connected, next to or within a short walk of transit stations and stops and designed to encourage transit use. TOC neighbourhoods are typically located within 1 km or a 10-minute walk from a transit hub and include a range of uses including residential, commercial, and institutional for a vibrant and complete community. The additional investment, amenities, and station improvements around a transit node can improve customer experience of their commute. TOC can be achieved through integrated transit-oriented development, transit-adjacent development, or land-value capture. The transit hub may have many modes of mobility, such as a subway, streetcar, light-rail, or a bus stop. The concentration and strategic location of



housing near transit stations both encourage transit ridership, but also reduces the environmental costs of automobile dependence and increases the health benefits of active transportation. Research has shown that the investment in transit alone does not revitalize an area, especially low-income areas unattractive to capital. Transit investments must also include creative strategies to enhance property values, making an area much more attractive for further investments (Rayle, 2015).

### **3.2 Gentrification in Little Jamaica**

This section explains current gentrification processes in Little Jamaica from the perspective of culture commodification and arts-led revitalization. This framework provides a larger planning and policy context to realign a range of existing and future policies and initiatives, together to realize the creative capacity of the city. The framework thus seeks to integrate planning, fiscal, cultural, infrastructural, and economic policies into a coherent and coordinated framework, with clearly delineated wealth-generating objectives. This analysis will demonstrate how creative policies implemented in Little Jamaica become an instrumental and economic development strategy by the City of Toronto. Linking the gentrification process of creative and cultural resources as an economic driver contributing to creativity and growth in Toronto.

#### **3.2.1 Art Districts: Selective Appropriation, Commodification and Performance**

“Culture is not a residual category, the surface variation left unaccounted for by more powerful economic analyses; it is the very medium through which social change is experienced, contested and constituted” (Lees & Slater Wyly, 2013, p. 143).

The process of gentrification through arts districts cannot be ignored in Little Jamaica where the Municipal and Federal Government and the United Way recently partnered with the arts-based non-profit organization Nia Centre to redevelop the first professional multi-disciplinary Black arts centre in Canada. Toronto’s Culture Plan for the Creative City (City of Toronto, 2003), which seeks to promote arts and culture as an economic strategy, is facilitating gentrification by commodifying Black culture in Toronto. It is important to recognize that this

redevelopment project frames and normalizes gentrification as a positive revitalization to the community. As a rapidly gentrifying neighbourhood, the community still does not have access to a community hub. It does not have ownership over Nia Centre and is thus prevented from assuming long-term stewardship of affordable land, which is meant to be “for the Black community.” I look to the work of Leslie Kern (2015) to frame this as the romanticization of Black arts, directly translating to the privileging of certain neighbourhood virtues of others or the “‘remembering to forget:’ a selective appropriation, commodification and performance of the past that conveniently erases, or renders purely historical, certain people and experiences” (p. 452). This new form of consumption space will only seek to drive up the cost of living for current residents masking the “slow violence of gentrification”. Though this culture was organically produced by residents and commercial tenants, strategic efforts are being made to reproduce Black culture to sell real estate Kern’s work on the “temporal landscapes of gentrification” examines the spaces popping up in the Junction that have created a new rhythm of activity in the neighbourhood (2016, p.448). Kern sees this “[a]s both hotspots for consumption activities and identity-building exercises, these events imprint new rhythms of everyday life upon the neighbourhood that aid in remaking place in line with both the needs of capital and the desires of some to construct a particular kind of authenticity” (2016, p. 448). The current City Councillor Josh Matlow corroborates this point. He wants to ensure that the neighbourhood can retain the culture to be enjoyed by the Black community:

“I don’t want the outcome to be a museum, it’s great if we have murals and better public realm and street signs that say ‘Little Jamaica’ but if that’s all it is and then we just have a bunch of gentrification taking over without retaining the barber shops and all the things that make Little Jamaica Little Jamaica. It just won’t be Little Jamaica anymore and it’s important to both the local community because they want their kids to connect with their identity and their culture” (personal communication, 2021).

However, current planning studies do not reflect his sentiments. The Eglinton Connects plan to revitalize the streetscape of Eglinton, a green, beautiful linear space that supports residential living, employment, retail and public uses in a setting of community vibrancy, fails to mention the vibrancy of Little Jamaica, and instead its boundaries are described as a large and/or underdeveloped area at the intersection between Dufferin Road and Eglinton Avenue in need of development. The deficit-based language used to describe lower-income racialized communities is evidenced in this City planning study; what’s missing is the

recommendations for community land ownership. The study prioritizes beautification and attractiveness. It states that “a healthy and vibrant public realm is the most important element towards achieving the Eglinton Connects Vision (pg.14).” To achieve an attractive public realm and meet their goals, it looks to the Creative City Planning Framework which provides a larger planning and policy context to realign a range of existing and future policies and initiatives, together to realize an enhanced value of the city.

Zukin (1982) states: “...deindustrialization is a long-term process that is connected with change in production, movement of capital, and the rates of return on investment that cause planners to think up new investment strategies on a global level” (p.18). Connecting this to recent investments in Little Jamaica, we know how the orbits of capital travel across time to either open or constrain areas to development and redevelopment. As the neighbourhood is described as underdeveloped in need of development, these processes of redevelopment are so intertwined, Zukin’s analysis formulates the planning study’s reimagined future as a natural evolution of gentrification.

### **3.2.2 Reggae Lane: BIAs, Beautification and the Commodification of Race**

Challenging the way race is commodified in the role of Business Improvement Areas (BIA) across the city cannot be isolated from power, economics, and anti-Blackness. The history of the BIA originates with the Bloor West Village business improvement area neighbourhood in 1970 (Houstoun and Levy, 2003, 68). The City of Toronto defines the BIA as “an association of commercial property and owners and tenants within a defined area who work in partnership with the city to create thriving, competitive and safe business areas that attract shoppers, diners, tourists, and new businesses” (City of Toronto, 2011). Two BIAs in the study area work together to manufacture a marketable and desirable destination for tourists and future residents, packaging the strip as an International Market. The Fairbank BIA positions the area as a multicultural and diverse ethnic cluster “offering shoppers and visitors a vibrant international market with shops and restaurants catering to the community’s diverse heritage” (Fairbank BIA, 2020). The York-Eglinton BIA serves the commercial district along Eglinton Avenue West between Marlee Avenue and Dufferin Street, and along the North side of Dufferin to Whitmore Avenue. The homepage of their website boasts that they are the commercial backbone of the city, while also promoting the future Eglinton LRT stations Oakwood and Fairbank (York-Eglinton BIA, 2020). The redevelopment changes in Little

Jamaica have been dominated by the voices of BIA members as prevalent actors. Hackwork and Rekers (2005) highlight that, though BIAs are small scale, their efforts are highly strategic operations entangled with various municipal policies. City planning documents support the beautification of Eglinton Avenue, for example, Toronto's Official Plan notes that attracting investments in priority neighbourhoods along Eglinton Avenue with the collaboration of community improvement through the redesign of streets and other public open spaces should remain a priority to support the development of complete communities and economic prosperity.

