Child Friendly Toronto: Engaging Children and Youth in the 'TOcore' Downtown Planning Project

FINAL REPORT

A Major Project submitted to the Faculty of
Environmental Studies in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master in Environmental
Studies, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

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Submitted June 29, 2015

Table of Contents

      Appendix A: Walking Tour Destinations and Photographs
      Appendix B: Summary of St. Lawrence students' mapping activity
      Appendix C: UTS students' important activities and important places

List of Figures

List of Tables

FOREWORD

The Child Friendly Toronto (CFT) project was my Major Research Project in partial fulfillment of the Master of Environmental Studies (MES) degree in Community Planning at York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies (FES). This research project gathered inner-city Toronto student's input for the City of Toronto's 'TOcore' planning initiative, examining young people's current experiences within the city, as well as their ideas for future planning and growth. The project was designed to be a fun, engaging and educative process where young people were not only participants, but also co-researchers and experts of their environments.

I entered the planning program at the Faculty of Environmental Studies with a background in environmental (and to a lesser degree educational) psychology, and with the goal of advancing my skills and knowledge of socially and environmentally just planning practices. One main objective of my past, present, and future work is to bring the voices of often marginalized groups – such as children, youth, and families of low-income, ethnic minority, and immigrant populations – into the planning discourse dominated by economically and socially powerful interests groups who often do not represent the community at large. Socially just and sustainable cities need to engage all groups within their diverse population in order to develop communities that can be safe, healthy, and inclusive places, where all members not only survive, but thrive. Children and youth, who are approximately one quarter to one-third of the population, are most often left unheard in the planning discourse. With the CFT project 81 students (ages 6-14) residing and/or studying in downtown Toronto had the opportunity to voice their ideas and experiences of their urban environments to the City of Toronto. The local knowledge of this young population can now be incorporated into the city's future planning initiatives.

Separating social and environmental aspects of sustainability has become increasingly difficult for me as I further my education in Environmental Studies. Outcomes of Child Friendly Cities projects around the world repeatedly show us the multifaceted significance of urban nature in children's lives. Ecologically healthy urban environments provide many more opportunities for developmentally appropriate play, for meaningful and engaging experiential education, for healthy lifestyles, and allow communities to look forward to a sustainable future. It was not surprising thus to find public parks and urban nature to be highly prioritized by the majority of children residing in the core of Toronto. Despite massive park-ravine systems crossing the city, the downtown core lacks in adequate green space, and this is taking its toll on inner-city children's health and well-being. The escalating challenges of growth and densification require ingenuity and creativity from planners, designers, and community builders alike. Tapping into the local knowledge of a resourceful urban population is inevitable in this process. I believe my work at FES has directed me to pursue this challenge further, albeit the CFT study was a mere baby-step in this direction.

Another major objective during my studies at FES, as well as for future work, has been to further develop a holistic interdisciplinary perspective, combining aspects of traditional technical planning matters (i.e. the development of physical infrastructure such as transit or community facilities) with environmental sustainability objectives, current research on public health (especially focusing on children's health and well-being), as well as transformative educational practices that provide students with an opportunity to be meaningfully engaged in real-life community-based projects. Added to this is a desire to delve deeper into intercultural ways of knowing and practicing planning, education and community development related work. Although the CFT project allowed me to work with a diverse group of young people, the majority of whom were visible minorities from many parts of the world,

gathering culturally diverse and relevant knowledge was not in the scope of this study. However, cultural analysis can become part of future studies, especially when sufficient time is available to build the necessary relationships for this type of research.

Over the course of the summer term during the 2013-2014 school-year I was fortunate enough to intern at the Children, Youth and Environments (CYE) Centre at the University of Colorado, Boulder, with supervisor Dr. Louise Chawla. This internship provided an opportunity to practice and observe facilitation of various child and youth engagement activities, and to gain a better understanding of the developmental appropriateness of specific methods. For the CFT project I carefully chose a series of activities that engage and educate, using a mix of traditional and participatory methodologies. The participatory aspect of this project asked students to become co-researchers, and local knowledge and experience of the urban environment helped define the course of the project and the questions explored by students. The activities I chose or developed varied to some degree for older and younger students. For example, younger students were asked to answer survey questions with drawings, while the older adolescent age-group would verbally describe their favourite places or activities.

The CFT project was a collaborative initiative between myself (the researcher), the City of Toronto's Planning Division, and the four participating groups of children (two from schools, two from after-school-care centres) and their respective teachers or group-leaders. It was an interesting, and sometime challenging learning experience where people had different views or ideas on proper methodology or modes of facilitation. For example, city planners asked that I extend the questionnaire, proposing additional questions to add to my original list. I hesitated to some degree, and attempted to add in the questions in a shortened version, knowing that children often do not enjoy, and may resist answering many consecutive questions in a written format. An individual interview with each participant would have allowed us to gather more detailed information from the students, yet given the time-constraints of the groups, this was not possible in most cases.

Based on the experience I gained conducting this research, as well as on the experience and knowledge of my peers at CYE, I believe projects such as the CFT initiative work best for students when they are spread out over the course of a half or an entire school-year, and possibly even longer. This allows the researcher and students to delve deeper into areas that the researcher may not have anticipated, and to adjust methods accordingly. For example, the larger-group setting of gathering children's ideas works better in schools, where students are expecting a more structured educational activity, while smaller group work (2-4 children at a time) with more discussions and neighbourhood-walks, is more suitable in after-school-care settings, and allows the researcher to gain more in-depth qualitative data. Students in all four groups reported that the most interesting activity was the neighbourhood walking-tour. This was conducted with the larger groups (17-21 students), and I believe may have been even better if we could go on these tours in separate smaller groups.

Overall, the project was a highly educational experience for me, I believe as much so, as for the participating students. The entire process, from my initial internship at the CYE Centre, then inviting the City of Toronto to collaborate in the initiative, to planning the activities, and applying for Ethics Approvals with the Toronto school-boards (one a success, the other a failure), to recruiting participants, and facilitating each session with the four groups allowed me to experientially learn about traditional and participatory action research methodologies. Preparing the research, as well as facilitating with the help of group leaders or teachers was a practice in collaborative work and in sustainability education. The knowledge and insight gained from young people's input will inform my future work and studies.

This educational journey will continue as I plan to conduct similar work and research at the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver, BC, under the supervision of Dr. Penny Gurstein starting this fall. The two years at FES with Dr. Barbara Rahder have provided me with invaluable knowledge in social and physical planning practices, and a diverse and at times radical background in planning theory. The self-directed nature of the MES program allowed me to pursue and cultivate my passion in more depth than ever before. I have met my learning objectives, and also will incessantly pursue these over a lifetime.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research overview

The Child Friendly Toronto (CFT) study was designed in collaboration with the City of Toronto's Planning Division. The major goal of this study was to gather child and youth input for the city's downtown planning initiative, the 'TOcore' project (City of Toronto, 1998-2015). Within the larger City of Toronto study, this participatory project, largely based on UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities initiative (UNICEF, 2014a) and the related Growing Up In Cities movement (e.g. Growing Up Boulder, 2015), was designed to examine growth-related opportunities and challenges in Toronto's downtown core from young people's perspective and by young people.

The first question of the study looked at young people's current experiences, and modes of transportation within downtown Toronto, while the second question asked students to make future recommendations for the city. Participants were asked to draw and/or answer short questionnaires regarding their favourite seasonal activities, significant places, and types of transportation in their neighbourhood, as well as within the larger study area (downtown core). These activities were followed by a student-led neighbourhood walking tour. Pictures taken during the walking tour were used by students to create a Photovoice of neighbourhood 'Likes' and 'Dislikes.' Finally, students made a Recommendations Report focusing one or more selected problems that they identified in their community.

Four groups of students participated in the study. Participants were recruited with a method of convenience sampling from two daycare centres and two schools in the following neighbourhoods within the study area:

- St. James Town: Twenty students ages 6-11 (85% of group was between ages 6-9) from the Rose Avenue Child Care Centre.
- Regent Park: Twenty-one students ages 8-11 from the Lord Dufferin Community Daycare.
- St. Lawrence: One grade 4 class of twenty-one students ages 9-10 from St. Michael's Catholic School.
- University of Toronto Schools (Queens Park-Annex): One grade 7 class of nineteen students ages 12-14 from the University of Toronto Schools (UTS), a private preparatory high-school affiliated with the University of Toronto.

Key findings

Children's significant places during all seasons were parks and playgrounds at or near their school and home. Although the city's various cultural attractions were known by the younger groups (ages 6-10), these places only became highly significant for adolescents, while parks and public spaces continued to be important for this older age-group. During the winter coffee shops and, to some degree, retail (i.e. shopping malls) replaced parks for youth. All age-groups spent longer periods indoors over the winter months, some not going outside to play presumably at all during this season. Snow-play (including skating) was reported to be a very important activity for children, yet only happened on a regular basis if provisions (parks, skating rinks) were easily accessible (within a 5-10 minute walk).

Levels of active transport (e.g. walking, biking) were generally high for all groups during the summer, and transit or car use increased for most groups over the winter months. Public transit was seen as an area in need of major investments (i.e. upgrade and expanded network), especially by youth, who relied on this for their independent mobility throughout the year. Younger children were less aware of this need, and generally had very low levels of independent mobility, mostly in the form of walking to nearby parks or school. Results of students' important activities, important places, and modes of transportation are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summarized results of the Child Friendly Toronto Study: Young people's important activities, important places, and modes of transportation.

	St. James Town	Regent Park	St. Lawrence	UTS
Winter Place & Activity	School Playground & Field (some snow-play)	Parks & Playgrounds (Snow-play)	Parks & Playgrounds (Snow-play)	Eat-out/coffee (school days). Shopping (weekends).
Summer Place & Activity	School Playground & Field	Parks & Playgrounds (Water-play)	Parks & Playgrounds (picnic; games; water-play)	Eat-out/coffee & parks (school days). Culture/entertainment (weekends).
Important Places in Neighbourhood	Parks & Playgrounds Indoor/outdoor recreational spaces.	Allen Gardens Regent Park & Aquatic Centre Riverdale Farm Moss Park	St. Lawrence CRC YMCA Distillery District Local parks	Around school (eat lunch, after school): Parks, parkettes, squares in summer; Cafés, restaurants in winter.
Important Places in Downtown Core	CN Tower Eaton Centre Nathan Philipp Square	-	CN Tower Eaton Centre Rogers Centre ROM City Hall	All major cultural and entertainment centres (galleries, theatres, museums, music halls), in downtown core. All parks and waterfront
Winter Transportation	Walking	Car (54%)	Transit (54%)	Transit (54%)
Summer Transportation	Walking	Active transport (55%)	Active transport (75%)	Active transport (59%)
Independent Mobility	Mostly none (one 11-year-old boy)	None	Mostly none (one 10-year-old boy)	Yes (some car-rides from parents, but rare).

Conclusions & Recommendations

Parks and public realm: The City of Toronto's parks serve the various needs of a growing urban population, and are highly significant public spaces for children and youth. However, young people's rights to safe, clean, easily accessible outdoor green spaces is compromised to a degree in the downtown core. The major concerns that emerged with this study were:

1) Lack of easily accessible sufficient park space at various times of day (as some parks are exclusively, or partially used by schools and daycare or community centres, and only allow the community to use the park later evenings and weekends). This problem was most noticeable in the higher-density neighbourhoods, such as St. James Town and The Esplanade in the St. Lawrence community.
Note: Easy access for younger children (under the age of 10) who lack independent mobility generally means a maximum 10-minute walk.
2) Garbage, pet-waste, vandalism, and neglect turns outdoor spaces into unhealthy or unwelcoming environments for children.
3) In certain areas of the downtown core (i.e. Moss Park) Toronto's homeless population uses parks and public spaces in a manner and/or to a degree that can be frightening for children.

Recommendations for the above concerns from this younger population were that the city needs to create more park-space within the downtown core – this is already a significant need with the current population density, and will become even more critical with future projected population growth. Young people ask that various measures be taken to ensure that pet-waste, littering, vandalism and neglect is minimized. Their recommendations include adding more garbage bins, doggy-bags, giving fines and penalties, and providing thorough and timely maintenance of parks and public spaces. When examining the issue of homelessness in Toronto, a solution recommended by many children was to provide safe adequate homes and support services for homeless people.

Table 2. Summarized results of the Child Friendly Toronto study: Final recommendations for Parks and Public Realm.

More park-space	• Larger open spaces: fields, urban farms. • More parkettes and outdoor public play areas: Ideally an outdoor play-space with urban nature is accessible by foot every 5-10 minutes. • Open-spaces that promote winter snow-play (such as toboggan hills, skate rinks or trails).
Park & public realm improvements	• Diverse/unique play-spaces in every neighbourhood: non-standard playgrounds include interactive art, nature playscapes, or adventure playgrounds. (Participatory design of these play-areas and public spaces with local children and youth can improve overall outcome). • More seating, diverse seating: benches, picnic tables, larger-group seating (rocks, logs placed closely in a circle). • Combining retail and outdoor public spaces, especially for youth (e.g. more cafes in parks; more public spaces to socialize on retail-oriented streets; 'outdoor malls').
Park maintenance	• Timely maintenance, regular waste removal. • More garbage bins, especially around benches and picnic tables. • Signage to clarify appropriate use of public spaces. • Signage and doggy-bags for pet-owners. • Separate dog-walking areas.

Community Services and Facilities: Similarly to parks and green-space, community services and facilities are highly valued yet may already be at, if not exceeding, their limits with current population densities. Skating rinks and swimming pools are not accessible for all, especially the younger age-group who walk to the majority of their after-school or weekend activities. This need is even greater for children from lower-income families, where parents may not have time or resources to chauffer or escort their children to recreational or other facilities that are located outside of their immediate neighbourhood. Projected growth and intensification within the core means that many more additional services and facilities will need to be provided to ensure livability, and a greater number of these investments need to be made in lower-income neighbourhoods.

Table 3. Summarized results of the Child Friendly Toronto study: Final recommendations for Community Services & Facilities

Swimming pools	• Indoor pool at Wellesley Community Centre, or at (or near) Rose Avenue Public School. • Upgrade and proper maintenance of St. James-Town outdoor pool. • Water-park/splash-pad in all neighbourhoods.
Ice-skating facilities	• Outdoor skating rink or skate-trail at, or in close proximity of St. James Town (max 10-minute walk).
Children's Book Banks	• A book-bank in every neighbourhood. These can be linked to local libraries or schools.
Affordable housing	• Offer permanent housing with support services for homeless individuals. • Create more rent-geared-to-income housing.

