

**BOUNDARIES, NARRATIVE FRAMES, AND THE
POLITICS OF PLACE IN PUBLIC HOUSING
REDEVELOPMENT: EXPLORING TORONTO'S DON
MOUNT COURT/RIVERTOWNE**

By

David Mair

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Abstract

Toronto's Rivertowne (formerly Don Mount Court) is Canada's first fully completed experiment with redeveloping post-war public housing developments into newly built mixed-income neighbourhoods (a combination of public housing and private condominiums). Originally built at the end of Toronto's urban renewal era, Don Mount Court consisted of 232 public housing units until the City's public housing authority decided to tear the buildings down in 2003. Five years later, former residents, along with newcomers, moved into rows of townhouses under its new name, Rivertowne. Proponents of this project believed this would transform an isolated, stigmatized environment into a thriving and integrated community. This thesis explores redevelopment as a mechanism that has profound and intricate impacts on space, place-identity and social dynamics between residents. Drawing on interviews with residents, I argue that the way proponents envision redevelopment is overly idealistic and overshadows a number of problems produced by the project.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Throughout 2005, a thin wall stretched around a number of blocks in Toronto's east end, tracing the site of a soon-to-be built housing development called Rivertowne. Only a few years before, this area was a public housing project built in the 1960s. Plastered along the wall were cutouts of people and taglines – an advertising strategy to reflect the kinds of people the new development was hoping to attract. There was young Rohima, who preferred an “espresso, not [an] expressway” in the morning, and the elderly Leo, who wanted to be “inspired, not retired”. Others included “thai, not tie” and “diner, not drive-thru”. Like most advertising for new real estate, these cutouts were projecting notions of place and what kinds of values and lifestyles Rivertowne was meant to embody. Part of this activity is with the name Rivertowne itself, since it wields almost no historical or current connection to the area. Likely the name is simply a twist on South Riverdale – the larger area in which Rivertowne is situated – and using an archaic spelling of “town” to generate a sense of history in the neighbourhood.

At least in its marketing, the area was a slate wiped clean: a new development, with new buildings and a new name. And for many of the prospective condominium buyers driving past the wall, they too may have figured on Rivertowne simply being one in a long list of condominium developments in Toronto at the time. But the site was in fact the city's first attempt at redeveloping its aging public housing properties.¹ The old buildings had been demolished, the tenants were moved temporarily to other properties in the city, and to fund the rebuild, the city sold a portion of the land to a private developer

¹ The City of Toronto calls the process “revitalization”. In this thesis, I will continue to use redevelopment.

to build condominiums on site. The result would be an entirely new built environment comprised of 232 units for public housing and 187 of private condominiums.

Rivertowne was the first project in Canada redeveloped under this new approach. Since then, Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC)² has initiated several other redevelopment plans (the largest being Regent Park, Lawrence Heights, and Alexandra Park), and similar projects have begun in other Canadian cities.³ The United States, on the other hand, has been much further along in this respect. Under HOPE (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere) VI, the federal government has been underwriting the redevelopment of public housing projects in cities across the country since it was passed in 1992 (Goetz, 2011). Although local contexts matter, scholars depict the current era of public housing redevelopment as following a similar trajectory: first the sites are chosen along some metric of physical deterioration and social “distress”, fuelled by planning and architectural critiques, with the state then utilizing private actors to help fund the reconstruction (Pomeroy, 2006; Goetz, 2011). In most cases, the new territory is designed around contemporary modes and aesthetics, drawing for instance, on the architectural principles of new urbanism and Jane Jacobs’ “eyes on the street” and Oscar Newman’s “defensible space” (Larsen, 2007; Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009; Thomson, 2010). Another key component, resulting from the use of public-private partnerships, is the advent of mixing public housing with private housing tenures in order to produce a greater heterogeneity of income groups – known commonly as “social mix” or “mixed income” (Joseph, 2008).

² TCHC is the local public housing authority.

³ Thomson (2010) examines the redevelopment of Little Mountain Housing, the first such project in Vancouver.