In 2014, the Laneway Project received funding by the City of Toronto to develop Master Plans for two Laneways in Toronto. As laneways fall primarily under the jurisdiction of Transportation Services, it is no coincidence with the recent development of the LRT that “Reggae Lane” was nominated with pressure from former City Councillor Josh Colle, Metrolinx and the York-Eglinton BIA (Reggae Lane Master Plan, 2016). Colle promoted the initiative of Reggae Lane he says because “[a]s Eglinton West continues to transform with the coming Eglinton Crosstown and Oakwood Station, it is more important than ever to remember and celebrate this rich history. Toronto needs to do a better job of recognizing its history - especially its music history. Like the Yonge Street strip, Yorkville, and Queen Street, Eglinton West has a music history and story that should be shared” (Armstrong, 2014). Evidently, community members of the neighbourhood don’t see it the same way. Dalton Higgins, a music programmer, pop culture critic and author, who grew up in Little Jamaica questions the impact of Reggae Lane,

“Will a re-naming of the lane do much, if anything, to help with some of the more pressing issues in the community, like economic development, helping to keep the mom-and-pop shops out there open, given the LRT construction and gentrification creeping in? There’s a condo development happening right next to this proposed Reggae Lane, so I can tell you that the people in the community are a lot more concerned with how that will impact the small black businesses out there” (quoted in Armstrong, 2014).

The lack of decision-making power and influence in promoting the neighbourhood is documented in the community’s response to the Reggae Laneway project. The report found that the cultural mural tucked away in an alleyway with a high concentration of drug use is not a welcoming gesture, but rather another form of tokenism. “The York and Fairbank BIAs have collaborated with local politicians to deliberately construct a multicultural urbanity

using art and culture in order to advance the Ethnic-Creative City vision of gentrification” (Patel, 2016 pg.3). Packaged ethnicity processes documented by Hackworth & Rekers (2005) reveals the BIA as a driving force in gentrification in ethnic enclaves across the city, such as Little Italy, Greektown and Little India.

### **3.2.3 Midtown in Focus**

Developments occurring along the Crosstown LRT transit line, at the intersection of Yonge-Eglinton exemplifies how intensification is rapidly occurring, but more importantly that much taller and denser developments with higher land value capture is being prioritized near transit stops. The Big Move, is a 25 year plan to invest \$50-billion in the implementation and construction of delivering bus, light rail, and other rapid transit facilities. The plan also considers intensification areas, highlighting the Yonge-Eglinton intersection as one of “Toronto’s five urban growth centres” (Metrolinx, 2008, 61). Metrolinx’s *The Big Move* has set the stage for provincial rulings related to development in Toronto’s midtown and downtown core to demonstrate the extent to which this focus exclusively on unlocking the value of land is at odds with creating a city where citizens can thrive (Baker et al, 2020).

*Midtown in Focus* was an inter-divisional study to ensure that growth positively contributes to the vitality and livability of one of Toronto’s most dynamic neighbourhoods. The study resulted in a renewed plan for Midtown with an updated Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan and infrastructure strategies to ensure that infrastructure capacity not only keeps pace with development but also supports quality of life in Midtown. City councillors, planners and residents spent years working on the Midtown in Focus and ToCore plans, only for the provincial government to disavow their work. City Councillor Josh Matlow shares his reservations of Bill 108 in the Toronto Star, “city staff is prepared for significant growth in various parts of the city, especially around public transit hubs. But the province’s decision to unilaterally change development plans will upend years of judicious planning” (Pagliaro, 2020).

Changes to the Provinces Bill 108, the More Homes, More Choices Act, will affect the planning and financial tools used to support new development, following the “growth pays for growth” ideology. This means that valuable infrastructure that supports vibrant and complete communities with adequate parks, recreation, library, childcare become jeopardized. What then is prioritized is much taller and denser development without consultation. The province

is allowing for more than double the height permissible in midtown, from 8-storeys to 20-35 storey high buildings on the corner of Eglinton and Bayview Avenue (Pagliaro, 2020). This new development will cater to the new Eglinton Crosstown LRT station Leaside, formerly Bayview station. Development in Toronto has “vastly redefined the so-called ‘highest and best use’ for urban land throughout the region”, investments in residential development are prioritized because of its higher return on investments in comparison to other land-uses. In Ontario, the policy foundation for regulating growth is “directing growth inward to already built-up areas, combined with unabated population growth in the Greater Toronto Area, has encouraged developers to seek permission to build higher and denser than envisioned by the zoning regime and other comprehensive planning policies.” Developers are thus supported in their proposals that exceed height densities. The case of *Midtown in Focus* serves to showcase the precedents that have been set for development along Eglinton Avenue. The implication of this development emerges from a strong spatial polarization of class underpinning urban life.

## **Chapter 4. IMPACTS OF THE CROSSTOWN LRT & THE ONGOING ERASURE OF LITTLE JAMAICA**

“Erasure is about having your historical presence in a space, your stories and claim of belonging to a space not respected or acknowledged and purposefully ignored and forgotten to perpetuate a narrative that does not include you” (Gordon, 2018,34).

Through land-use and transportation planning and policy, the City of Toronto is responsible for setting the parameters for growth and development along Eglinton Avenue. A requirement of Toronto's Official Plan is to conform to the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), which specifically supports the diverse set of opportunities for living, working, and enjoying culture. Section 2.2 of the Official Plan states that the integration of transportation and land-use planning is critical to increasing accessibility throughout the city. Thus, the implementation of the Crosstown LRT provides connectivity to neighbourhoods through rapid transit over subways and buses. However, as the development of the transit network has the power to enhance the living conditions of lower income parts of the city, in Little Jamaica, there is an increase in residential and commercial land values beginning to displace the community it intended to connect and provide better access to transit across the city.

Transit infrastructure investments in conjunction with the City of Toronto's creative strategies presents us with the issue of gentrification leading to displacement. Gentrification becomes apparent throughout the development process, with the intentional displacement of lower-income populations, through various marketing and design tactics implemented to attract middle-class suburbanites back to the city. The risk of displacing an entire community and its culture in neighbourhoods across the city is profound.

### **4.1 Socio-Spatial Shifts**

The composition of the city has seen dramatic changes over the years. The area of Little Jamaica has experienced demographic changes; however the impact of LRT development is expected to severely transform the make-up of the area. In the last decade, the Jamaican

community has been squeezed out of the area, at a much faster rate than any other ethnic group. Recent trends show that between 2006 and 2016 the Black population declined three times higher than any other ethnic group. The overall neighbourhood population experienced a decline of 5%, whereas the Black population saw a sharp decline of 13%. The Black Futures on Eglinton Planning Study also found that, over the last 10 years, average home prices have increased at a whopping 66%, while the average household income has only increased by 10% (Bfoe, 2021). The Oakwood Village continues to change, replacing the Black community by people of Chinese, Italian, Portuguese, Hungarian, and Filipino descent (Kurek, 2017). According to the results of Debbie's research, the displacement of Black-owned grocery stores has impacted the social production of space that is Little Jamaica. Jamaican/Caribbean patrons have changed the way they experience the space because for a lot of them it is no longer accessible to buy their ethnic groceries, preferring other areas in Toronto like Weston Road and Brampton that provide the same culturally-specific items without being stuck in traffic for longer periods of time due to congestion caused by LRT construction. City Councillor Josh Matlow attributes the ongoing changes to Black consumer choices directly related to the construction of the LRT stating that "there have been so many obstructions whether it be parking, even seen sometimes there blocking buildings and construction materials put up. If it's not easier or convenient to get to a lot of people just go shopping somewhere else and that's an understatement to how Little Jamaica has been affected over the past decade" (personal communications, 2021).