Transportation and Transit: Child-friendly forms of transportation are active transport (e.g. cycling, walking) and public transit – both of which can be done independent of adults. Children's major focus was pedestrian and cycling safety and infrastructure, while youth (who travel independently within the city) also requested improvements to Toronto's transit system. Wider sidewalks, pedestrianized areas, more elevated and/or wider cycling lanes, a connected cycling network, and an expanded and upgraded transit system (i.e. more subway, or LRT lines, faster street-cars, added bus lanes) were among the top recommendations from children and youth.

Table 4. Summarized results of the Child Friendly Toronto study: Final recommendations for Transportation & Transit.

Pedestrian infrastructure	• Wider sidewalks. • Minimize obstruction caused by construction.
Cycling infrastructure	• Expand city-wide cycling network with more cycling-lanes, maps, and signage. • Separated cycling lanes on major roads with heavy traffic. • Minimize obstruction caused by construction. • More bike-racks.
Public transit	• Expand transit network, especially with additional LRT lines (as these are more cost-efficient, yet avoid motor-vehicle congestion). • Improve current subway and streetcar network to decrease travel-times. • Add bus-lanes, especially during daytime rush-hour. • Close selected downtown areas to private vehicle traffic, allowing only active transportation modes and public transit in these areas. • Minimize obstruction caused by construction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

Global urbanization and population growth has considerably shifted the social and physical environments of children and youth (e.g. Chawla, 2002a; Freeman & Tranter, 2011; Malone, 2007; Whitzman, Worthington, & Mizrachi, 2010). In response to the massive increases in the number of children growing up in poverty – a direct consequence of increasing global income disparity – the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989 (UNICEF, 2014b). One year later the Child Friendly Cities (CFC) initiative was created in order to guide local governments in the implementation of the principles outlined in the Convention.

The Child Friendly Cities initiative focuses on children's right to play, to nature, to independent movement, and the right to healthy, safe and unpolluted urban environments (Freeman & Tranter, 2011; UNICEF, 2014a). It also encompasses the right to meaningful education, social and cultural interactions, and the right to participate in decisions made around children's environments. CFC is closely linked to other sustainable development and green urbanist movements around the world, and focuses not only on developing a better understanding of the complex relationship between physical environments, social and environmental inequities, and health and well-being, but also promotes the direct application of this knowledge in community planning and design initiatives (Chawla, 2002a; Derr, et al. 2013; Freeman & Tranter, 2011). A related parallel initiative, the Growing up in Cities project, began in the 1970s with the work of urban planner Kevin Lynch together with UNESCO (Chawla, 2002a). This work was revitalized in the early 1990s by the Norwegian Centre for Child Research and Childwatch International, and together with the Child Friendly Cities movement, continues to conduct action research projects related to children's rights, urban planning and environmental education internationally.

Twenty-five years have passed since the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the initiation of CFC, and there have been major advances for children's rights around the world (UNICEF, 2014c). Yet research from these past two decades also shows us that in countless ways children's rights remain greatly compromised (e.g. Freeman & Tranter, 2011; UNICEF, 2014c; Whitzman, et al., 2010). Exclusion of young people from urban public spaces and urban discourse is increasingly commonplace (Freeman & Tranter, 2011; Valentine, 2004). Children's levels of outdoor play, active transport (AT), and independent mobility (IM) have been significantly reduced (e.g. Fyhri et al., 2011). Increased urban densities, if not planned in a child-friendly manner, can decrease availability of urban green space (e.g. Kearns & Collins, 2006), and add to traffic congestion, obstructing children's AT and IM (Tranter, 2010). Overall, these societal and physical changes in children's environments are associated with growing levels of childhood health problems, such as obesity, diabetes (e.g. Gilliland, et al., 2012), anxiety (Malone, 2007), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (e.g. Gray, 2011). This literature highlights how cities are important determinants of children's physical and psychological health, and stresses the importance of incorporating children's needs and rights into urban planning initiatives.

Research also shows us that planning and designing communities *with* children will have far more benefits than solely planning *for* them (e.g. Chawla, 2009; Ergler & Kearns, 2013; Malone, 2013; Percy-Smith & Burns, 2013). Participatory planning with young people is a valuable method of community engagement that incorporates the often marginalized voices of children and youth into urban planning initiatives. It is also a highly engaging and educative process where students can develop and test various methods of data collection. In participatory research project participants identify major issues and concerns within the community. Additionally, participating students may not only assess or evaluate

current conditions, but can also develop solutions to the real-world problems they have identified. The tasks within participatory planning and research are meaningful because they relate to the participant's actual personal experiences. Past research has shown that students engaged in participatory planning initiatives gain skills and knowledge of local environmental and social issues (e.g. Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Hart, 2013). Through the process of co-research and co-planning students develop increased awareness of the diverse and complex needs of various individuals and groups within society, and advance their skills in collaborative problem-solving by learning to work with these diverse needs (Derr & Kovacs, in prep.).

Furthermore, the literature shows that participatory planning with young people has a positive effect on student's self-confidence, self-worth, and sense of place (e.g. Chawla, 2002b; Chawla & Heft, 2002). Through active collaboration between city planning departments and local schools and school-boards, the educational aspect of participatory planning and research can be expanded. Participatory projects such as this study have been shown to help students expand their knowledge of local and global sustainability challenges, and build skills in democratic citizenship and environmental stewardship (e.g. Chawla, 2009; Malone, 2013; Nicotera, 2008). Finally, incorporating young people's ideas into urban planning and design will lead to the development of more child-friendly environments, and this will benefit not only children, but the entire community (Derr et al., 2013).

Research goals and objectives

This exploratory research project was designed to gather child and youth input for the City of Toronto's 'TOcore' initiative (City of Toronto, 1998-2014), a planning project that looks at ways to effectively manage the social and physical infrastructure-needs of a rapidly growing and evolving downtown Toronto, in order to ensure that the city remains a vibrant, fun, livable, and healthy community for its residents, workers, and visitors. The 'TOcore' study examines growth-related opportunities and challenges within parks and public realm, transportation and transit, community services and facilities, water/wastewater management, and energy, creating a set of strategies for each of these building blocks to "ensure that infrastructure is keeping pace with growth."

This Child Friendly Toronto (CFT) research examined the same question – growth-related opportunities and challenges in Toronto's downtown core – using a mix of traditional and participatory research methodologies, studying the city's current and future infrastructure needs from young people's perspectives, and by young people. The study focused on three building blocks outlined by the city's project – parks and public realm, transportation and transit, and community services and facilities – addressing the following questions:

- What are young people's current experiences of downtown Toronto, and how do children and adolescents use and move around in the study area? This question aimed to identify what specific activities, types of transport, and specific areas within the downtown core are significant for children and youth, and what barriers young people currently encounter that limits their full and equitable use of the given space(s) and infrastructure.
- What are young people's future growth-related expectations? This section of the study asked students to focus on solutions to current and projected issues and concerns. Children and youth had the opportunity to provide innovative solutions to the real-world urban problems they identified or became familiar with in the initial stage of the project.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Participants

Four groups of students participated in the study. Participants were recruited with a method of convenience sampling (inviting an entire class or after-school-care group) from the following neighbourhoods within the study area:

- St. James Town: Twenty children ages 6-11 from the Rose Avenue Child Care Centre (George Brown College) at the Rose Avenue Junior Public School. Eighty-five percent of participants fell between the ages of 6-9.
- Regent Park: Twenty-one students ages 8-11 from the Lord Dufferin Community Day Care Centre (at Lord Dufferin Junior and Senior Public School).
- St. Lawrence: One grade 4 class of twenty-one students ages 9-10 from St. Michael's Catholic School, a public catholic school within the Toronto Catholic District School Board.
- University of Toronto Schools at Queens Park-Annex: One grade 7 class of nineteen students ages 12-14 from the University of Toronto Schools (UTS), a private preparatory high-school affiliated with the University of Toronto, and located on the University campus.

With the exception of student's ages, individual demographic data was not obtained in this study. However, based on observation, over 80% of the St. James Town, Regent Park, and St. Lawrence groups' members were visible minorities (Asian, African or Hispanic). According to the group supervisors and teacher the majority of these children were either first or second-generation immigrants. For example, approximately 85% of the Rose Avenue Public School student's first language is not English (Toronto District School Board, 2014). The majority (approximately two-thirds) of the UTS students were Caucasian, about a quarter of the group were Asian, and one student was of African descent. The diverse make-up of these groups reflects the overall diversity Toronto's population – as well as the race-class divide that still exists within the city, with Caucasian students under-represented in the public-school-system, and over-represented in private schools.

Students attending the three public schools reside in these respective neighbourhoods, while UTS students attend the school from all areas of the City of Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). A few UTS students reside in the direct vicinity of the school, about 5 live within the downtown core, a third to a half are in the outer suburbs of the city, and a couple of students commute daily from neighbouring cities, such as Markham or Mississauga.

Project Activities

The CFT study's activities were compiled and adapted by the researcher, and were based on previous CFC projects around the world, including methods used or observed by the researcher at the University of Colorado, Boulder's Children, Youth and Environments Centre, activities from Stanley King and Susan Chung's *The Social Art of Architecture Youth Manual* (2014), and methods outlined in David Driskell's (Executive Director of Community Planning & Sustainability in Boulder, CO) manual titled: *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth* (2002).

'City on the Wall'

Elementary school children (St. James Town, Regent Park, and St. Lawrence groups) began the project with this introductory activity originally designed by architect Stanley King and sustainability educator Susan Chung (King & Chung, 2014). The goal of this activity was to introduce the topic of urban planning, and the Child Friendly Toronto project, and to allow participants and the researcher to build rapport.

Based on the description provided in King and Chung's Co-design Manual, the activity began with a large picture depicting an unsettled wilderness area and one person arriving by canoe. A group drawing of a small but growing settlement was then facilitated using a short narrative. The outcome of this activity – most often a crowded and chaotic city – is used as a starting point for a discussion about the need for urban planning in order to create healthy, happy, livable communities.

In addition to the 'City on the Wall' activity, the St. Lawrence group was presented a brief introductory slide-show about Toronto's pre-colonial and post-colonial history. Furthermore, the 'City on the Wall' narrative was revised to be more reflective of Canada's colonial history: Instead of a vast wilderness and absence of people, the initial picture for this group depicted a teepee representing a village with First Nation's people.

UTS students did not partake in the 'City on the Wall' activity, but were presented with a short slide-show of Toronto's growth and the 'TOcore' city project. This group had addressed urban sustainability and planning related topics in their class curriculum over the course of the year, examining economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects of urban issues, with teaching units in Urban Planning and Design, Transportation, Housing, Affordability, and Public Space.

Surveys

Elementary school children were asked to draw their favourite winter and summer outdoor place and activity, as well as describe (or draw) their favourite winter and summer modes of transportation in the city. The St. Lawrence group were also administered a short questionnaire with items listed in Table 5.

Table 5. St. Lawrence student's questionnaire

Questionnaire item
'What kind of things do you play here most often?'*
'Do you come here on your own, with other children, or with grown-ups?'*
'Why/why not?'*
'What do you like about your favourite winter transportation?'
'What do you like about your favourite summer transportation?'
'Is there any type of transportation you dislike?'
'If yes, why?'
'Have you noticed any changes over the last few years in your neighbourhood?'
'If yes, what are these changes?'
'Tell us why you like or dislike these changes.'

* These three questions were posed twice; once after the winter and once after the summer outdoor place/activity drawings.

Students at UTS were only available for three session, and were therefore given a shorter version of the survey, asking them to fill out a table listing 1-3 favourite and/or common activities in downtown Toronto during the winter and summer, and a school-day and a weekend. Due to time-restrictions this activity was combined with the mapping session (see 'Mapping' section below). Students were also administered a short questionnaire with items listed in Table 6.

Table 6. UTS student's questionnaire

Questionnaire item
'What is your favourite way of getting around the city (transportation) and what do you like about it?'
'Is there any type of transportation you dislike? If yes, why?'
'How do you get around the city most often in the winter (December-April)? How about during the summer (May-October)?'
'What changes have you noticed over the last few years in downtown Toronto? Tell us why you like or dislike these changes.'

Individual and Group Mapping

Students were given enlarged maps of their neighbourhood, as well as maps of the entire study area, and were initially asked to locate their home and their school on the map. Next, children were instructed to locate one or more places in their local neighbourhood (things they would like to show during field-trip) and one or more places in the larger downtown core that they find interesting, fun, or perhaps strange, weird, or scary. Elementary school students were then asked to label these areas, and create a legend on the back or bottom of the map using coloured pencils or markers. The St. Lawrence and UTS groups also participated in a group-mapping activity, where they put stickers on a large map to show their places of interest in Toronto. UTS students were asked to indicate their modes of transportation on this larger map with colour-codes (green – walk, run, jog, skip; red – bike, scooter, roller-skate, skateboard; blue – public transit; black – car, taxi). For UTS students the survey and mapping activity took place during the same 60-minute session.

Figure 1. UTS students' group-mapping activity.

Neighbourhood Walking Tour

Destinations for the walking tour were selected based on the input from the students. For the Regent Park, St. Lawrence and UTS groups the researcher presented two or three alternative routes that incorporated most, if not all the children's selected destinations in the neighbourhood. Students and the group leaders chose the route based on interest, logistics, and time availability. The elementary groups had 2.5-3 hours available for the walking-tour, while the UTS group had only one hour available. For this reason the UTS group decided to split in two and explore both routes in order to cover a larger area. The St. James Town group's route was not planned in advance; rather each group took a turn selecting a destination point and leading the tour to this place. Furthermore, this group did not receive permission to

leave the St. James Town boundary during their field-trip, therefore only destinations within the immediate neighbourhood were visited.

Students worked in pairs (UTS) or groups of three (elementary school groups). Each pair or group was given a digital camera, a rating sheet, and a map. Students were directed to take photographs of things they really like or really dislike on the tour, and to fill in the rating sheet for each of these things and/or places. All groups or pairs took turns leading the larger group to one of the various destinations. Students were told that they are responsible for selecting the specific route, but can be assisted if they require.

Photovoice with neighbourhood 'Likes' and 'Dislikes'

Student photos were printed and returned to each group. Elementary school students were then asked to create a poster or booklet with their 'Likes' and 'Dislikes,' either individually or in their groups. Students were instructed to begin by selecting their best, or most important pictures, and grouping these into a 'Likes' and a 'Dislikes' (and possibly a 'both') section, then to glue these into the booklet or poster, and add a written explanation of why they like or dislike the place or thing depicted on the photograph.

Recommendations Report

This final activity was designed to gather children's ideas on how to improve aspects of their neighbourhood that they may be concerned about. The information on children's 'Likes and 'Dislikes' from the previous session, as well as information gathered during the walking tour (i.e. discussions with children) was compiled into one large poster by the researcher, and students were asked to either select a problem (a 'dislike') from this list, or pick another issue or concern that may not be on the list, but they know exists, and then to think of ways the city could improve or eliminate this. Students were informed that their 'Likes' section may be useful in identifying solutions to selected issues. Students were also asked to conduct computer-based research on the internet, searching for examples of their selected problems, and possible solutions to these in Canada, or in other parts of the world.