There is an on-going debate as to how redevelopment actually affects the neighbourhood and its residents. Proponents see redevelopment as a much needed tool to improve housing standards (Buron, 2002), lower segregation and stigmatization and crime (Popkin *et al.*, 2004), grant better access to resources and services (Kleit *et al.*, 2003), and lower crime rates (Tach, 2009). However, critics have pointed to a range of potential issues, including distress associated with temporary relocation during reconstruction (Schippling, 2007) and frustrations with participation in the design process (James, 2011; Sewell, 2003; Bockmeyer, 2000). Post redevelopment, researchers have also noticed that interaction across tenure is not only limited, but can lead to problems such as class and racial discrimination, heightened regulation and surveillance, and a new potential for stigma (August, 2011; Tach, 2009; James, 2010; McCormick *et al.*, 2012). There are also concerns that redevelopment projects may be a deliberate or unintended precursor to an area's gentrification (Goetz, 2011). Thus, while revitalization typically promises to improve neighbourhoods and residents' livelihoods, there is just cause to critically assess the goals versus the actual outcomes.

There is another dimension to redevelopment, which is often overlooked in the current debate. Neighbourhoods tend to secure an important role in people's lives, as locales where residents reside, interact with one another, access amenities and services, and derive senses of community (Witten *et al.*, 2003). They also carry the potential to connect to an individual or group's identity, and by way of this process, are ever evolving and contested (Martin, 2005). Particularly for "place studies", neighbourhoods are thus important in revealing the enigmatic relationship between people and the built environment. Redevelopment disrupts and reconstructs this relationship by establishing

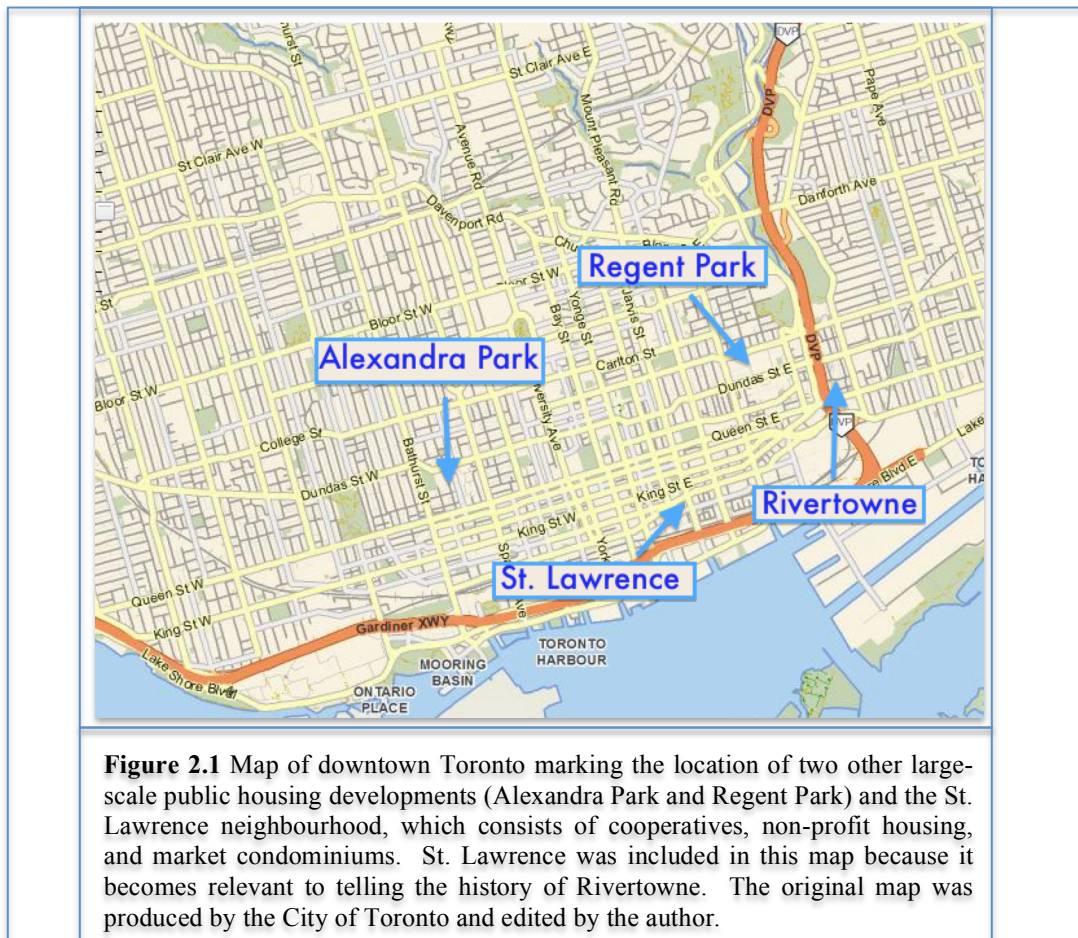
new buildings, parks, and streets, and also by introducing a large number of new residents to the area, who have their own social identities, values, histories and goals about what they want their neighbourhood to be. When Rivertowne was completed, it welcomed a diverse collection of people: a returning resident who remembers what life was like in the old development, a family transferred from another TCHC property in the city, a new Canadian who just moved to Toronto, a condominium owner who grew up in the surrounding neighbourhood, and a university student who is renting one of the condominiums until she finishes her degree.