## **4.2 Commercial Impacts**

The commercial street of Eglinton plays a key role in concentrating low-margin, small-scale businesses and in providing affordable goods and services to the community. However, the construction of the LRT has caused sidewalk, road, and parking closures, restricting access and exposure to businesses. Chapple & Loukaitou-Sideris (2019) research in commercial displacement in the U.S examines how cities begin divestment in neighbourhoods leading to closures of small businesses. A common theme they found was that businesses experienced displacement pressures due to investment, such as new rail transit systems or transit-oriented development forcing them to close or relocate. These investments led to higher costs in rents on commercial units, making it difficult for businesses to continue operating (Chapple & Loukaitou- Sideris, 2019, p.48, Huang, 2020). Existing literature provides evidence of how



small local businesses in under-served neighbourhoods were forcibly removed to facilitate the construction of major transit infrastructure. During the construction of the Jubilee Line Extension project, small business owners were displaced from Inner East London in England (Jones & Lucas, 2012, p. 4, Huang, 2020). The forced removal of local Black businesses is also evidenced during the construction phase of Crosstown LRT. Researcher Debbie Gordon in her work, *Erasure of Little Jamaica*, assesses the community's loss of Black-owned grocery stores because of gentrification directly tied to the construction of the LRT. One store of significance is Gus Tropical Foods, a Black-owned grocery store operating in the community since at least 1980, was shut down in 2016 due to government mandated closures along Eglinton Ave. W., making room for the LRT station. In her research, Gordon documents other businesses closing due to increased rents (Gordon, 2018). People's Choice and Fischer's, two long-standing grocery stores serving customers in the Black enclave, were unable to survive the redevelopment costs of the area. Chinese-owned Caribbean grocery stores managed to have the finances to relocate their business further along the avenue.



Figure 5. Image above: People's Choice Grocery forced to close.

Since the Crosstown LRT is handled by Metrolinx, which has then subcontracted to several partners, the small businesses along the avenue are left ignored, frustrated, and further confused. City Councillor Josh Matlow brings up the issue with businesses not having access to

financial support until a small business benefit program was introduced to support businesses impacted by the pandemic across the province:

“Those specific concerns the businesses have felt like they've been collateral damage, I think you know a really interesting point that's been raised to me is that over a decade of taking on the burden for the greater good, these businesses received virtually no meaningful support by the government. They were left on their own. You know they got some token gestures; flyers were sent out, little ads and things like that, but no meaningful financial support. The pandemic has been another example of where these businesses have had to take on the burden, they've had to close to protect our collective public health and it's the first time ever that they've received any financial support from any government. So, the irony is, that it took a pandemic to get the government to actually recognize that these businesses needed help which is bonkers. It has been incredibly difficult for many of them to survive and frankly many of them have not survived” (personal communications, 2021).



Figure 6. Image above: last remaining record shop Trea-Jah-Isle Records

As Caribbean business owners are forced to relocate their businesses along the peripheries, there has been a rise in Asian entrepreneurs along the commercial strip. Food access aligns with racial segregation and gentrification because the prevalence and access to supermarket access decreases in lower-income neighbourhoods (Eisenhauer, 2001). Figure 6 shows that Little Jamaica is situated within a priority designated area outlined in Black along the TTC Rapid Transit Line where access to good-quality, affordable food is in decline (Florida, 2019).

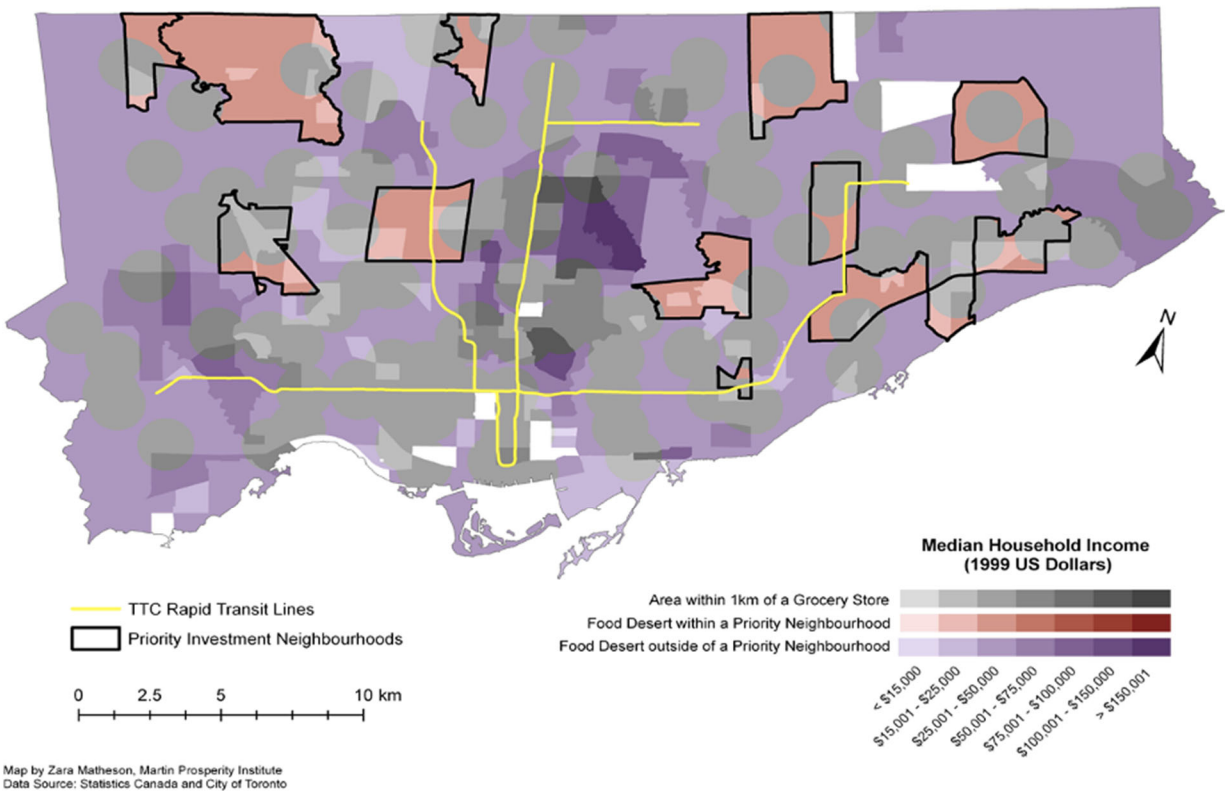


Figure 7. Source: Martin Prosperity Institutes

Business owners have expressed feelings of neglect by systemic racial and spatial inequities by way of gentrification and local displacement. Little Jamaica's vibrant cultural scene is part of what once made the area a desirable place to live, work and visit. With land prices, development and growth pressures moving quickly into the area, the continued viability of many of these small businesses is of concern.