UTS students had the last two activities combined, and were asked to create a report (as a computer document) for the city. This report had a 'Likes,' a 'Dislikes' and a 'Recommendations' section (with same instructions as above), and students were also directed to use the internet for any research they may want to conduct regarding the selected problem and possible solutions.

The CFT project consisted of the above six sessions taking place over the course of 3-5 weeks between March and May, 2015. All in-door activities were designed to take about 45-60 minutes, and the walking tour was planned to take approximately 2-3 hours. UTS students had only three 60-70 minute sessions available for the study, so the activities were condensed to fit this schedule: the introductory 'City on the Wall' activity was omitted, surveys and mapping took place on day one, the neighbourhood walk on day two, and a 'Likes, Dislikes and Recommendations Report' was created during the third session.

3. RESULTS

Results of the various methods used in the CFT study helped answer the two main research questions: student's current experiences (important places, important activities, and modes of transportation) in the downtown core of Toronto, and student's recommendations for future improvements within the study area. In order to better engage younger children, many surveys questions asked students to create drawings, and label these, rather than answer in pure written format. Some basic writing was required (i.e. labels and questionnaire items), and many children chose not to respond. Frequency counts excluded missing data, and therefore our actual sample sizes varied for the majority of the survey items. Although some degree of quantitative analysis was made, these results must be interpreted with caution. Overall, this exploratory study provided important qualitative data. Further studies would be necessary for a more accurate quantitative assessment.

Qualitative data was thematically analyzed. The three building-blocks of the study: Parks & Public Realm; Community Services & Facilities, and Transportation & Transit, were major categories. Other themes that emerged were Culture & Heritage, Public Art & Murals, Housing, and Shopping/Retail. Although in the Results section these four additional themes are grouped separately, the first three (Culture & Heritage, Public Art & Murals, Housing) can be considered sub-categories of the Community Services & Facilities category, and are discussed as such in the final Conclusion and Recommendations section. The City of Toronto's 'TOcore' study defines this Community Services & Facilities category to include "recreation, child care, libraries, schools, human services, public health and arts and culture."

Figure 2 shows the larger 'TOcore' study area, as well as the four neighbourhoods of the CFT project within the downtown core. Neighbourhood boundaries for this study were defined by student's important places in their community, most of which were visited during the walking tour. See Appendix A for individual maps of each neighbourhood, depicting walking tour routes and destinations, as well as select photographs taken by the students.
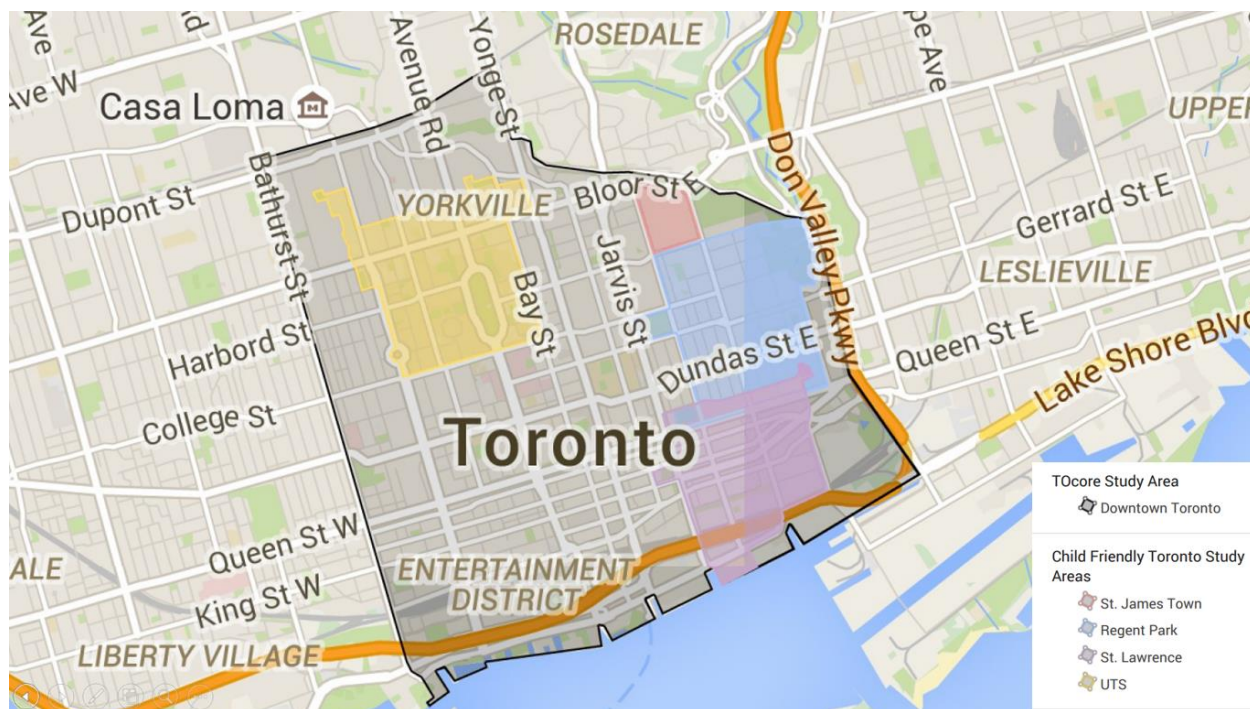

Figure 2. Map of Toronto's downtown core, and the four neighbourhoods of the CFT study.

St. James Town

'City on the Wall:'

Figure 3. St. James Town children's 'City on the Wall' group drawing.

Important places and activities

Survey response rates were low for this group, with only six children choosing to participate in this activity. Four other children offered to answer the survey questions in an interview format, and show their places of interest on the computer using Google Maps. Overall, the St. James Town children's favourite winter and summer outdoor play-space was the playground and large field outside their school. Other important places listed by the children within the neighbourhood were the community centre, the basket-ball court and the movie theatre. Although some children did report snow-play and sledding on the school playground and field, and one child mentioned ice-skating as an occasional winter activity, about half of the children said they do not play outside during the winter months, stating that they are indoors and "play hide-and-seek with little brother" or "do art at home." When asked where the nearest skating rink is most children did not know of any that was walking-distance. The two rinks mentioned by the one student who listed skating as a winter activity were College Park (outdoor rink that is not open any longer) and Ryerson Athletics Centre (indoor rink). Outdoor rinks that are free of charge and nearest to the St. James Town community, such as the Regent Park and Riverdale East Park rinks, or Evergreen Brickworks' skating trail were mostly unknown and rarely used by this group of children, with one child stating that she had walked to Evergreen Brickworks one time. The field and school playground, along with other neighbourhood parks are also the most important outdoor play-spaces over the summer months.

Places of interest reported within the downtown core were the Eaton Centre, the CN Tower and Nathan Philips Square. The majority of children stated that they visit outdoor places with parents or other grown-ups, with only one older boy (age 11) saying that he can go to the park by himself. The St. James Town group's walking tour destinations are listed under 'Place' in Table 3.

Transportation

Within the St. James Town community most children reported walking as their favourite form of transportation during summer and winter month. Public transit (especially bus and subway) were used when travelling into the downtown core area. One child listed biking as a favourite summer transportation mode, and one smaller child listed walking as her least favourite mode of transportation "because it is boring."

C) Draw and name your favourite way of getting around in the city in the winter:

This is your favourite type of winter transportation

I'M WALKING

4. What do you like about your favourite winter transportation?
I LIKE THAT I GET EXCERCISED.

Figure 4. Drawing of St. James Town child's favourite transportation mode

Neighbourhood 'Likes' and 'Dislikes'

    Results of the walking tour and Photovoice are presented in Table 7, highlighting St. James Town children's 'Likes' and 'Dislikes.' Parks, playgrounds, as well as indoor and outdoor recreational spaces where children can play and socialize emerged as most important aspects of the neighbourhood. Children also showed an appreciation for colourful murals. Litter, dog-waste and lack of maintenance were found to be the major problems within outdoor play-spaces, especially during the winter months, when more dog-owners frequented the playground as opposed to children. St. James Town students expressed a need for unique and un-usual play-grounds, as well as more opportunities for water-play and swimming. According to children's' and adults' accounts, the local outdoor swimming pool is "too small" and "not clean," therefore many children do not use it.

Table 7. St. James Town Walking Tour and Photovoice

| Likes	Place	Dislikes
Parks & Public Realm		
Heritage and glass tower buildings: "Nice and not ugly."	Streetscapes	Grey tower building and grey walkways: "Boring and ugly."
"It's big, it's fun and it has monkey-bars."	School field and playground	"It is boring [because] it's like any other."
"I like playing on the climbing stuff."		
"The spiral slide."		
"I like the tunnel slide."	Parkette and playground north of 225 Wellesley residences.	"We hate the poop all over the place."
"The fun park."		"Too much garbage."
		"It is ugly and has poo."
		"I don't like that the slide is broken."
"I like to play basketball."	Basketball court and playground east of Bleecker St.	
"I like the raptor's logo because it looks very styled, and it looks like they took their time to make this logo."		
"We gather friends and play theatre here. I was told not to jump on the rocks because you can slip and fall."	Rocks outside Library and Community Centre	
"Rock-tag!"		
"Jump on rocks."		
Public Art & Murals		
"Because we like dinosaurs!"	Dinosaur Mural	
"Because it has bright colours."		
"I like the mural because it has lasers and bright colours."	Wall Mural on St. James Town Community Corner building	
Community Services & Facilities		
"I like to borrow books here."	St. James Town Library	"The washrooms are not too good/they are smelly."
"Quiet."		
"I get to make new friends here."		
"Library camp is so fun!"		
"I play basketball and ping-pong here."	St. James Town Community Centre	"I do not like that there is no swimming pool."
"Because it's our community."		
"I like that there are computers I can play on here."	St. James Town Community corner	
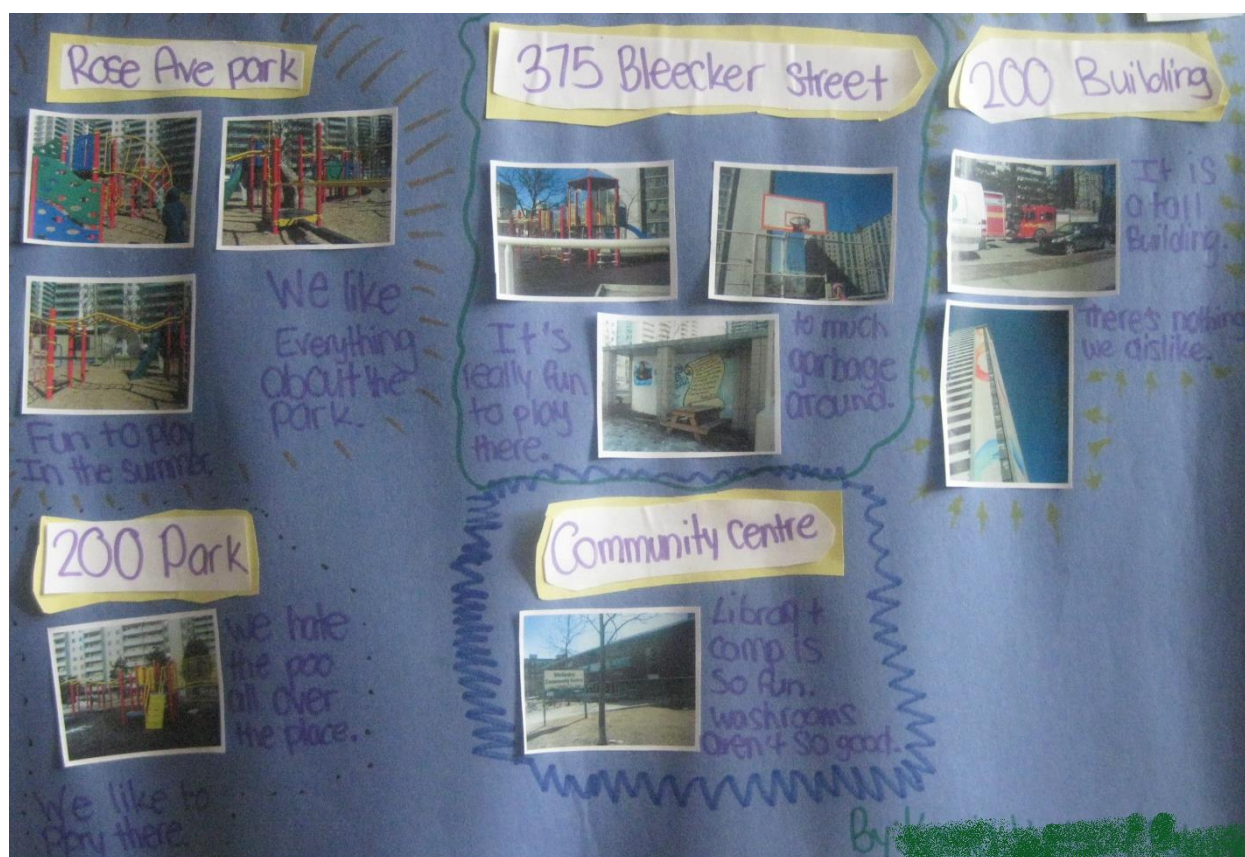
Figure 5. Photovoice poster of two St. James Town children's 'Likes' and 'Dislikes.'

Recommendations

Three younger children (ages 6-7) participated in this activity. In their recommendations reports one child suggested that Lego Land, a large aquarium (similar to Ripley's Aquarium), and the likes of the Burj-Khalifa sky-scraper in Dubai be closer to his community. Two other children worked together and asked for diverse indoor and outdoor play-spaces, such as the High Park castle playground, go-karts and track, a splash-pad, a trampoline-basketball park, and a library reading area with a unique bee-hive reading structure (see Figure 6): "I like the bee-hive. It has something where we can climb up and read up-top, and play bee hide-and-seek." One seven-year-old child requested that there be more phone-stores in the neighbourhood, explaining: "I likes phones, that's why I like phone-shops. I would like more phone-shops in the area and wish I had money to buy phones."