In addition, the groups who were most responsible for designing the project and showcasing the neighbourhood to the public, namely the TCHC, architects, planners, and media, were actively pursuing goals that attend to the neighbourhood's place identity. As I will show, they largely envisioned redevelopment as a mechanism to transform what they saw as a problematic and failing "place" to a more successful, normalized one. The most important tenets of this new neighbourhood were (1) establishing a boundless, reintegrated urban fabric with the surrounding neighbourhood, (2) a reduction in stigma from the former place and (3) producing a "thriving" community among residents (*National Post*, 2007; *Toronto Star*, 2010; Kunzle and Sisam, Interview;⁴ TCHCb, 2012). From the appearance of the housing to the organization of the streets, much of the composition of Rivertowne was in service to these aims.

This thesis is about approaching the redevelopment of Don Mount Court, not through its success or failure in improving housing standards or neighbourhood services, but as an intervention through "place" and examining the kinds of contestations that have

⁴ In this thesis all interviews I conducted with professionals (not residents) will be cited as the participant's last name followed by "Interview." A table compiling these individuals is located in the Appendix I.

occurred over the neighbourhood's identity. At its heart is an analysis of what kind of place proponents of redevelopment imagined Rivertowne to be compared to the actual experiences and feelings residents have had since moving in. My hope is to challenge the notion that the City of Toronto's current program is a predictable or clean process that improves a neighbourhood space. Interviews with residents will reveal a far more complicated image where politics over place takes centre stage.



As opposed to Toronto's notorious Regent Park, Don Mount Court is not well known in the city. In my own experience, few people I spoke to about my research had heard of the neighbourhood. Especially since Don Mount Court no longer officially

exists, this thesis is a way to share its history. In the following chapter, I trace the history of the neighbourhood focusing most attention on the period of urban renewal, which resulted in the construction of Don Mount Court in the 1960s, and the more recent period of redevelopment, which led to the construction of Rivertowne. This view will showcase the similarities and differences between the eras while also laying the groundwork for discussing contemporary dynamics and place-identities.

In Chapter Three, I consider the existing academic literature on redevelopment in Canada and the United States and what conclusions have been drawn so far. This section is not exhaustive, but is organized around four major intellectual strands that compose the rhetorical base that proponents use to convince cities to engage in redevelopment: (1) neighbourhood effects, (2) social mix, (3) contemporary thought on design and planning and (4) neoliberalism. The second section of this literature review then considers some theoretical approaches to “place” that I believe have great explanatory power in regards to the dynamics between residents in Rivertowne. The framework I discuss here leads my analysis of the neighbourhood in later chapters. After engaging in the literature, I briefly outline the methods used in this research and what my experience and position in the neighbourhood was like.

While the literature review explored the theories behind redeveloping public housing, the content drew from on-going discussions in Canada and the United States from the last half-century. As each project is embedded in its own context, I needed to understand what specific ideas inspired the design of Rivertowne and how their own goals became involved. I was also interested in how those responsible for the redevelopment understood the older neighbourhood as a place. Chapter Five is the result

of this query. After interviewing the architects, and the main urban planner, and examining policy briefs/literature by the TCHC and City Council reports, I found that proponents of redevelopment articulated a kind of oppositional dynamic between the failing Don Mount Court and the successful Rivertowne.

Chapters Six and Seven are devoted to neighbourhood life in post-redeveloped Rivertowne. Drawing from theories on “boundary-work” and “neighbourhood narrative frames”, I explore the contestations between residents over defining Rivertowne’s identity and how these factor into other aspects of everyday life in the neighbourhood. Most important, this depiction of Rivertowne complicates the narrative about redevelopment and the goals envisioned by proponents. I conclude this research by considering what the City of Toronto could learn from Don Mount Court/Rivertowne’s experience. Part of this section is directed at architects, planners and the TCHC and highlights how some elements of the design have contributed to the challenges facing the neighbourhood. But my larger hope is to create room for a more general, critical reflection on redevelopment, at a time when so much of the debate is focused on what I believe to be questionable hopes and assumptions.