The relationship between displacement and gentrification has been contested for years because of the way the displacement of residents in a neighbourhood in the gentrification process is measured. Using a yes or no phenomena, meaning displacement is only determined if residents have been removed from an area entirely, invalidates the displacement felt by many in Little Jamaica, by loss of access to social resources, affordable and ethnic foods, businesses and cultural connections in the area (Guzman, 2018). The LRT development serves as an aid to capital accumulation. Though it is stressed that the many actors, specifically planners feel as though their hands are tied and lack the ultimate power in capitalism, using

the myth of innocence to disavow themselves from the implications of their role in the political struggles over space displacing the people and culture in order to reshape the physical and social landscape of the study area.

#### **4.2.1 Commercial Rent**

Commercial changes are occurring at a much faster rate, and this can be attributed to commercial tenants not having the same protections under the same policies that control rent increases for residential tenants (Retha, 2017). Concerns related to the affordability of commercial space still require scholarly attention and policy consideration (Rankin & McLean, 2015). The Ontario Commercial Tenancies Act (1990) does not provide the same protections as the Ontario Residential Tenancies Act (2006). The Commercial Tenancies Act (1990) does not regulate rent increases for businesses. The power lies with the landlord to change the rent rate by any amount at any time. According to the Commercial Tenancies Act (1990) if the rent is not paid after the 16th day from when it is due, the landlord can change the locks without notice.

Due to pressures exerted by Covid-19 and construction delays, on September 30, 2020, City Council adopted a motion that had a number of directions regarding supporting Black-owned and -operated businesses. One of the motions speaks to the concerns of rising property rents, showing that “City Council requested the Province of Ontario to introduce rent control legislation for commercial units along Eglinton Avenue West to protect Black-owned and operated businesses from unfair or drastic increases to their rent”. Another legal tool the City Councillor Josh Matlow aims to incorporate into negotiations with developers and Metrolinx is the first right of refusal to purchase or transfer property before it is put on the market. It asks to give Black-owned and -operated businesses on Eglinton Avenue West first right of refusal for any retail spaces opening in any of the LRT stations located along Eglinton Avenue West from Marlee Avenue to Keele Street. It also requested the Province of Ontario to require property owners in the subject area to provide Black-owned and operated businesses with a first right of refusal on retail spaces upon transfer of land. Legally as it stands the government cannot enforce this, as it is only a request, ultimately leaving the Black businesses along Eglinton with no real protections.

It is evident in the closure of commercial businesses that transportation planning and urban policy do not “dominate the overwhelmingly abandoned residents, catering instead to a set of

people - suburbanites, tourists and wealthy investors - with little attachment to the area” (Toews, 2018) groomed to consume Black culture separated from Black people. Perhaps a prediction already made by long-standing resident and home-owner Dalton Higgins “Not sure exactly what that would mean for the current Caribbean residents and businesses in that neighbourhood but it is safe to assume that many may not survive the neighbourhood make-over. It may be in the decades to come that one of the few remaining reminders of the Caribbean presence in that neighbourhood is the street name: Reggae Lane” (Armstrong, 2014). The erasure of everyday living for the Black community is evident in the loss of barber shops, restaurants and grocery stores.

## **4.3 Residential Impact**

### **4.3.1 Transit-Oriented Development**

“I remember walking into the nearby condo developer’s sales office to check out what they were up to, and the woman at the front desk told my wife and me that the neighborhood would be changing for the better, not to worry, and I wondered what she meant by that - less black businesses, more Starbucks and Rexalls, less reggae?” (Armstrong, 2014).

The changes in housing typologies and the price of housing are a key indicator of gentrification processes working through a neighbourhood transforming its geography. The height and density of properties are increasing along Eglinton Avenue through rezoning applications. Developers are using Provincial policies that promote the integration of land use planning and transportation to direct growth to Major Transit Station Areas along priority transit corridors which is creating higher property values in the area. The updated 2020 GGH further prioritizes intensification and higher densities in strategic areas recognized as Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) and Protected Major Station Areas (PMTSAs). These areas are directed to meet the minimum density target of 160 residents and jobs combined per hectare. The City of Toronto must delineate at least 180 Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) on or by July 1, 2022. At least four stations along the LRT within the boundaries of Little Jamaica are eligible for delineation, which will result in higher intensification following the announcement of MTSAs. This raises concerns, as you will see in this section, that the

neighbourhood is already experiencing an increase in development in the form of high-rise market condominiums unaffordable to residents.

Eglinton Avenue has been rezoned to allow for more height and density, according to the Eglinton Connects planning study, the City of Toronto predicts and sets the stage for long-term intensification of Eglinton. Investments in transit and streetscapes are intended to accommodate 107,000 new people and jobs, including a prediction of 31,000 new employees and 76,000 new residents (pg.12). The plan suggests that expected growth along Eglinton Avenue should be accommodated primarily in a mid-rise form (generally 4-11 storeys) where appropriate, and tall buildings (generally greater than 11 storeys). In Little Jamaica, the area is zoned MCR (Main Street Commercial Residential) under the former City of York Zoning By-law 1-83, as amended, and (Commercial Residential) CR 2.5 (c2.5; r2.5) SS2 under Toronto Zoning By-law 569-2013. These zones allow for a range of commercial and residential uses. Since 2009, Little Jamaica has seen 11 development applications submitted for properties “8 of these 11 proposals are for development above the average as-of-right building height along Eglinton which is now 7-storeys or 24 metres under the Zoning By-law. This up zoning or increase in permitted height was designed to incentivize mid-rise development as a part of the Eglinton Connects Planning Framework. Yet almost half (5) of these applications have been submitted in the last two years for proposals ranging from 8- to 30-storeys and total 603 residential units” (Adams et al., 2020), a clear discrepancy in the plan for mid-rise development in the City’s 2010 Official Plan for Eglinton Avenue (City of Toronto, 2015). The maximum height permitted in this area is 8-storeys; however, the City of Toronto is approving high-rise market condominiums, unaffordable to many locals living along Eglinton and throughout the city through the funding benefit Section 37. The Official Plan provides for the use of Section 37 of the Planning Act to pass by-laws for increased height and/or density, when proposals requests are above the designated height limits.

#### **4.3.2 Recent Developments**

Two major developers that aim to capitalize off Toronto’s largest transit expansion are Empire Communities and KingSett Capital. The Eglinton Connects report outlines six areas that can anticipate significant mix-use intensification and redevelopment. The area of Little Jamaica falls under one of these focus areas at the intersection between Dufferin Road and

Eglinton Avenue. It describes the area as a large and/or underdeveloped area that can benefit from mixed-use development and is an opportunity to build larger high-rise buildings.

2433 Dufferin Street (northeast corner of Dufferin Street and Hopewell Avenue) - An application for a Zoning By-law Amendment was submitted in June 2014 (14 172663 NNY 15 OZ). Following revisions to the proposed development, the application was approved by the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) following a settlement hearing, pursuant to an Order/Decision in September 2019. An 8-storey building, including 99 dwelling units with at-grade retail has been approved in principle, with the final order withheld until conditions are satisfied.

#### **1924-1928 Eglinton Avenue West**

An application for Site Plan Approval was submitted in February 2019 (File No. 19 112144 NNY 08 SA) to construct an 8-storey building containing 27 dwelling units and ground floor commercial space. The application was approved and NOAC has been issued.

#### **1886-1920 Eglinton Avenue West**

An application for Site Plan Approval was submitted on August 26, 2020 (File No. 20 185654 NNY 08 SA) to permit an 8-storey (25.5 metres plus mechanical penthouse) mixed-use building. The proposal has a total gross floor area of 14,016 square metres, 200 residential units and at-grade commercial space. A total of 74 underground vehicle parking spaces are proposed as well as 226 bicycle parking spaces (22 short-term and 204 long-term).