During a visit and discussion with City Planners one child asked if the city could build a "children's house." When prompted to explain what this house would look like, she agreed that the castle playground at High Park could be considered one example of such a house "but make it taller!" During this visit an informal discussion with daycare leaders revealed that St. James Town has only one large sports field (at the local school) available for the many children within this high-density neighbourhood. After school hours this field is divided and shared by day-care centre and the community.
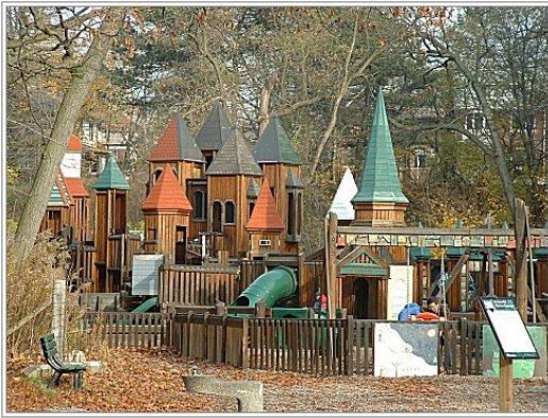
Figure 6. High Park Castle playground (Swansea.ca, 2007-2015) and bee-hive reading structure (Bangkok Library, 2009).

Regent Park

'City on the Wall:'

Figure 7. Regent Park children's 'City on the Wall' group drawing.

Important places and activities

      Of the 20 children surveyed the majority (70%) reported various forms of snow-play as their main winter outdoor activity. This snow-play included ice-skating, tobogganing, building snow-people and snow-forts, having snowball fights, and snowboarding or skiing (see Fig. 8). Three children (15%) made drawings of an outdoor playground and field, and three children reported that they do not play outside in the winter. Of these later three, two reported indoor soccer as their main winter physical activity, and one child described their favourite winter activity was to "stay inside and drink hot chocolate."

      Seventeen children made drawings of summertime outdoor activities. Of these the most commonly depicted activity was water-play (76%), with the majority of drawings showing a swimming-pool, or lake, and some diving boards (see Fig. 9). Some of these drawings were labelled Riverdale pool, or were located adjacent to a playground and park, and only one was of a back-yard swimming pool. Two children listed the park as their main summertime outdoor destination, while two others reported playing basketball as their main activity. Children's responses to the mapping activity highlighted their important places within the neighbourhood. With the exception of Moss Park, John Innes Community

12

Centre, and the Regent Park/Duke of York school, these important places were visited during the walking tour, (see Appendix A). The two most popular outdoor play-spaces for this group were Allen Gardens and Regent Park.

Figure 8. Drawings of Regent Park students' winter outdoor activities.

Figure 9. Drawings of Regent Park students' summer outdoor activities.

Transportation

Fifty-four percent of students reported car-rides as their favourite winter transportation, with parents driving children to school and after-school activities. Walking was second, with 29% of children listing this as their preferred way to get around the city, and public transit was the least favoured (17%).

Active transport was the most preferred form of summer transportation for this group, with 30% of children biking and 25% walking to their favourite activities. Car-rides were also favoured (30%), while public transit use remained the least preferred option (15%). Figure 10 shows student's seasonal variations in transportation.
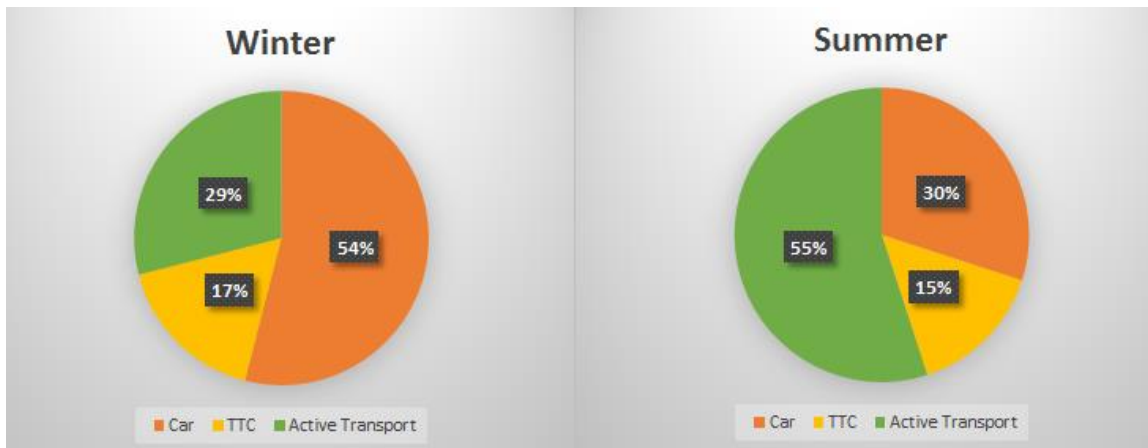
Figure 10. Seasonal variations in Regent Park student's favoured transportation modes
(Note: Active Transport scores are derived from the combination of walking and cycling).

Figure 11. Drawings of Regent Park students' winter and summer transportation modes.

Neighbourhood 'Likes' and 'Dislikes'

Table 8 shows the compiled Photovoice results of Regent Park children's 'Likes' and 'Dislikes.' In accordance with similar CFC studies, children showed a great appreciation for access to parks and playgrounds with lots of nature and open space that promotes outdoor active play during all seasons. This group also had a good understanding of the important role of social infrastructure within a community, highlighting the need for the food-bank, for more book-banks, fun and spacious schools, daycares, and suitable housing for people. Children also liked public art, colourful murals, and bicycle infrastructure. The major dislikes included garbage, dog-waste, and non-impressive graffiti, "only one book-bank," lack of adequate open play space in schools, and neglected public spaces that were void of people and interesting play structures.

During the walking tour the children commented on the improvements made to the Regent Park neighbourhood, noting how the area "feels much safer now." I asked them to explain to me what has changed, why it didn't feel safe before. The children said it was mainly due to the many street-people, or homeless people in the neighbourhood. I then asked what they think happened to these people – did they get housed? One child immediately answered "No, they now live in my neighbourhood," which is the Queen St. East and Moss Park area.

Table 8. Regent Park Walking Tour and Photovoice

Likes	Place	Dislikes
	Parks & Public Realm	
	In general	"We don't like it [that] they cut the tree down which we breathe in."
	Streetscapes	Grey house: "We don't like it because it doesn't have any colour."
"We like it because of all the stuff you can do here." "Lots of space to play." "Allows all people to come and swim." "Beautiful nature."	Regent Park & Aquatic Centre	"We do not like the litter in the bushes." "I don't like littering, it is polluting."
"We like the basketball court."	Regent Park – North Parkette	"This place is nothing [not used for anything]."
"Lots of nature." "Beautiful view." "I like the field because you can run around and look at nature." "People can experience life on a farm."	Riverdale Farm	"Dislike lots of poop and graffiti."
"Open space and nature." "We like the giant dog in the dog-park."	Allen Gardens	"We don't like [splashpad] because it is empty and not fun at all."
	Community Services & Facilities	
"We love to read." "We like it because kids get free books and books they love." "Some kids can't afford to pay for books - the book-bank makes sure that doesn't happen."	The Children's Book Bank	"I dislike that there is only one book bank." "They need more interesting books."
"We get a chance to read and get books." "I like playing on the logs beside the library."	Library	"Dislike the area because of garbage cans" [Note: it was recycling pickup day.] "We don't like it because it is very quiet."
"This is a good place for people who cannot afford food." "I like that people donate to the food-bank."	Yonge Street Mission Food Bank	
"Helps people get better."	Health or Medical Centres	"Looks like it has a lot of hospitals in one [building]."
"Looks like it's nice for little kids to play." "Helps kids be in a better place when parents are at work."	Cole Street Daycare	

"Schools help kids get smarter and have a better education."	Our Lady of Lourdes School	"It is small." "There is no space."
"People without cell-phones can call someone."	Phone Booth	"People without cell-phones can call someone."
Public Art & Murals		
"It is very creative."	Owl Carving on a tree-post at Riverdale Farm entrance	
"It looks like real water." "We like birds and sea animals." "Because of the First Nations."	First Nation's Mural around Allen Gardens construction site	
	Wall graffiti	[Dislike]
Transportation - Transit		
"More bike racks could help people when they go somewhere."	Bicycle infrastructure	
Housing		
Low-rise apartments: "[These] houses give people a better place to live." Heritage Victorian house: "This is a beautiful house and we need more of them."	In general	
Shopping & Retail		
	Beer Store	"The beer store is not good for you because beer is not good for you."

Recommendations

Students worked individually or in pairs for their recommendations report. The topics chosen were homelessness, garbage and dog-waste in parks, drug-use, small schools, and playgrounds.

Homelessness: Children's recommendations for the issue of homelessness were that people should receive more financial support in order to be able to afford a home, as well as more charitable aid in the form of food, basic supplies and emergency shelters. One group highlighted the need for governments to provide more affordable housing, as well as the role of communities in providing employment opportunities in order to keep people off the streets:

> "First of all, the government should put more mortgage-to-income buildings so poor people can afford a home. Secondly, people should offer work to homeless people so they can afford food and other items they need."
>
> – Regent Park children, ages 10 and 11

Garbage and pet-waste: Solutions for these issues included more signs and instructions, affordable or free doggy-bags, and a service that cleans waste and litter. One group suggested that anyone caught not cleaning up after their pet should not only be fined, but also be asked to provide community service by joining the "poop-duty" service for a few weeks, while their dog will be walked by someone else.

16

Drug-abuse: One child examined the problem of drug-abuse and her approach was to first figure out *why* people are misusing drugs in the first place. "Some people hate their lives. They may be using drugs to kill themselves. I know someone who uses drugs because of a disability." This 10-year-old student showed an in-depth understanding of how drug-abuse is a form of self-medication for people who are struggling with mental or physical health issues.

Small schools: Two children researched how small schools (especially in dense urban areas) negatively impact children's health. The students argued for better playgrounds and larger outdoor play-areas that can provide adequate space for much-needed physical activities. Students asked for schools to "use their money wisely" by investing in improvements of outdoor play-spaces.

Playgrounds: One child did research on playgrounds, and found an impressive picture of a waterpark he would like in the neighbourhood. This pirate-ship play-structure built on a splash-pad combines two generally favoured aspects of play in parks: climbing-sliding structures, and water-play.

Figure 12. Images from Regent Park students' Recommendations Reports, from left to right: Together Toronto Campaign (n.a.); Helping the homeless in New York (Wikipedia); Kidstown Waterpark (2013).
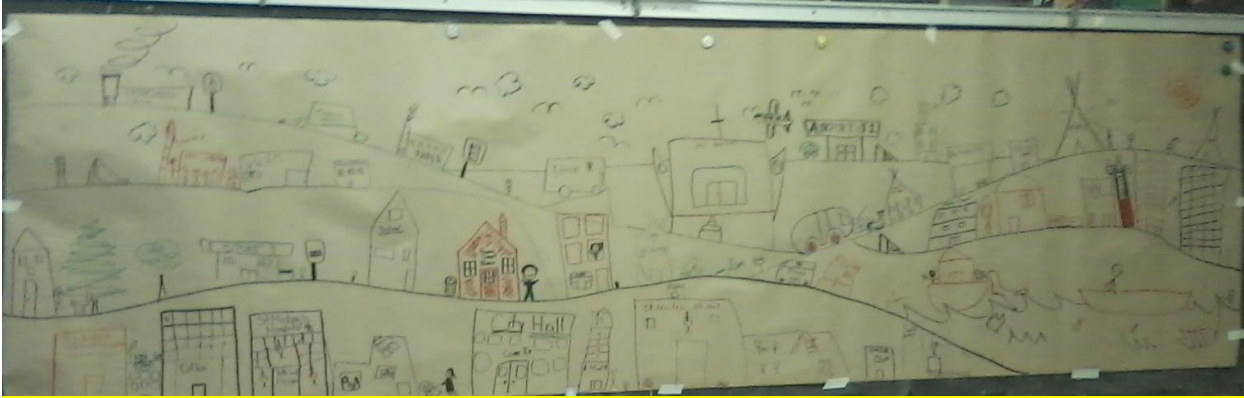
St. Lawrence

'City on the Wall:'

Figure 13. St. Lawrence children's 'City on the Wall' group drawing.

For the St. Lawrence group the 'City on the Wall' activity's narrative was slightly altered, and this revised version was likely a more accurate reproduction of the actual process of colonial settlement formation in North America. The settler in the narrative chose a location close to water and other essential resources, and in the vicinity of a Native community. As the settlement grew into a town, then a city, there was need for more and more land, and the Native community was displaced (crossed out and re-drawn) further out of town. One child turned the original teepee area into a museum. Towards the end of this activity children started to complain that there is no space left to 'build' (or draw). At this point the discussion of urban growth, sprawl, density and livable communities was initiated.

Important places and activities

Fourteen out of fifteen children (93%) in this group reported various forms of snow-play as their favourite winter outdoor activity (sledding at Riverdale farm, skating, building snowmen and snow-forts, having snowball fights), and one child listed the playground as their main winter outdoor activity. Spending time at a park (62%) biking, eating, or playing games (soccer, tag), and water-play (31%) such as water-gun battles, and visits to the beach or pool were the two most commonly reported summer activities. One child reported staying indoors and "doing art."

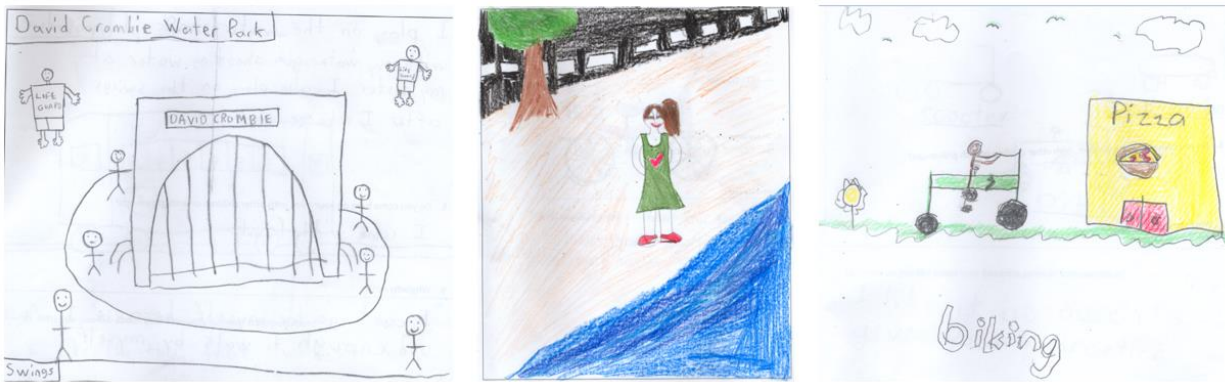*Figure 14*. Drawings of St. Lawrence students' winter outdoor activities.

Figure 15. Drawings of St. Lawrence students' summer outdoor activities.

This group also filled out a short questionnaire related to their drawings. Results of this questionnaire show that the majority of children are not independently mobile, and most often require a parent to join them for their outdoor play. Children cited their age and safety as the main barriers to independent mobility: "I am too young" or "because if mom and dad doesn't come with me I get in danger." Only one 10-year-old reported that he has independent access to neighbourhood parks: "I go on my own because my mom thinks I know what to do, and I do."