Chapter Two: A History of Renewal to Redevelopment

Napier Place

The area of my study is bounded by the Don Valley, Queen and Dundas Streets and Broadview Avenue in what is a pocket of South Riverdale. Through the first half of the 20th century – when it was called Napier Place – it consisted mostly of detached and semi-detached Victorian and Edwardian housing built between 1870 and 1920 (CTAa). Houses in South Riverdale were, according to a planning report published by the City in the 1970s, “small and of low-cost construction, and intended for industrial workers” (Walks and August, 2008: 2606). The streets were organized in short grids with narrow laneways running along the backs of the buildings and cars parked out on the street – a common pattern at the time for much of Riverdale and residential inner city Toronto.

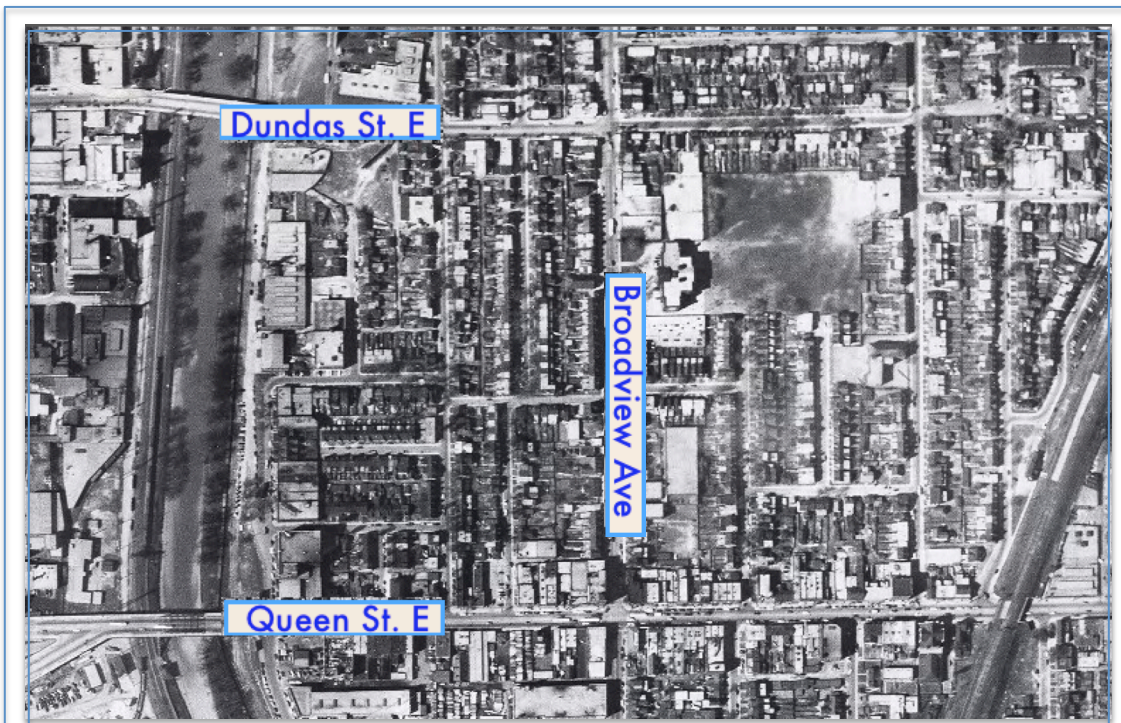


Figure 2.2. An aerial photograph taken in 1953. The area shows much of South Riverdale as well as the former neighbourhood of Napier Place (west of Broadview Avenue). Photograph copied from the City of Toronto Archives (CTAk)

Photos of the neighbourhood in the 1960s reveal housing in differing states of repair (Fig. 2.2). Parts of Munro St., for example, were lined with substantial two-three storey brick houses with gables – some with large porches and front gardens that were well tended. Mixed in with these were houses with boarded windows, wooden shack extensions in the back, and debris around the yards. As it is today, Queen St. East, Dundas St. East, and Broadview Ave. were the neighbourhood shopping streets for residents. This included the basic neighbourhood non-residential spaces like an auto garage, hair salon, grocer, bank and a church.