#### **1603 Eglinton Avenue West**

A recently-constructed 17-storey mixed use building with 219 residential units, ground floor commercial uses and a 3-level below grade garage. The rezoning application was approved in 2011 (By-law 998-2011).

#### **1801-1807 Eglinton Avenue West**

An application for a Zoning By-law Amendment was submitted on July 21, 2020 (File No. 20 170662 STE 12 OZ) to permit the construction of a 30-storey mixed-use building (106.53 metres to top of the mechanical penthouse) inclusive of a 4-storey podium along Eglinton Avenue, which steps down to one storey along the Vaughan Road frontage at the rear of the site. A total of 22,175 square metres of residential gross floor area and 455 square metres of



non-residential gross floor area are proposed, as well as 284 dwelling units.4.3.3 Section 37  
Community Benefits

Community benefit agreements provide a unique model in achieving equitable development; however, its promises are not always honoured. Through Section 37, as outlined in Chapter 5 of the Official Plan and local Secondary Plan, developers can compensate in one of two ways; offering the city financially for the implementation, or “in-kind”, providing the benefit themselves. Section 37 is intended to have a big impact on the quality of life for residents of Toronto, allowing secured benefits to be direct, tangible and responsive to community local needs (Section 37, 2014). The following two case studies illustrate how Section 37 has been used to benefit future residents of the study area and how it could be used to benefit the needs of the local community in the future.

#### 4.3.3.1 Case Study 1: 1603 Eglinton Avenue West



Figure 8. Initial Rendering of the Hub. Image Source: Empire Communities.



#### Project Information:

1. Address: 1603 Eglinton Avenue West
2. Developer: Empire Communities
3. Architect: Richmond Architects
4. Status: Complete

Real estate speculation began as early as 2010, when a zoning application was submitted to the city by Empire Midtown, at 1603 Eglinton Avenue West. Empire Communities had proposed a flashy 18-storey, mixed-use residential condo apartment building with 12 townhouses, including retail along Eglinton Avenue and underground parking. It is located on the southwest corner of Eglinton Avenue West and Oakwood Avenue and is adjacent to the planned Oakwood LRT station. The 204 units mixed-use development well-exceeded local zoning but also differs from the City of Toronto's 2010 Official Plan's mid-rise designation for Eglinton Avenue (City of Toronto 2015). At the time, City Councillor Josh Colle put out a request for the developers to consult with the community, resulting in the City of Toronto and Empire Communities coming to an agreement in more improvements to retail space, parking, and a reduction of 12 to seven townhouses (Toronto, 2018). This development project has been named the "HUB," a 16-storey glass and precast building with 220 units along the southwest corner of Eglinton and Oakwood Avenue (Starr, 2013). As of 2021, a 1-bedroom 2-bathroom in this condominium is advertised for rent starting at \$2,200. The advertising on Zillow, a real estate listing locates the condo apartment in "The Victoria Village Neighbourhood, steps away from Oakwood LRT" a common theme found in redevelopment projects is to disassociate the new development from the stigmas of the neighbourhood; however, it is unclear if this is a mistaken neighbourhood location, or an intentional tactic used by the realty company.

In order to fulfill this increase in height and density to the area, the developer agreed to a financial contribution through Section 37. Not only are developers utilizing zoning by-law changes but the encouragement of the City of Toronto and the benefits to transit agencies becomes more and more obvious. For example, one of the agreed upon cash contributions is in the form of a monthly transit pass. Empire has agreed to provide a monthly transit pass at no cost to the tenant for each residential tenancy for a period of 12 months (City of Toronto, 2011). Funding benefit negotiations also included a cash contribution of \$2000 per unit and a

public art contribution of 0.5% of gross construction cost of the development (City of Toronto, 2011). “That agreement can look like an x amount of affordable retail space or cash contribution. But a community must be aware of this tool and organized so they can demand for these benefits the way other neighbourhoods have done successfully” (Adams et al., 2020). Without the awareness of the community, the developer was able to build taller, therefore making the area denser, City planning documents revealed they were permitted to do so by tying the contribution to the transit agency. Ultimately, Section 37 of the Ontario Planning Act is used to support gentrification processes by attracting new, wealthier residents with Metrolinx transit passes and public art improvements, instead of affordable units for local tenants to remain in the community (Switzman, 2015, p27). Developers are only required to build affordable housing units when development is 5 hectares or more, and yet Toronto's Affordable Housing Action Plan states that most residential developments are below 5 hectares (City of Toronto, 2009). This policy failure results in affordable units to be negotiated through Section 37 benefits yet in the case of “The Hub” this allocation opportunity was neglected, a common occurrence across the City of Toronto.

#### 4.3.3.2 Case Study 2: 1801 Eglinton Avenue West



Figure 9. South view of 1801 Eglinton Avenue West. Image Source: Submissions to the City of Toronto

Project Information:

1. Address: 1801 Eglinton Avenue West
2. Developer: KingSett Capital
3. Architect: BDP Quadrangle
4. Status: Pre-construction

Developers continue to propose significant intensification on Eglinton in anticipation of the Crosstown LRT which seeks to “maximize” the number of potential users within walking distance of transit stations. This is one of the largest developments to be considered in the area. In July of 2020, KingSett Capital submitted a rezoning application for a 30-storey tower adjacent to the planned Fairbank Eglinton Crosstown LRT station. It will replace the existing mixed-use buildings at 1801-1807 Eglinton Avenue West which holds two three-storey buildings at ground-level retail with residences above and to the rear. It is located in a Mixed Use Areas designation in the City of Toronto Official Plan and its location within the Dufferin Focus Area as identified in Site and Area Specific Policy 477, which anticipates tall building redevelopment at the Dufferin and Eglinton intersection.

The application proposes a 284-unit tower featuring 176 m<sup>2</sup> of retail space and a 279 m<sup>2</sup> community hub and business innovation centre. The 22,630 m<sup>2</sup> development would rise to a height of 105.25 metres and include 168 one-bedroom units, 88 two-bedroom units, and 28 three-bedroom units. Of the total number of units, 47 would be rental replacement units.



Figure 10. Image of site in August 2020. Source: Urban Toronto.

The Official Plan provides for the use of Section 37 of the Planning Act to pass by-laws for increased height and/or density, when proposals such as this at its current height surpass the designated height limits. Though the applicant is still waiting on approval from the City Council, it is necessary that communities prepare themselves to adequately negotiate for community benefits that are reflective of the communities' needs. Over a decade has passed since Empire communities submitted their application for the "Hub" where the negotiated community benefits tied back to Metrolinx. A lot has changed in the area including the City Councillor, then Mike Colle to now Josh Matlow.

City Councillor Josh Matlow says, "One of the first things that I say to developers when they even knock at our door at my office is; we can debate the height, we can debate the density, but I want to make sure that those businesses have first right of refusal to return and come back at prices that they can afford and if a developer can demonstrate that in my books they've got a better opportunity to get something approved so negotiation is one tool that we have and I think that we need to use it." When I asked what the community needs, he told me, "Along with retaining the businesses which is just that we all agree on or at least retaining the ability for them to continue. The top feedback that we received when it came to community benefits was healthcare; the pandemic has put a spotlight on its importance. But it was also through a social development lens, meaning that it was not just about physical

health, but also about mental health care; it's about supporting our youth and it's about supporting isolated seniors.”