Approximately half of the students answered that they have noticed changes in the city over the last few years, and the majority listed 'more construction' as the major change they noticed. Although most students reported disliking construction, some said building more housing was a good thing, because "more people can live in the city."

Table 12 in Appendix B summarizes responses for the mapping activity, highlighting the St. Lawrence children's important places both within the neighbourhood, as well as in the larger study area.

Transportation

The majority of St. Lawrence students reported public transit as their favourite winter transportation mode (54%), with car-rides and walking both a second choice (23% for both). Children's favoured summer transportation was cycling (58%), followed by public transit (25%) and walking (17%).

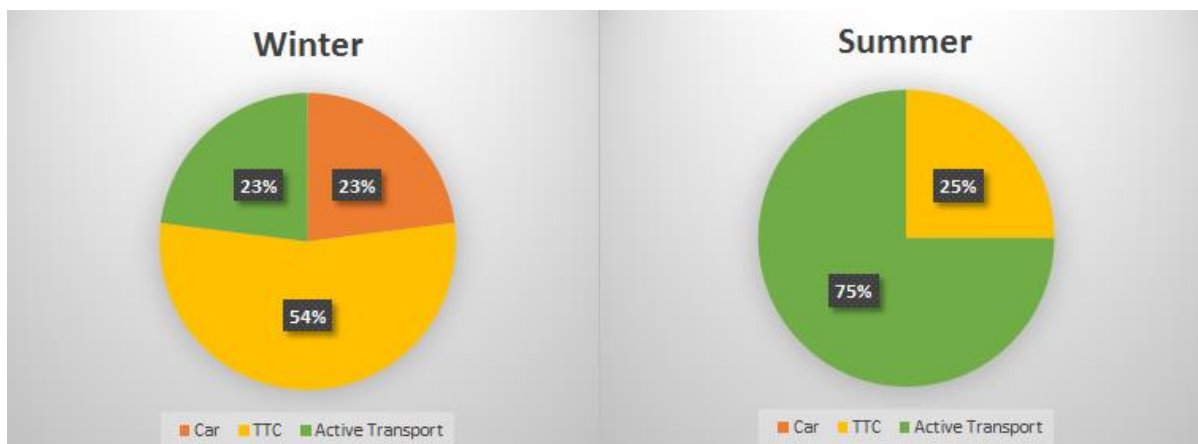*Figure 16.* Seasonal variations in St. Lawrence student's favoured transportation modes.
(Note: Active Transport scores are derived from the combination of walking and cycling).

Neighbourhood 'Likes' and 'Dislikes'

St. Lawrence children's Photovoice 'Likes' and 'Dislikes' are summarized in Table 9. Similarly to the Regent Park group, and most children in CFC studies, access to open space with nature and

playgrounds was the most significant need expressed. Children also reported that garbage, vandalism, neglect and the presence of homeless people make these areas feel less safe or unwelcoming.

The St. Lawrence group showed a great appreciation for the city's heritage, and also showed the greatest concern for their safety as pedestrians within this high-density area often congested with traffic. One of the major concerns students had was lack of pedestrian safety due to obstructed walkways (mainly due to construction), or narrow sidewalks on congested roads (such as Lakeshore Blvd. under the Gardiner Expressway).

Table 9. Summary of St. Lawrence walking tour and Photovoice of 'Likes' and 'Dislikes'

Likes	Place	Dislikes
Parks & Public Realm		
Nature (trees, shrubs, flower-beds, fields): "We like [this tree] because it gives us air" "Lots of open space." "Parks keep people happy and healthy." Hills and berms. Water fountains. Sandy beach on waterfront. Person collecting litter on waterfront.	In general · David Crombie Park · Park on Esplanade opposite CRC · Parliament Square · Sherbourne Commons · Sugar Beach · St. James Park · Moss Park	Signs of neglect or vandalism: "We don't like how this sign was knocked over and not fixed." 'No dogs allowed' sign: "It is not fair." Litter and graffiti. Animal waste: "We don't like how there is no-one to clean the pigeon poo."
Playgrounds in general: "A great place for kids to play." Wooden playground on Esplanade opposite the recreation centre. Giant slide at Corus Quay.	Playgrounds	Slide at Corus Quay not for public use. Wooden playground on Esplanade did not pass safety standard and school or daycare children are not allowed on it. Possibility that it will be replaced with a regular playground. Overall, not enough interesting playgrounds.
	Park on Esplanade at St. Lawrence Community Centre	Closed to public until 8pm (access only for schools and recreation centre).
	Moss Park	Feeling unsafe because of street-people; Locked gate to playground (other one was open, but newcomers may not know).
Community Services & Facilities		
"It's a part of our community."	St. Lawrence Community Recreation Centre	
"Lets parents go to work."	Daycare at Distillery District	
Public Art & Murals		

People can interact with it, or climb on it: "It is creative," and "funny."	Playful Art at Distillery District	
"It's cool and pretty."	Wall murals	
Culture – Heritage		
St. Lawrence Farmer's Market Distillery District Statues and signs of historically relevant people or events: "We like it because they keep Canadian history alive." CN Tower City skyline.	In general	
Transportation – Transit		
Policeman guiding vehicle and pedestrian traffic at an intersection with construction: "The policeman keeps us safe from traffic."	Pedestrian infrastructure	Pedestrian walkways blocked by construction: "Too much construction." Narrow sidewalks and heavy traffic (on Lakeshore under Gardiner): "It's not safe"
"[Bikes] are a quick way of getting around."	Bicycle infrastructure	
Buses are good to get around…	Public transit	"… but pollute."
Housing		
"We like that they make homes for people…"	In general	"…but more construction."

Recommendations

Students created their recommendations report individually or in pairs, addressing the following three topics: park improvements, construction, and homelessness.

Park improvements: Four children recommended that the city should invest in more parks or open-spaces, adding nature, such as grass, flowers, shrubs and trees to urban areas, rather than allowing more development: "You can build more stuff but it destroys the wild." "Stop constructions and plant more trees. Survey the community to see where these should be." One child further recommended building indoor green-spaces, such as green-houses (similar to Allen Gardens) that can provide winter green-space in a sheltered environment. This child explained in detail how a green-house like this could have an indoor playground, or even a daycare inside, and should also have a rainwater collecting system. Another student recommended picnic tables at St. James Park, and birdhouses for the pigeons "to keep the birds from pooping at people." One child addressed the issue of litter and graffiti, proposing that the city provide more bins, more signs, security cameras, and promote less packaging. Two children also suggested that Moss Park have "watchers or friendly helpers" to support the street-community in the area.

Construction: Student recommendations to help minimize the adverse outcome of ongoing construction was to "plan better [by] planning ahead, create more signs, get more people, and do it when it's not busy."

Homelessness: This topic was selected by the majority of students, and their main recommendation was to "build homes for them." Some students suggested providing more financial support, and creating fundraisers to generate charitable aid, and providing social services so "they can

live like us, have a family, like us." One 9-year-old child concluded the following: "Homeless people are poor. They need help and support and health. They need homes." One other student wrote a more detailed report that highlighted an understanding of underlying issues – growing income disparity and lack of affordable housing, or adequate social supports – at the heart of the problem:

> "The city needs to stop making the rich richer and make the poor get a home, and get a job and give them special help. The city can't just not care about them and dismiss them […] even if they have a mental disease or drug addiction. They need a place where their mental disease can be helped."
> – St. Lawrence student, age 9.

University of Toronto Schools

Important places and activities

UTS student's after-school and weekend activities, and their seasonal variations are presented in a visual format in Figure 17. (Also, see Appendix C Table 13 for a list of these activities with frequencies, and Table 14 for a list of students' important places for the reported activities within the downtown core).

Figure 17. Young people's seasonal variations for school day and weekend activities

The UTS group's survey results showed some seasonal, as well as some after-school and weekend variations in activities. Overall, students listed a great range of activities for weekends and weekdays, although more than half of the students participate in a relatively wider range of activities over the weekend, and especially summer weekends. A couple of students listed 'going to school' as their only weekday activity, and some had 'school' and eating out/coffee' as their two sole weekday activities, while 'eating out/coffee' was not an important weekend activity for this group. On weekdays a few students reported that they stay indoors, while a somewhat larger number reported this for weekends.

Seasonal comparison shows that winter and summer weekdays were dominated by school and eating out or going for coffee (during school-lunch hour and afterschool), with summertime providing the opportunity to eat out in neighbouring parks. Going shopping was a main winter weekend activity, while summer weekends were dominated by cultural activities, such as going to museums, galleries, theatres, concerts or movies. For a couple of students winter weekends were a good time to go skating and for many summer weekends provided the opportunity for park visits, which were second to cultural activities over the summer.

The majority of UTS students reported that they did notice changes in their neighbourhood. The two main changes reported were increases in construction and public transit becoming more crowded. Almost all students cited that they dislike these changes, with a few saying that although they dislike the construction, they do appreciate the outcomes (i.e. renovated buildings, well-designed streetscapes, tall glass towers).

Transportation

Students' most common winter transportation was public transit, while during the summer walking was reported at highest rates (see Table 10, and Figure 18). Car-use decreased over the summer, and bike-use increased. Interestingly student's most and least favoured mode of transportation was public transit, with many individuals citing how they both love and hate the subway or streetcars (Figure 19). Reasons for liking Toronto's public transit were that it can be fast and efficient (though not always), it is relatively affordable, allows independent travel, subways avoid traffic congestion, and are overall decently fast. The two main problems students cited with transit were over-crowding and delays, and the two most disliked modes of public transportation were old subway trains and old street-cars that seem to derail often.

Table 10. UTS student's modes of transportation

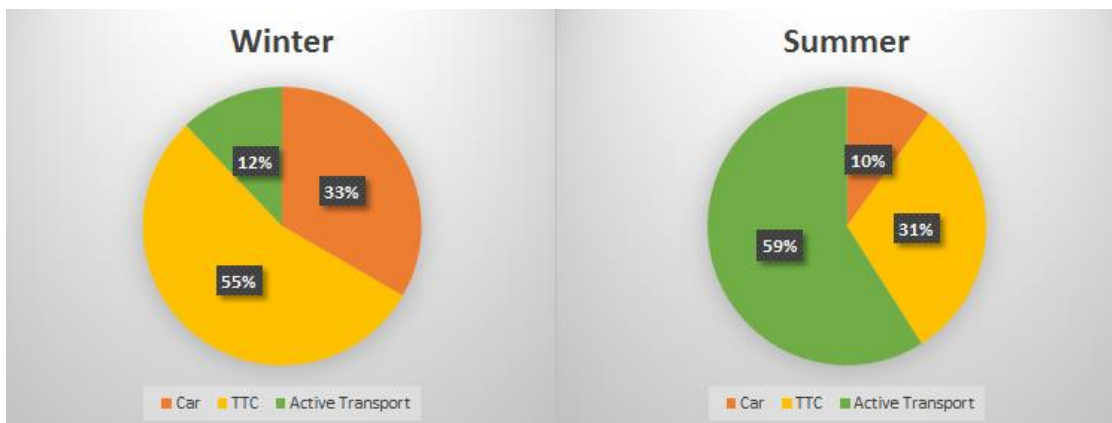| Transportation	Favoured	Disliked	Most Common	
			Winter	Summer
Car	20%	26%	33%	10%
TTC	40%	63%	54%	31%
Bike	10%	11%	4%	14%
Walk	30%	0%	8%	45%

Figure 18. UTS students' seasonal variations in most common forms of transportation

23

(Note: Active Transport scores are derived from the combination of walking and cycling).

Some students prefer the privacy and comfort of a car over public transit, even if there is traffic congestion, arguing that it is still convenient and less stressful as long as one is a passenger not a driver. Youth who reported car-rides as their favourite mode of transportation most often listed public transit as least favourite, while those who listed biking as their favourite disliked the use of cars most. Cyclists almost always cited congestion, and environmental consequences of driving as an argument against transit or car-use, and also saw the physical and mental health benefits of biking (i.e. "it is enjoyable, good exercise, and you get to see everything at your own pace"). The majority of car and transit users perceived cycling to be dangerous due to traffic congestion. Walking was highly favoured during the winter, and even more so over the summer, with students stating that it is "healthy and relaxing," "convenient when everything is close by," and allows people to "absorb the city atmosphere."
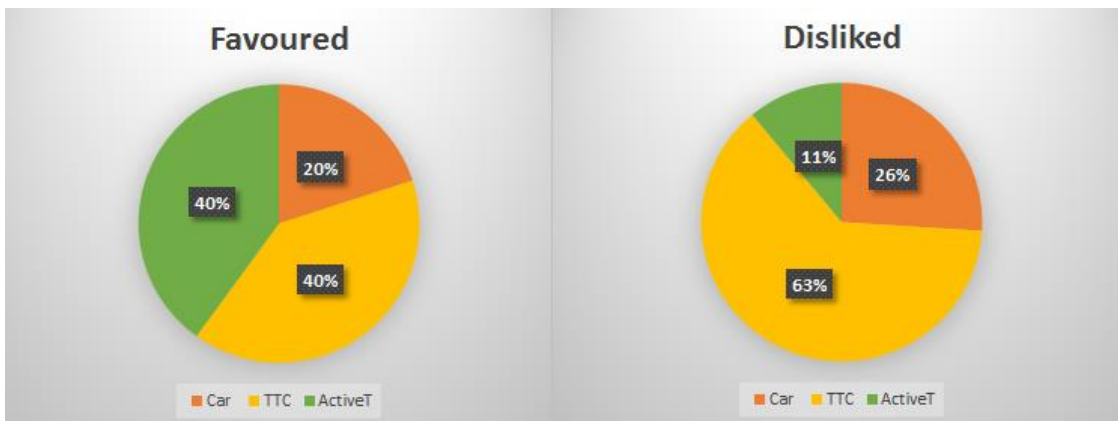
Figure 19. UTS students' most and least favoured modes of transportation.
(Note: Active Transport scores are derived from the combination of walking and cycling).

Neighbourhood 'Likes' and 'Dislikes'

UTS student's Photovoice 'Likes' and 'Dislikes' are summarized in Table 11. Parks and public spaces continue to be important for this older group of youth, with a focus shifting away from play towards provisions for socializing (i.e. adequate and diverse seating). This group had much more to comment on transportation and transit infrastructure, focusing on transportation modes that facilitate their independent mobility (walking, cycling, and public transit). The negative effects of construction on safe active transport were highlighted by many. Students showed a great appreciation for shopping and retail areas, as well as the diverse range of cultural events and activities in the city.