#### 4.4 Analysis

Traditional housing in the Oakwood-Vaughan Village area dates to the mid-20th century consisting of a mix of semi-detached, making up 16% and detached homes making up 32% (Toronto, 2016). Apartments consist primarily of low-rise buildings (5-storeys or less) along Eglinton Avenue, Vaughn Road and Oakwood Avenue, making up 28% of this building type in the area (Toronto, 2016). Apartments greater than 5 storeys account for 17%, which is far less than the rest of Toronto which makes up 44% (Toronto, 2016). Since the announcement of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, by 2015 average housing prices have increased between 68%-82% (Switzman, 2015, p27). Data used from the Toronto Real Estate Board was used to study the increase of Toronto's housing prices between July 2014 and July 2019. Overall, in the City of Toronto housing prices averaged just over \$821,198 in 2014 and in 2019 an increase of 42 percent occurred with home prices averaging at \$1,167,968 (Foran, 2019). As of 2016, the Toronto Neighbourhood Profile statistics of the Oakwood Village neighbourhood shows that 47% are renters and 54% are owners (Toronto, 2016). However, detached and semi-detached housing prices have dramatically changed in the City of Toronto, with housing prices more than doubling in the Oakwood Village area between the 5-year study period with a shocking average increase of 121% (Foran, 2019). The shift to condo development, especially near transportation infrastructure, is making home ownership of detached and semi-detached homes out of reach for many. Projects under development are expected to change Eglinton West Avenue and Little Jamaica dramatically with approximately 829 units being planned, most of them under condominium tenure schemes, and with costs for a 1-bedroom unit ranging from \$1495 (Zumper, 2021)<sup>1</sup> to \$2495 (Zillow, 2021)<sup>2</sup>. Most of these units are 1-2 bedrooms, designed for single persons and young professionals which seeks to attract a different demographic of renter from the average households in the area. This design layout does not accommodate the current demographic in the study area, where 61% of the

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<sup>1</sup> Zumper is an online marketplace platform for apartment rentals. Experts' aggregate data from active listings to calculate median asking rents

<sup>2</sup> Zillow is an online marketplace platform for apartment and home listings. Zillow Observed Rental Index is used to measure typical market rate rent across the region.

neighbourhood is of one-family household, and couples with children make up 44% of the neighbourhood, making them vulnerable to transit-induced displacement (Toronto,2016).

The assemblage of actors motivating the gentrification process and the displacement of local residents has been a slow process; however, gentrification is a long-game. In the case of Little Jamaica, it has occurred over a decade. Katherine McKittrick (2007) describes this in her work on Black Geographies and the Politics of Space that the racialized process of exclusion happens through spatial segregation compounded by erasures that render those spaces “les damnés, as invisible/forgettable” (p. 5). BIA President, Alampi pushes the narrative of the community's desperate need for development, reinforcing the gentrification process through a colonial lens. Again, we are reminded of the ways that the process of gentrification is rather similar to colonialism in its processes. Scholars such as Nicholas Blomley (2004) and Glen Coulthard (2014) draw the comparisons of gentrification as a modern form of colonization. The developer and the BIA president refer to the neighbourhood through the lens of discovery. This is referred to as the “Christopher Columbus Syndrome” a common practice in the gentrification process is to “discover” an already-established neighbourhood as new (Coscarelli, 2014; ReyRoSho, 2016). Thus, it is impossible to ignore the boldly imperialist name of the real estate developer “Empire Communities” and it is even more difficult to ignore that they were the first to redevelop property in a predominantly-Black neighbourhood.

## Chapter 5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 How Does Anti-Black Racism Manifest?

In this chapter, I conclude this research by exploring how anti-Black racism is manifested in urban planning and policy guiding the restructuring occurring in Little Jamaica. The downfall of Little Jamaica's vibrant community is more subtle than "white roads through Black bedrooms" the common process of pouring concrete in Black neighbourhoods with little to no political power to stop their neighbourhoods from being carved up to build interstates such as the I-880 and I-980 in Oakland, California (Miller, 2018). Today, it's light rail transit through a historical Black neighbourhood. Transportation policies such as *The Big Move* fail to consider the impacts of transit infrastructure and transit-oriented development in corridors on rising land value, housing affordability, and the displacement of equity-seeking groups in the

Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA) (Hertel, Keil & Collens, 2016).

In the process of this public infrastructure development, from 2009-2019 Black-owned businesses have dropped from 98 to 87 (Hope, 2021). Black business owners and residents in Little Jamaica are forced to endure gentrification as a process that resembles colonization through neoliberal policies privileging the interests of developers. Displacement pressures linked to transit investments have had devastating consequences for shifts in businesses and residents along Eglinton Avenue. The development of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT is a clear example of the crucial role state power plays in relation to capitalist development and settlement on Turtle Island (Toews, 2018). The Chair of the York-Eglinton BIA Nick Alampi praised the "Empire Communities" for having the vision and courage to develop along Eglinton Avenue at the height of the LRT construction. He says that when the developer "came across the opportunity, they saw the diamond in the rough. They're going to find that this is the place to be" (Starr, 2013). Cheryl Case positions this issue as targeted development without attention paid to goals of affordability, local economic development and confronting anti-Black racism in planning (Hope, 2021). Systemic anti-Black racism in the BIAs is evidenced in the under-representation of Black business owners. BUTO's recent report (2020) 'A Black Business Conversation: On Planning for the Future of Black Businesses and Residents on Eglinton Ave W.' found that though there is a high concentration of Black-owned businesses along Eglinton West, there is little to no representation on the BIA boards. "The

history of bias towards the Black community, lack of care and responsiveness to the needs of the Black business to succeed, and resistance to promote Eglinton West as Little Jamaica by the Eglinton Hill and York-Eglinton BIA have eroded the relationship and trust of the Black businesses in the area” (Romain Baker et al, 2020).

Racial and other equity-based differences in the City of Toronto’s objective to support economic prosperity are documented in the initiatives and promotions provided to local businesses impacted by the King Street Transit Pilot. When the City of Toronto began a streetcar priority project along King Street. The pilot affected drivers, restricting traffic and causing issues with park after the removal of parking areas. The high-income neighbourhood residents and business owners expressed their complaints about loss of business the pilot was causing. Widespread media coverage secured a meeting at the mayor’s office, leading to increases to the city’s business-assistance budget and city-subsidized free parking (Spurr, 2018). Over eight years of construction along Eglinton Avenue, and the local independent retailers along Little Jamaica continue to suffer without any financial support from the city to alleviate the impacts of traffic restrictions and the removal of on-street parking spaces.

In 2016, as the City of Toronto began a process to acknowledge anti-Black racism in Toronto and develop a comprehensive plan to address it. The five-year plan includes 22 recommendations and 80 actions to assess current policies, practices and structures to identify anti-Black bias and take corrective and preventative actions. A critical recommendation #15 states that the City of Toronto is to support Black-owned businesses to better compete and thrive in Toronto. After five years into the plan’s recommendations, Black businesses along Eglinton Avenue are still waiting for support. Current City Councillor Josh Matlow, admits that Anti-Black racism is at play and cannot be denied stating “I believe that Metrolinx has allowed the Little Jamaica area of Eglinton to be left in a condition over many years that we haven’t seen in other parts of Eglinton” (personal communications, 2021). Pendall et al. (2012) argue in *Bringing Equity to Transit-Oriented Development: Stations, Systems, and Regional Resilience*, that once investments in light-rail infrastructure occurs, immediate disinvestment in communities’ is used as a strategy as speculators hold out for the market to dramatically shift post transit development. The process of divestment that is occurring in Little Jamaica follows a similar pattern of erased Black communities across Canada and the United States.



The Provincial Policy Statement (2014, 1) provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. As a key part of Ontario's policy-led planning system, the Provincial Policy Statement sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land. It also supports the provincial goal to enhance the quality of life for the citizens of Ontario. Behind these general policies, however, exists the interests of real estate moguls, developers, private consultants, and politicians who drum up policies that promote gentrification in government buildings and high-rise condo offices. In P.E. Moskowitz's book *How to Kill a City, Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighbourhood* (2017), the author explains that under capitalism, use-value is understood as the value a place is agreed upon by people it is useful to. Exchange value, on the other hand, is deemed valuable by its potential economic worth. Under racial capitalism, for example, neighbourhoods categorized as "blighted" may well provide crucial use value for its users. However, the stigma might help depress its economic value and thus help prepare the ground for city managers, developers, banks, and planners to work together to change the users of the space in order to make future increases in exchange value possible (Moskowitz, 2017, p.138). This ideology is evidenced as the chair of the York-Eglinton BIA in coordination with Metrolinx, Nick Alampi, notes, "This is an older neighbourhood with many buildings grandfathered in; this is the last pocket that's steps from Forest Hill with affordable real estate, so this is a really great neighbourhood to invest in" (Crosstown, 2014).

The deeply flawed and exploitative ideology of the real estate approach to development is not only an assembly of several actors including city councillors, real estate and development industry experts, ratepayers' associations, and BIAs, it is also strongly supported by the city planning department. The real estate vision promotes displacement with the idea that existing populations are unable to support a viable commercial district (Rankin & McLean, 2015). This model thus promotes the influx of middle class, affluent residents to promote high-quality investments in commercial retail. For example, the replacement of local businesses to big box retailers is evidenced in the City of Toronto's planning study, Eglinton Connects. The study intends to erase local Black businesses along the avenue: "as established main street areas of Eglinton are intensified and redeveloped, these retail services should be replaced and expanded" (EglintonConnects, 2014). The direct intentions to displace and replace the businesses however do not align with the views of City councillor Josh Matlow and the Black community. Matlow suggests that these businesses are "meaningful to them and if the shops that are little Jamaica ceased to be in existence they won't be visiting anymore. So

those businesses must survive and that's why a big part of our initiative despite the fact that Metrolinx's work has had such a horrible impact in their lives is to find ways to make things more affordable and accessible for them to remain there” (personal communications, 2021).

The systemic nature of racial capitalism permeates Toronto's institutions, practices, and policies. The rebranding of an ethnically creative city largely aligns with neoliberal policies to transform the built environment without taking into account the effects of anti-Black racism faced by Black business owners and community members. In 2010, when Black residents in the Danforth area applied pressure to the largest BIA in Toronto to officially recognize four blocks between Greenwood Avenue and Monarch as “Little Ethiopia” they were dismissed (Hope, 2021). To date there is no official recognition of the cultural and economic impact businesses and residents have had on the city of Toronto. This exclusion has its roots in historical treatment of Black and Indigenous people. To date, Little Jamaica, is still not officially recognized and is instead marketed as the ‘International Market’. The intention of language used to package a multicultural essence rather than ‘Black’ ‘Jamaican’ or even ‘Caribbean’ further polarizes the strategically-produced culture over the organic landscape and resilient culture of Little Jamaica.

This pilot survey although small shows the alarming difference between mainstream and black business.

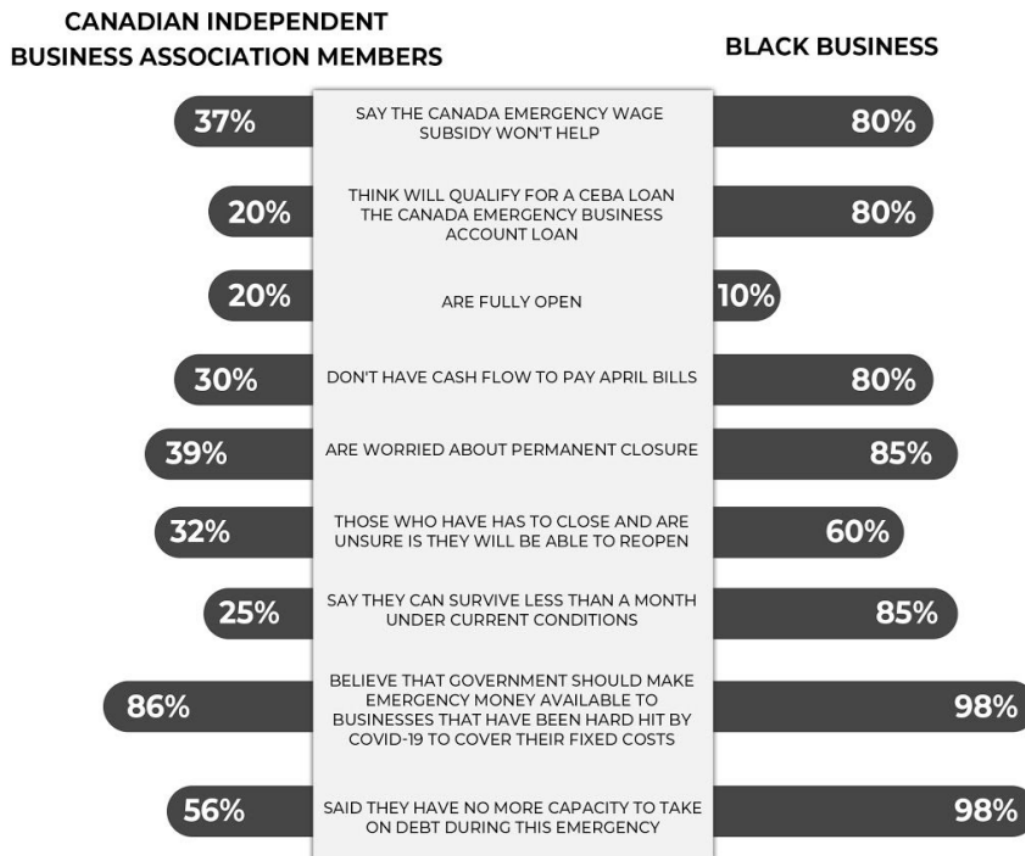


Figure 11. Source: Black Business and Professional Association

The Canada Small Business Financing Loan for instance is a government-sponsored loan program that offers up to \$1,000,000 to small businesses in Canada. However, it requires small businesses “to demonstrate strong profitability, a high credit score, and ultimately, the bank has the final say” (Adams et al., 2020). To supplement the systemic barriers Black businesses face in receiving loans, the “The Black Business and Professional Association” (BBPA) developed a “In The Community Initiative,” designed to financially support Black businesses in Little Jamaica impacted by the construction of the LRT and Covid-19. A recent survey conducted by BBPA found that 85% of Black businesses are worried about permanent closure and say they are unable to survive less than a month under current conditions

(personal communications, 2021). The loans provided by the BBPA are unfortunately not enough to prevent the displacement pressures faced by Black businesses in Little Jamaica.