Table 11. UTS students' 'Likes' and 'Dislikes'

Likes	Place	Dislikes
Parks & Public Realm		
Parks in general. Lake, lakeshore "provides a serene and peaceful escape from the busy city." Playscapes for kids. Balance of sun and shade. Fountains, parks, parkettes. Statues "add to ambience." "Mix of city and nature." "Natural elements make the neighbourhood feel nicer and look nicer." "Seating for people to eat and socialize."	In general	Privately owned public space: "feels like we are trespassing." Some parks "seem to serve no purpose and take up space." Lack of sufficient outdoor seating. Not enough greenery. Not enough garbage bins.
Efficient use of space (i.e. underground parking). Streets with consecutive stores. Modern structures, tall glass buildings. "The sky-high buildings downtown made out of glass give off a futuristic and modern impression."	Streetscapes	Narrow walkways. Dimly lit areas, sketchy areas, esp. alleyways. 1-storey buildings: "they take up a ton of space." 60s architecture: "ugly, bulky, takes up too much space." Construction "inconveniences pedestrians, bikers, drivers," "looks ugly," and "disturbs the peace."
Pretty, quiet, a "safe haven." Emergency phones – visible, easy to use, feels safer at night. Amphitheatre and rocks – great for socializing, sitting, reading, eating. Benches to eat, talk.	Philosopher's walk	"Often many modern influences, shattering the third space-like quality." Missing tables to work on Trash-cans not near benches Lots of construction around
	Queens Park	Takes up too much space
Community Services & Facilities		
	In general	Need more garbage bins Repair things sooner.
"Free books, quiet place to visit."	Libraries	Reference library: "too large, takes up a lot of space, too close to other library, can't take out books."
Housing		
	In general	Not enough affordable housing "in nice areas of city, especially in core."

25

		Homelessness: "bad for Toronto's reputation."
Shopping & Retail		
Brand name stores. Coffee shops "smell good and I feel very intelligent sitting there sipping lattes!"	In general	Not enough shopping-malls.
Great place to gather with friends.	Starbucks	Construction around it annoying.
Convenient and quick	G's grocery store	Lacks in design.
Culture – Heritage		
Diversity, "especially cultural diversity." Attractions for tourists (i.e. Museums). Mix of old and new architecture. So many places to visit "you never get bored." "Many activities can be done in a small area of Toronto (i.e. restaurants, museums, parks)."	In general	Destruction of a heritage site. "Construction around historical sites."
"Interesting design, mix of modern and old, just like ROM itself."	ROM	"Quite confusing," especially finding which entrance is the real one.
Transportation – Transit		
Relatively organized.	In general	Construction. "Too busy, too messy." "Construction inevitable, but would be nice if it wasn't so much."
Diagonal crossing: "pedestrians can cross any way without danger, faster," and "it encourages walking." "Pedestrian availability in downtown core." Wide sidewalks. "Low walkability as soon as you leave downtown."	Pedestrian infrastructure	"Too much construction, obstructing sidewalk." Narrow sidewalks. Big crosswalks that slow traffic. Dimly lit streets, alleyways.
Many and different types of bike-lanes, raised, protected. Bicycle traffic lights.	Bicycle infrastructure	Lack of bike-lanes: "Dangerous for cyclists. This bothers me greatly." Random bike-lanes, no connected network. "Narrow, disconnected" and "weak" bike-lanes. "Disrespected by drivers."

		"I dislike biking around in Toronto, and sometime the lanes don't even work."
		Need more bike-racks, more consistent, and "near places where they are needed."
		Not enough rental bikes.
	TTC, especially subway	Overcrowding.
		Not most accessible.
		Narrow platforms.
		Streetcars derailing.
	Roads, vehicle traffic	Dislike congestion, and construction makes it worse.
		Heavy traffic, and parked cars make congestion worse.
	Snow-plowing	"No schedule, slow, badly executed."

Recommendations

> "I would […] like for teens and children to have more of a say in our city's decision because ultimately all the big changes that are currently being made will start being very impactful when we are adults and so if the younger generation had more of an opinion then maybe we could create a better city for the future."
>
> – Student, age 13.

UTS students' Recommendations Reports examined issues within the two broad categories of transportation-transit, and public spaces. Within the category of transportation-transit the following three topics were addressed: public transit improvements, pedestrian safety, and cycling safety and infrastructure. The majority of transportation-transit recommendations attempted to address the issue of motor-vehicle traffic congestion in the downtown core.

Public transit: Improvements to Toronto's public transit, or the TTC network were considered the main priority for this group, who rely on this system for their independent mobility into and within the downtown core. The major recommendation was to expand the subway network, adding more lines, more subway cars, and ensuring that these run on schedule, without delays. Examples students referenced included the transit systems of New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Boston. Some students would prefer that the transit network expansion include buses and light rail transit (LRT), while others recommended that the city focus on subways, and actually remove the "useless" old streetcars that "constantly derail" and "slow traffic down." In contrast, a couple of students recommended closing off areas to private vehicle traffic, referencing European examples such as Rome or Florence, and arguing that this would ensure streetcars are not delayed by traffic congestion. Although these two recommendations seem to be the opposite, they are both attempting to tackle the major problem of public transit being slowed down by vehicle traffic (and vice-versa), making transit use less appealing.

More specific recommendations included adding a downtown relief line to the subway system, upgrading to rocket trains, and creating express-lanes for buses. Other improvements youth suggested were to make transit more affordable for older students, replace the current token system with travel cards you can add money to, make TTC routes that are not subway easier to find and understand, and fix the intercom system on subways, so transit-users can at least hear the announcements of delays and attempt to avoid these if possible.

27

Pedestrian and road safety: Recommendations to improve pedestrian safety and walkability included closing down central areas of downtown to private motor-vehicle traffic (based on various European models), adding more diagonal crosswalks, reducing above-ground parking that adds to traffic congestion by creating more underground parking, and providing better detours and more efficiency during construction.

Ongoing construction throughout the city was seen as a major issue, leaving walkways, bike-lanes, and roads obstructed for long periods, causing excessive traffic delays, congestion, and noise and environmental pollution. Major suggestions to ease the negative effects of construction were to plan better, give the public more advance notice, have longer work hours, more workers, and work more during off-peak days and hours, in order to finish projects faster and with the least disturbance, offer better detours, and to tax or fine any construction that takes more time than what would be reasonably expected.

Pedestrian safety due to "dark and sketchy" alleyways was also a concern, and students recommended closing off these areas with gates, or providing motion-sensor lighting. Emergency phones located on walkways within parks (i.e. on philosopher's walk) were perceived to significantly improve safety.

Cycling safety and infrastructure: Many students recommended that the city expand the cycling infrastructure by creating a well-connected network of bicycle lanes, as well as by providing many more racks for cyclists. Students believe that creating more raised, separated or wider bike-lanes will promote safe cycling, and some suggested that introducing a mandatory 'safe bicycling curriculum' in elementary schools would also improve overall road safety for cyclists.

Public spaces: Recommendations to improve public spaces included making the expected or accepted uses of unwelcoming public spaces more obvious, expanding or creating more public spaces, and adding diverse types of seating (benches, tables, and rocks) to facilitate various activities. A final concern for roads and public spaces was garbage and overall neglect, and the main recommendations for these were to provide more garbage bins along walkways, and next to seating areas, and to ensure that damaged or vandalized spaces or infrastructure are repaired promptly.

4. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Children account for approximately 25-33% of the population globally and with increased urbanization, half of the world's children are growing up in urban environments (UNICEF, 2012). Many larger cities, including Toronto, are growing and intensifying rapidly. Although urban infill and densification is considered the sustainable solution to avoid sprawl and conversion of rural green-fields to urban or industrial land, there are numerous challenges associated with increasing urban density. Of these, the two most significant concerns for children are loss of urban greenspace and increased traffic congestion – both exacerbating the already important issue of major reductions in western children's physical activity, (i.e. via lower levels of active outdoor play and independent mobility), which in turn affects young people's health, quality of life, and well-being.

The CFT study was designed to promote child-friendly development in Toronto's downtown core, and to give children a voice in Toronto's planning discourse. Major recommendations derived from the study are summarized under the three building-blocks of the 'TOcore' initiative that this study focused on: parks and public realm, community services and facilities, and transportation and transit.

Parks and Public Realm

In accordance with numerous Child Friendly Cities studies around the world, this research project highlighted how parks and green spaces remain important places for urban children and youth. The majority of elementary-school aged children listed parks and play-grounds as their top-choice places for both winter and summer outdoor activities. For children in high-density urban areas open-spaces such as Riverdale Farm and Park become very significant, providing them with access to nature, adequate space for active play during any season (the hill is used for sledding in the winter, and rolling on grass in summer for example), and also an opportunity to learn about growing food or raising animals. In most areas of Toronto children do have walking-distance access to parks, yet some barriers to outdoor active play still exist.

Lack of sufficient outdoor spaces in higher density inner-city neighbourhoods (such as St. James Town or St. Lawrence areas) means the most easily accessible park or playground in close proximity of residents (within a 5-10 minute walk) is claimed by multiple users. Schools and day-care centres have priority access, and this may mean that children not enrolled in the local community-centre's or school's after-school program may be excluded from using certain spaces (i.e. park and playground at St. Lawrence CRC). Although other parks may be open to the public at all hours (i.e. Sherbourne Commons near Lakeshore for St. Lawrence community), younger children will be less likely to go to parks that are further away from home, and depend on their parents to access these places. Older children may be allowed to independently visit local parks in the neighbourhood, but this rarely happens before the age of 10, and even most youth (12-14-year-olds) feel that safe independent mobility by foot or bicycle is greatly compromised by traffic congestion, construction obstructing roads, bike-lanes and walkways, narrow sidewalks, and lack of safe and connected bicycling routes.

For many, and particularly for younger children, if appropriate (safe, fun, and immediately accessible) outdoor spaces do not exist, these children may end up staying indoors for significant amounts of time, especially during the winter months. Providing adequate space for outdoor play during the winter months (i.e. skating rink or trail, toboggan hill, all-season adventure playground) would need to become a planning priority. Not only do most children enjoy outdoor activities in the snow, this is also imperative for public health, specifically in high-density and lower-income neighbourhoods such as St. James Town, where parents may not have the time or resources available to transport their children to places and activities outside of the community.

Although parks and playgrounds are the most important public space for urban children, creating child-friendly fun and playful environments in other public spaces can also contribute to children's health and happiness in urban environments. Children and youth greatly appreciate public art, stressing the aesthetic value of colourful wall murals, creative carvings, as well as beautiful heritage buildings, or modern design. Dull, grey, and boring streetscapes and architecture leave young people uninspired. The pedestrianized historical Distillery District with its three art installations – two of which are playful and interactive – is an excellent example of a child (and all-ages) friendly public space that is not a park or playground (see Fig. 20).

Figure 20. Interactive public art providing opportunity to play at the Distillery District.

For older children and youth social, cultural and retail-oriented activities take precedence over playgrounds, while parks and urban nature continue to play an important role, especially as safe and peaceful places to spend time with family and friends. For this age-group certain landscapes may still provide affordances for play and physical activity (jumping on rocks and boulders), the priority however is to have sufficient and diverse forms of seating available for the various uses of park-spaces, such as eating lunch, 'hanging out' with a group of friends, or reading and studying, and to have independent, safe, and enjoyable access to various forms of entertainment and retail. Streets with interesting shops, wide sidewalks, aesthetically pleasing design, adequate seating, lighting, trees, and garbage bins are important parts of the public realm for this older age-group, and as most child and youth-friendly design, generally benefit all age-groups. Furthermore, Toronto's offers this older age-group the opportunity to partake in diverse cultural and social activities.

A major challenge facing many cities around the world stems from the conflictual uses of public spaces by diverse and vulnerable populations. In most CFC studies, including this project, young people report feeling fearful due to the presence of street-people in parks. Therefore, the problem of homelessness intensifies the problem of insufficient green-space within urban centres, such as Toronto. Children in this study showed remarkable compassion and recognized that the problem of homelessness could have a simple solution: providing homes for homeless people, and the additional social and physical supports that they may require. This suggestion from students is akin to the 'Housing First' approach, a cost-effective way to reduce rates of homelessness that has been successfully adopted by municipalities across North America and some countries in Europe (e.g. Larimer, et al., 2009). With the Housing First approach homeless individuals are offered a permanent home rather than temporary aid and shelter, and are not required to meet any conditions (such as sobriety or employment) prior to receiving housing and necessary support services (Tsemberis, 2010). This approach however, is only the initial step towards recovery for people with mental-health and addictions issues (CAEH, 2011), and some students participating in the CFT project clearly understood that in order to fully tackle the issue of homelessness, reductions in housing costs, in income disparity and in poverty will also be necessary.

Table 2. Summarized results of the Child Friendly Toronto study: Final recommendations for Parks & Public Realm

More park-space	• Larger open spaces: fields, urban farms. • More parkettes and outdoor public play areas: Ideally an outdoor play-space with urban nature is accessible by foot every 5-10 minutes. • Open-spaces that promote winter snow-play (such as toboggan hills, skate rinks or trails).
Park & public realm improvements	• Diverse/unique play-spaces in every neighbourhood: non-standard playgrounds include interactive art, nature playscapes, or adventure playgrounds. (Participatory design of these play-areas and public spaces with local children and youth can improve overall outcome). • More seating, diverse seating: benches, picnic tables, larger-group seating (rocks, logs placed closely in a circle). • Combining retail and outdoor public spaces, especially for youth (e.g. more cafes in parks; more public spaces to socialize on retail-oriented streets; 'outdoor malls').
Park maintenance	• Timely maintenance, regular waste removal. • More garbage bins, especially around benches and picnic tables. • Signage to clarify appropriate use of public spaces. • Signage and doggy-bags for pet-owners. • Separate dog-walking areas.

Community Services and Facilities

With its numerous municipally operated community centres, pools and skate rinks available free or almost free-of-charge to the growing urban population, we can assert that Toronto has invested well in developing this aspect of its infrastructure. However, despite the ongoing investment in community services and facilities it can be argued that these services and facilities are already at, if not exceeding, their limits with current population densities. Examples from this study in support of this claim include reports from the St. James Town community, stating how the one outdoor pool is inadequate (i.e. not maintained well, and small), yet there is no other public outdoor or indoor pool in the vicinity. When recreation centres and facilities are further away than a short (app. 5-10 min) walking distance, these become inaccessible for most families with children under the age of 10. Similarly, children will not commute, and especially not independently, to outdoor skate-rinks in other neighbourhoods. If a skate-rink or skate-trail would exist in the St. James Town area, it is highly probable that this will directly impact children's winter outdoor physical activity levels. Regent Park students' question: "Why only one book-bank?" further supports the claim that Toronto will need to invest in additional community services and facilities. Finally, St. Lawrence children fear public spaces, such as Moss Park, when these are frequented by street-people, and yet understand that people on the street are a vulnerable population in need of supports and affordable housing, both of which are insufficient within the city. Providing permanent homes and support services for this vulnerable population will benefit the entire downtown community, and can help resolve contested uses of parks and public spaces.