The commercial landscape along Eglinton Avenue west is an essential part of Little Jamaica's economy that has positively impacted the community for decades. Perhaps most striking is the fact that Caribbean historical culture is a microcosm of Eglinton Ave. West. It is home to some of Toronto's finest Caribbean entrepreneurs and deserves to be preserved. Knowles (2003) identifies four ways through which we can understand how racial and spatial processes intersect within the context of Little Jamaica: 1) the contestations over our built environment, despite the communities long standing history and attachment to Little Jamaica, property owners, developers and investors envision of a different future; 2) the everyday embodied and performed social lives of people, the community who live, work, and play to create the vibrant community that is Little Jamaica; 3) the movement (placement and displacement) of people, displacement has taken many forms resulting in a direct loss of not only people but economic, social and cultural resources, and activities with the placement of infrastructure transformation; and 4) the social relationships engaged in by individuals and groups, the powerful way gentrification disconnects people from property, completely fragmenting nurturing social relationships.

Lack of process and participatory decision making to intentionally and meaningfully engage Black people contributes to inequity and mistrust in the community that has been historically disenfranchised and underserved for generations. The development of Canada has historically dismissed the existence of Black and Indigenous communities, in the following section, I provide proven urban policies and strategies that put equity at the forefront of municipal approaches. These policies have been used to redress harm experienced by historical Black communities in the United States in order to prevent further displacement, it is my recommendation that the City of Toronto explore implementing and integrating equity in City planning policies.

## 5.2 Recommendations

With the construction of the Eglinton Crosstown ending in 2022, the City of Toronto sees an opportunity to invest in the preservation and recognition of the unique heritage of The Eglinton West Community of Little Jamaica and at the same time create an Economic Innovation Hub that would provide support to existing small businesses and offer unique opportunities for new start-ups in the area.

Following the motions presented in September of 2020, the Planning Department is currently studying the Eglinton West corridor/Little Jamaica area, intended to support and celebrate this cultural corridor. For the City of Toronto to truly grapple with the history of Anti-Blackness and the ways that planning has harmed Black communities, the acknowledgment of displacement and neighbourhood transformation that has occurred must be made. The current impacts of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT I presented in this paper can no longer be reversed; however, I propose the following policy recommendations to protect local businesses and the culture of the historical Black enclave known as Little Jamaica against the threats of neglect, gentrification, and further displacement.

### #1: Historic Preservation

Cheryl Blackman, Director of Museums and Heritage Service for the City of Toronto recognizes the significance of the commercial strip saying, “Little Jamaica is the heartbeat of Black-owned and Caribbean-owned businesses in Toronto” (Hope, 2021). The plan to conserve the culture and history of the area have come from the demands of the community. However, this practice does not protect against the forces of gentrification and economic disinvestment. Recently, heritage conservation has been a successful tool in strengthening Black community agency in the United States. However, City of Toronto heritage preservation policies are severely lagging, which calls into question the discrepancy in protecting white spaces over Black spaces. The Los Angeles City Planning Office of Historic Resource Department launched the initiative “Los Angeles African American History Project” to identify Black cultural heritage sites. Local Black businesses such as a well-known Black-owned barbershop “Magnificent Brothers” are currently being identified as spaces for designation. It is

recommended that the current study of the City of Toronto examines structural racism embedded in preservation policies preventing the conservation of Black cultural assets in historically-Black neighbourhoods. To develop cultural heritage policies to manage, preserve, interpret, and celebrate the tangible and intangible heritage of local Black businesses in the study area. It is recommended that the City look to other jurisdictions that have successfully implemented policies to prevent the displacement of Black communities.

## **#2: Zoning Regulations for small-scale retail**

The replacement of the existing mixed-use buildings at 1801-1807 Eglinton Avenue West which held two three-storey buildings at ground-level retail is concerning. The original building was designed to host small-scale retail; however, the new development project proposes commercial space that's a larger-format commonly designed for a national chain. Combining multiple storefronts will heavily impact the survival of local businesses as name-brand retailers can outbid them. Zoning is one of the most powerful tools that municipal governments possess and can be employed to shape a city (LaVecchia & Mitchell, 2016). It is recommended that the City of Toronto maintain smaller-plate formats in new development projects so that they do not exceed the traditional retail units for all lands zoned Commercial Residential within the area. The use of zoning regulations should be used to protect the operations of smaller businesses in Little Jamaica.

## **#3: Create a Preference for Local Businesses in Publicly-Owned Buildings:**

Cities like Seattle have developed guidelines to make publicly-owned properties accessible to locally owned small businesses ensuring that "the benefits of urban land ownership... flow to all city users" (Fainstein 2012 p. 22, Switzman, 2015). Newly-renovated transportation hub, the King Street Station, has given priority to local businesses to operate inside the station and along the outdoor plaza. It is recommended that the transit-oriented communities department of Metrolinx consider the up to 50 provincially \-owned sites that could be available for private-market purchase and development allocated space for small businesses in new publicly-owned development.

## **#4: Community Land Trust and/or Commercial Land Trust:**

In *Alternatives to gentrification: exploring urban community land trusts*, Susannah Bruce (2008) identifies current progressive community-based alternatives to mitigate the impacts of gentrification. She particularly focuses on the small-scale success of community land trusts in

urban areas. These alternatives put emphasis on the power of neighbourhood-level organizing to acquire land not for the purpose of market-driven consumption but on providing equitable economic and social land stewardship. The history of community land trusts was born out of the oppressive structures of racial capitalism denying property rights to African American sharecroppers in the South. Since then, it is used as a method for land ownership in Black communities that face displacement. In June of 2020, the City of Seattle is taking the necessary steps to redress the harm Black communities experience by increasing community ownership in land. They've transferred ownership to a decommissioned fire station to the Africatown Community Land Trust.

Black Urbanism TO (BUTO) a non-for-profit organization of Black professionals with a diversity of professions including urban planners, have been able to advance the needs of the community and are currently assessing applicable CLT models and options for the community to secure long-term affordability and ownership of a space. It is recommended that the City of Toronto assess all city-owned property within the study area and throughout the city and devise a program for Black-led organizations such as BUTO to acquire underutilized public property.

#### **#5: Recognize Businesses as Cultural Landmarks:**

Legacy businesses getting pushed out-recently illustrated by the forced closure of the iconic Honest Ed's forced to make room for a condo development on Bloor and Bathurst-is a phenomenon that is radically erasing local businesses across North American cities. To combat this, American cities such as San Francisco developed the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry, a two-part measure that first tracks historical businesses that have been in businesses for 20-30 years or more and have contributed to the identity of the city. Secondly, the Legacy Business Historic Preservation fund provides grants to 300 provides \$500 per employee (up to \$50,000) for eligible businesses; and \$450 per square foot (up to \$22,500) for property owners, that agree to offer 10-year leases to those businesses on an annual basis (LaVecchia & Mitchell, 2016). It is recommended that the city implement this model and assess the cultural, economic, and historical contributions Black businesses in the study area contribute to the social fabric of the city.

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