Projected growth and intensification within the core means that many more additional services and facilities will need to be provided to ensure livability. The city will also need to make sure that many of these services and facilities are located in close proximity of the populations most reliant on them. Urban areas that consist of larger percentages of social-housing units (such as St. James Town), or attract a vulnerable homeless population (displaced from Regent Park to Moss Park for example), will require higher levels of investment in this regard, than areas were condominium development attracts a higher-income and generally young to middle-aged adult population.

Table 3. Summarized results of the Child Friendly Toronto study: Final recommendations for Community Services & Facilities.

Swimming pools	• Indoor pool at Wellesley Community Centre, or at (or near) Rose Avenue Public School. • Upgrade and proper maintenance of St. James-Town outdoor pool. • Water-park/splash-pad in all neighbourhoods.
Ice-skating facilities	• Outdoor skating rink or skate-trail at, or in close proximity of St. James Town (max 10-minute walk).
Children's Book Banks	• A book-bank in every neighbourhood. These can be linked to local libraries or schools.
Affordable housing	• Offer permanent housing with support services for homeless individuals. • Create more rent-geared-to-income housing.

Transportation and Transit

Although the four groups differed in their favoured and most common forms of transportation, the above sections highlighted that safe and reliable transportation to significant places is a priority for all children and youth, and especially for young people over the age of 10, when independent travel to selected destinations becomes increasingly common. St. James Town children generally walked to all their destinations, which were most often within the neighbourhood. Regent Park and St. Lawrence neighbourhood children also used active modes of transport (walking and cycling) to a great degree, but differed in their use of inactive transport, with transit preferred by St. Lawrence community members, and driving more common with Regent Park families. St. Lawrence and UTS students were more similar in their use of transit in order to access their favoured cultural activities further away from their residence, and in the downtown core. These two groups were also the most affected by the negative impacts of ongoing construction.

Child-friendly forms of mobility are either active transport (cycling, walking, roller-blading, skateboarding, etc.) or public transit – both of which can be done independent of adults (Freeman & Tranter, 2011). However, if younger children's parents feel un-safe using active transportation (cycling or walking) within the city with their smaller children, and if the majority of grown-ups either use transit or drive because of safety concerns, even if a child is older (i.e. age 10 or 12), they would not have had the opportunity to develop the set of skills or confidence necessary to navigate themselves through city traffic by foot or on a bicycle. Creating pedestrian and bicycle friendly infrastructure therefore needs to be a major goal for any city wishing to promote safe and healthy forms of transportation for current and future generations.

UTS students' recommendations for transportation and transit improvements are well-thought-out and insightful. Although some of these students prefer car-rides over other forms of transportation, the vast majority of recommendations focused on pedestrian and cycling safety, and public transit development. Only one student recommended removing street-cars in order to improve traffic congestion. The overall focus of this group was to develop a much more effective and reliable transit system for the city, as well as a connected cycling network that promotes safety for cyclists. Toronto's transit network would require major investments in order to bring it up to current global standards, and UTS students (similarly to many other residents of Toronto, and especially the downtown core) are asking that these investments be a significant priority for the city.

Table 4. Summarized results of the Child Friendly Toronto study: Final recommendations for Transportation & Transit.

Pedestrian infrastructure	- Wider sidewalks. - Minimize obstruction caused by construction.
Cycling infrastructure	- Expand city-wide cycling network with more cycling-lanes, maps, and signage. - Separated cycling lanes on major roads with heavy traffic. - Minimize obstruction caused by construction. - More bike-racks.
Public transit	- Expand transit network, especially with additional LRT lines (as these are more cost-efficient, yet avoid motor-vehicle congestion). - Improve current subway and streetcar network to decrease travel-times. - Add bus-lanes, especially during daytime rush-hour. - Close selected downtown areas to private vehicle traffic, allowing only active transportation modes and public transit in these areas. - Minimize obstruction caused by construction.

Fourty years ago, in 1976 children accounted for approximately 20% of the population in downtown Toronto (City of Toronto, 2014). Over the last 40 years the overall population within the core has doubled, yet the number of children remain almost the same, accounting for only 11% of the current population. These growth trends show us that the city is attracting young and middle-aged adults, generally 20-60-year-olds, while most families with children choose to live in the outer suburbs.

As Toronto continues to grow, the risk of further marginalizing this already under-represented group of children and youth is high. Infrastructure improvements in all areas – parks, public realm, community services and facilities, transportation and transit – are inevitable for the city. The type of improvements the city invests in – *who* these improvements are for – will essentially define the future demographic make-up of the city, leading to either further marginalization and exclusion of children and their families, or to re-creating a diverse and socially sustainable community of all ages who live, play, work, and study within the downtown core.

AFTERWORD

The Child Friendly Toronto project is yet another addition to the international Child Friendly Cities movement that began in the 1970s in response to the recognition that global urbanization will greatly alter childhoods. Although researchers have noted this impact of increasing urbanization on children around the world many decades ago, we are only beginning to see *how* this trend has affected children's lives, and children's rights (excellently summarized in Freeman & Tranter, 2011). Essentially, as we see children and young people excluded from urban space and discourse to a greater degree than ever before, part of the CFC movement has transitioned to a Children's Right to the City movement. The majority of recent CFC studies are conducted in Australia, in Western and Northern Europe, in the United States, and to some degree in New Zealand. There is also a small group of CFC researchers working in Turkey, the Middle East and Asia. Canada has a handful of researchers working on topics that are highly relevant to CFC, especially in the field of urban planning, public health and environmental education, and a few municipalities in various provinces have adopted child-friendly planning policies (e.g. City of Edmonton, 2014; or City of Surrey, 2010). However, Canada has yet to join the international CFC movement in a substantive way.

The CFT project follows many of the approaches and methods used and refined over the past four-five decades with similar projects around the world, and adapts these to the present-day context of Toronto in 2015. Like most CFC initiatives, CFT aims to address the many ongoing or recently developing issues of urban childhoods: children's exclusion from urban public spaces and urban discourse (e.g. Freeman & Tranter, 2011; Whitzman, et al., 2010), decreased levels of outdoor play, independent mobility and active transport (e.g. Thomson, 2009), and parallel increases noted in children's emotional and physical health problems, such as obesity, diabetes, or anxiety (e.g. Gilliland, et al., 2012; Malone, 2007; Gray, 2011). Urban densification and traffic congestion exacerbate these concerns (e.g. Carroll, Witten, & Kearns, 2011; Whitzman, 2010), and therefore become a major challenge for planners of large and growing metropolitan centres, such as Toronto. Children in all CFC studies where motor-vehicles dominate transportation (i.e. North America and Australia) ask that cities build infrastructure that better promotes child-friendly modes of mobility: walking, cycling, and public transit.

CFC initiatives, including the CFT project also address a growing concern for environmental sustainability by providing young people not only with knowledge and awareness of sustainability concerns that they will face during their lifetime, but also with a set of skills and an opportunity to actively apply these, making more immediate changes to their community and local environment (e.g. Malone, 2013; Percy-Smith & Burns, 2012). When children spend 18 years in institutions that supposedly prepares them for the challenges of life, yet are only allowed to participate in tackling these challenges once they leave school and reach voting-age, we are essentially spending 18 years telling them to wait. These 18 years are the most formative: core attitudes, world views, and behavioural patterns develop most during the initial life-stages of childhood and adolescence. Therefore, as we tell children to wait (generally 18 years) before they can start participating actively in community development work and discourse, we are actually teaching children to not act, to not participate, and to be passive recipients of other's decisions made for them. Despite these 18 years of disempowerment, many still wonder why our youth do not bother to vote or feel like they cannot make a difference or a change once they are young adults.

CFC projects attempt to address this concern of a disempowering educational system by working within schools, and allowing young people to participate in local community-based planning and development projects. Research shows the immediate educational and psychological benefits of these projects for children and their community: greater knowledge of sustainability issues, environmental stewardship, increased levels of competence, self-efficacy, sense of place, and sense of community. What we need to look at in future studies is whether or not these benefits are maintained over the long-run. Do CFC projects help children who have become active 'agents of change' continue down this path as young adults, and later in their life as well? Will these children continue the work of creating a socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable world for all beings to live in?

Many CFC projects, such as the CFT initiative do not measure these individual psychological changes in their participants, yet may assume that as previous research has shown these changes, current projects will also have similar effects. As I noted in my Foreword, projects such as the CFT initiative are best performed over the course of a longer period, ideally an entire school-year, if not longer, allowing researchers to examine not only children's output, but also the numerous process-related (i.e. psychological and educational) variables. This longer time-frame will also allow researchers to gather more in-depth qualitative data. Given the shorter time available for the CFT study, it was not possible to include measurement of these numerous variables.

For the CFT project I selected a set of methods that build upon each other and allow the progression of the project to be child-led to some degree, yet are presented and structured for all four groups in the same manner, so outcomes may be comparable. Despite the intent to engage all ages equally, I still struggled to some degree with the youngest age-group of 6-8-year-olds (in the St. James Town group), and recognize that further training in education will benefit my future work with young people. Originally I did not plan to administer surveys in the form of interviews, yet the interview method turned out to be most appropriate with the younger members of the St. James Town group. Due to numerous factors, which may include age, or cultural differences (apart from being the youngest, this group also had the highest rate of immigrant ESL speakers according to my knowledge), I found it most challenging to keep these students motivated, engaged, and on task. Because this group had the choice of numerous other activities to participate in during the CFT project, I ended up working with a smaller number of children, and had many more opportunities for individual discussions. This smaller-group setting also allowed me to ask students the survey and questionnaire items in the form of a semi-structured interview. This form of in-depth qualitative data was highly informative, and will benefit my future research.

Developing pre- and post-project questionnaires in order to assess individual educational and psychological benefits will also greatly improve this type of CFC research. A short pre- and post-test was administered to children in Boulder, Colorado during a similar CFC study, and these children were also asked to write individual reflective essays on their experiences (see Derr & Kovacs, in prep.). UNICEF's website has resources available for researchers and educators, including questionnaires that may be used to assess child-friendly aspects of a city. Reflective essays from children allow qualitative assessment of educational outcomes, and may provide some information on individual psychological benefits of the project. However, we have yet to develop and standardize questionnaires that examine the individual psychological benefits of CFC projects. Furthermore, longitudinal studies will be necessary in order to assess long-term outcomes, and long-term maintenance of behavioural or attitudinal changes.

As I continue on this path of research and education on children's rights, and specifically on children's right to the city, I hope to address the many shortcomings of the current CFT project with my future work. Despite the limitations of this current project, I believe the material gathered for the City of Toronto from the four groups of students in the downtown core provides invaluable information for current and future child-friendly development. Upon culmination of the project I had the opportunity to present key findings at the Environmental Studies Association of Canada's (ESAC's) annual conference in Ottawa, Ontario, and also to present to a small group of planners at the City of Toronto. The Final Report was disseminated amongst staff at the City of Toronto's Planning Division. The CFT initiative attempted not only to allow a generally marginalized group of young people to have a voice in their community's planning and development, but also to cultivate hope within this young generation that the future is indeed in their hands.

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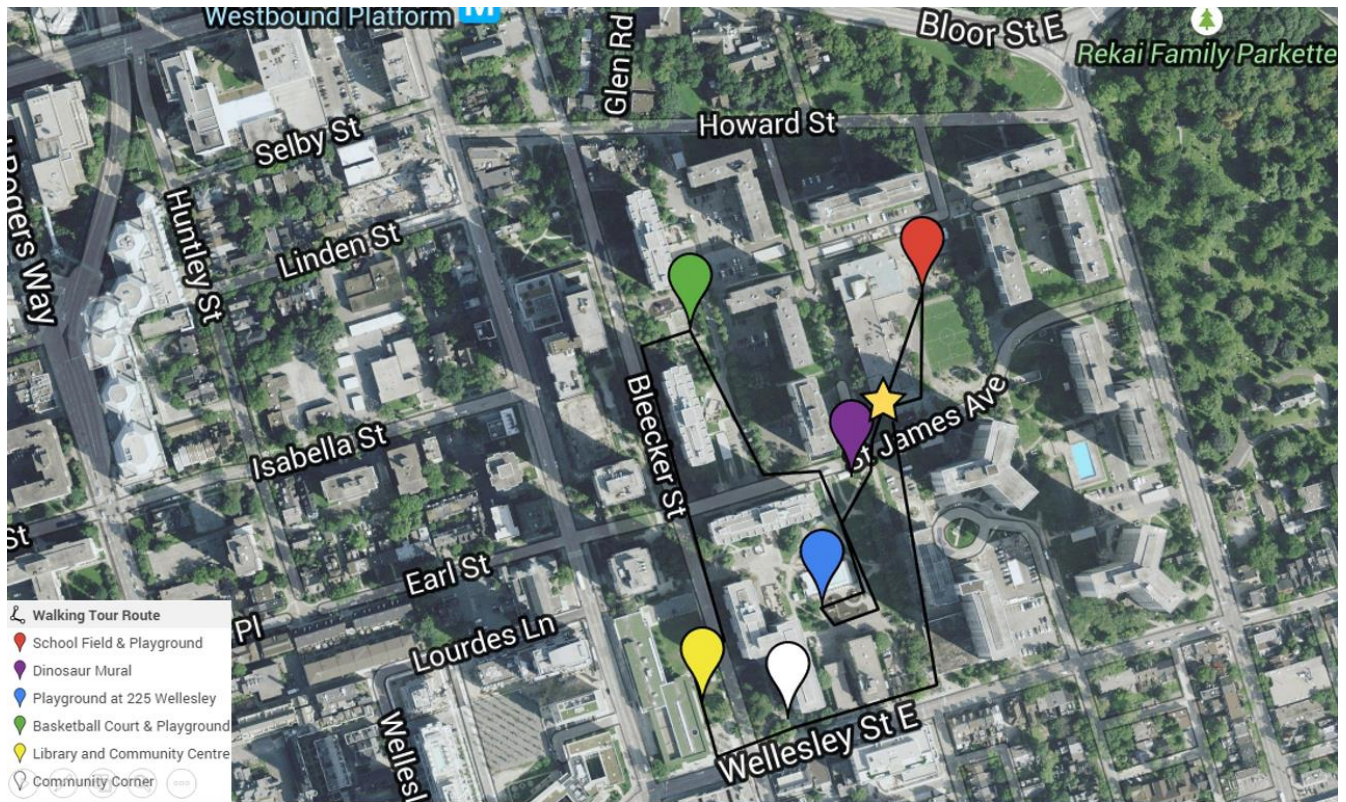
St. James Town:

School Playground

Dinosaur Mural

Playground at Wellesley Residences
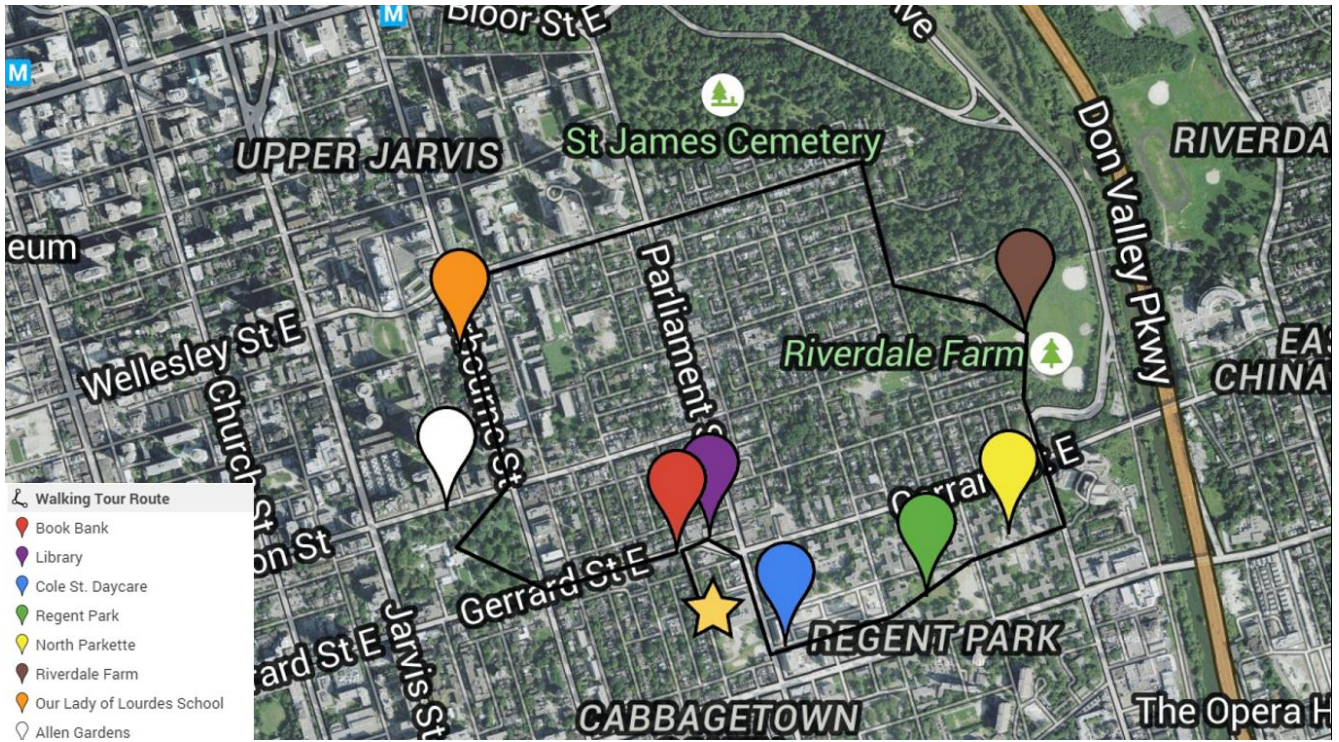
Basketball Court & Playground

Library and Community Centre

St. James Town Community Corner

Regent Park:

Book Bank & Food Bank

Parliament St. Library and logs east of the building.

Cole St. Daycare

Regent Park

Garbage and pet-waste at Regent Park

Riverdale Farm

Regent Park – North Parkette

TORONTO Municipal Code #608
Please have your dog on a leash.
Please pick up after your pet.
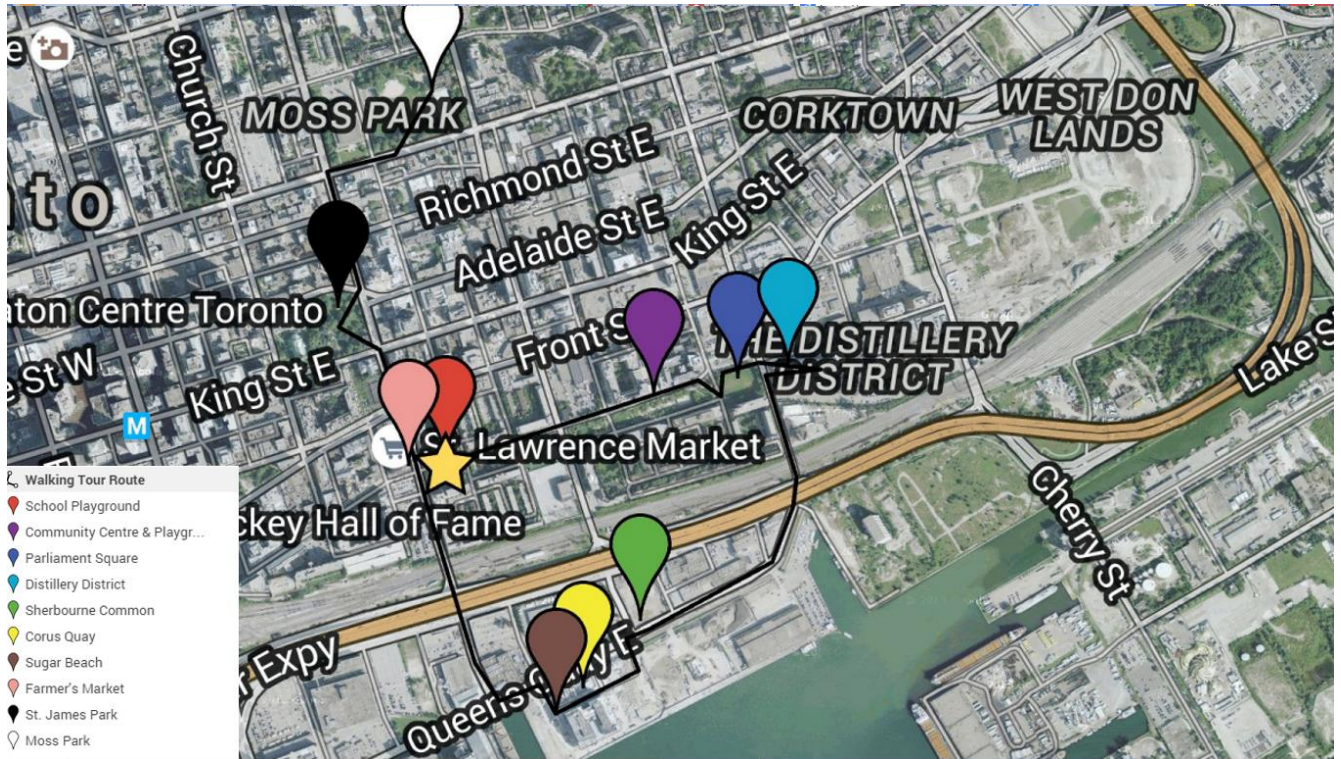
Murals & Art

Our Lady of Lourdes School & separated cycle lanes

Allen Gardens

St. Lawrence:

School playground

St. Lawrence CC and playground on Esplanade

Parliament Square

Distillery District

Crossing Lakeshore Boulevard under Gardiner Expressway

Sherbourne Commons

Corus Quay, Queens Quay and Sugar Beach

St. Lawrence Farmer's Market
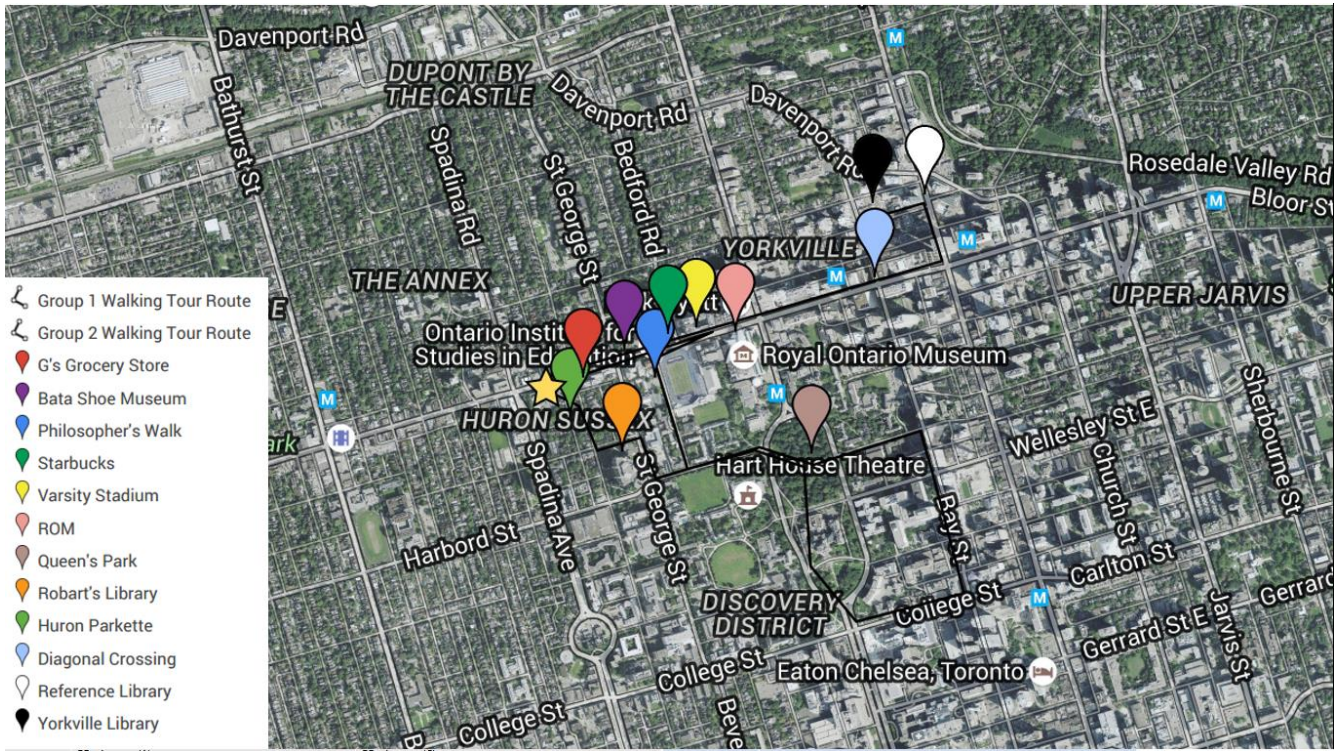
St. James Park

Moss Park

University of Toronto Schools:

Royal Ontario Museum

Bata Shoe Museum

Varsity Arena

Huron Parkette

Philosopher's Walk

Queen's Park

Cycling infrastructure – or lack of...

Construction everywhere (including Starbucks)

Yorkville Library

Pretty but unwelcoming public space that seems private...

APPENDIX B
Summary of St. Lawrence students' mapping activity

Table 12. St. Lawrence children's important places within Toronto's downtown core

Culture & Heritage	Parks, Community & Recreation Centres, Libraries	Social, Entertainment, Retail
CN Tower (15)	YMCA (10)	Eaton Centre (11)
Rogers Centre (14)	St. Lawrence CRC and Park (5)	Adelaide St E. (2)
Royal Ontario Museum (8)	Moss Park and John Innes CC (3)	Dundas Square (1)
City Hall (7)	Queens Park (3)	Cineplex Cinemas (1)
Air Canada Centre (6)	Nelson Mandela Park (2)	
Hockey Hall of Fame (5)	St. James Park (1)	
Distillery District (3)	Allen Gardens (1)	
Union Station & Skywalk (3)	Parliament Square (1)	
Art Gallery of Ontario (2)	Cabbagetown Youth Centre (1)	
Our Lady of Lourdes Church (2)	David Crombie Park (1)	
Blue Jays Way (2)		
Casa Loma (2)		
St. Lawrence Farmer's Market (2)		
Nathan Philips Square (1)		
Maple Leafs Garden (1)		
Ryerson University Campus (1)		
George Brown College – King St. (1)		
Chinatown (1)		
Harbourfront Centre (1)		
Redpath Sugar Museum (1)		
Corus Quay (1)		
CBC Museum (1)		
Fort York (1)		
Roy Thomson Hall (1)		
St. Michael's Church (1)		

UTS students' important activities and important places

Table 13. Seasonal variations in UTS student's favoured activities during school days and on weekends.

	Winter	Summer
After School	Social/retail: Eat out/coffee (11) Shopping (3) Hang-out w friends (1) Cultural activities: Museum/galleries (0) Theatre/music (1) Movies (0) Heritage (0) Watch Sports (1) Sports: Sports practice (4) Skating (0) Parks: (0) Community: School (6) Community & Recreation Centre (1) 'Best Buddies' program (2) Library (3) Other: Inside/nothing: (2) Ride subway: (1)	Social/retail: Eat out/coffee (8) Shopping (5) Hang-out w friends (1) Cultural activities: Museum/galleries (2) Theatre/music (2) Movies (0) Heritage (1) Watch Sports (2) Sports: Sports practice (5) Skating (0) Parks: (9) Community: School (4) Community & Recreation Centre (0) 'Best Buddies' program (0) Library (3) Other: Inside/nothing: (1)
Week-end	Social/retail: Eat out/coffee (2) Shopping (8) Hang-out w friends (2) Cultural activities: Museum/galleries (3) Theatre/music (2) Movies (4) Heritage (1) Watch Sports (3) Sports: Sports practice (4) Skating (4) Parks: (2) Community: Community & Recreation Centre (2) 'Best Buddies' program (0) Library (3) Church (1) Other: Inside/nothing: (5) Not here (1)	Social/retail: Eat out/coffee (0) Shopping (7) Hang-out w friends (4) Cultural activities: Museum/galleries (7) Theatre/music (8) Movies (4) Heritage (5) Watch Sports (4) Sports: Sports practice (3) Skating (0) Biking (1) Parks: (9) Community: Community & Recreation Centre (2) 'Best Buddies' program (0) Library (1) Other: Inside/nothing: (3) Not here (1)

Table 14. UTS student's important places.

Type of Activity	Important places
Social/Retail	Eaton Centre Kensington market Yorkville Chinatown Starbucks Tim Horton's
Cultural activities	Museums/galleries: Royal Ontario Museum ROM); Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) Theatre/music: Ed Mirvish Theatre; Harbourfront Centre; Roy Thomson Hall; Convention Centre Sports: Rogers Arena; Air Canada Centre; Varsity Arena Heritage: CN Tower, Distillery District, City Hall.
Parks	Riverdale Farm Christie Pits Queens Park Toronto Islands Ramsden Park Toronto Necropolis & other cemeteries Huron Parkette (school lunches, after school) Jean Sibelius Square (school lunches, after school)
Community & Recreation Centres, Libraries	YMCA Daniel's Spectrum Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre Robarts Library Toronto Reference Library