For much of its history, South Riverdale has been a “working class” area, compared to the rest of Toronto (Whyte, 2012: 9; CTAA, Keating, 1975: 1). In 1961, the average income per family was \$4,107 – only 70% of the average for the Metropolitan area (CTAf). Making up more than a third of these salaries, were residents employed as craftsmen or industrial workers, many of whom likely worked in the light and heavy industries nearby (CTAA). Up until the 1970s, the area had attracted a significant amount of industry, including large-scale production facilities such as Canada Metal Co. (a lead smelter) and AR Clarke Tanners (Walks and August, 2008: 2605, 2620). Many of these were located in close proximity to housing. Running along the western section of Napier Place, directly across from residents, were a furniture warehouse, knitting mill, auto-parts manufacturer, and just a short walk north of Dundas Street was a large incinerator (CTAj).⁵

South Riverdale’s population in the first half of the 20th century was predominantly of British origin (CTAf). By the 1960s, Anglo-Saxon was still very much

⁵ On Davies Ave in 1965, there were Johnson Furniture Warehouse, Riverdale Crankshifting and Grinding Ltd., Dempsey Frank E and Co Ltd. (chemical distributor), and Supreme Knitting Mill (CTAj).

the norm, but the area was transforming for two reasons. The first, according to Donald R. Keating, was that large numbers of these Anglo-Saxon residents began moving to the suburbs during the post war boom (Keating, 1975:1). This was also at a time when large waves of immigrants were moving in. First, this was people from other parts of Europe, primarily Italians, Greeks and Yugoslavians (Statistics Canada [SC], 1961, 1971). Then beginning in the early 1970s and increasing throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the neighbourhood became home to large numbers of Chinese immigrants (SC, 1971, 1981; 1991; 2000; Walks and August, 2008). This second wave has been especially important



Figure 2.3 Napier Place circa 1960s. Notice the Victorian housing, small private yards and porches in the front, and cars out on the street. In the 1960s this streetscape would receive extensive criticism, but would then receive acclaim at the beginning of the 21st century. Photo Credits: City of Toronto Archives (CTAd)

for changing the neighbourhood's identity. Gerrard Street, which runs east/west a block north of Napier Place, has become an important site for Chinese commerce and culture, and for the last few decades has been known as East Chinatown.

Origins of Canadian Public Housing Renewal

Compared to other developed western countries, Canada was relatively late in implementing public housing for low-income residents. The UK had legislation following WW1 to clear slums and ensure decent homes, and in the United States public housing was introduced as part of Roosevelt's New Deal, though the program was relatively small and based around providing loans to fund construction (Goetz, 2013: 26; Stone, 2003: 4). The latter's first official project was Techwood Homes in Atlanta in 1936. A year later, the United States passed the Wagner-Stegall Housing Act, which formalized a process for the federal government to provide funds to local public housing authorities to construct and manage new properties (Goetz, 2013: 30). Its scope, however, was still small and it would take the Housing Act of 1949 – a piece of Truman's Fair Deal – to initiate large-scale production of housing coupled with the much more popular desire for urban renewal/slum clearance (Teaford, 2000; Goetz, 2013: 28). In the same year, Toronto would be in the middle of constructing its pioneer project, Regent Park.

The histories in each country share a central theme, namely that public housing owes its emergence to divergent movements responding to conditions within inner cities. Most important were four views: (1) urban reformers lobbying for the eradication of slums, (2) the "housers" calling on the government to provide permanent, non-market housing to the working class, (3) progressives looking at public housing as a way to create jobs and strengthen the economy and (4) growth boosters like banks and central city businesses, which hoped renewal would save sagging property values (Goetz, 2013: 25; Purdy, 2007: 363; Teaford, 2000: 444).

While concerns over slums predate the 20th century, attention reached new

heights in both the United States and Canada following the Great Depression in 1929.⁶ Finding affordable decent housing had already been a problem in many Canadian cities but conditions only worsened with the surge in unemployment and families in need of government relief as well as the drop in wages for those who still had jobs (Purdy, 2003: 52; George, 2011: 90). One outcome for Toronto was greater overcrowding in low-income areas as families rented out parts of their dwellings to boarders or other families to make up for lost income (George, 2011: 90).

This only accentuated largely middle-class depictions of slums as dangerous spaces of “vice, crime and disease” (Purdy, 2003). These areas were, for reformers, where society broke down into moral and physical decay. Drawing mostly on social democratic ideals and emerging technocratic planning and public health fields, reformers called for the elimination of slums through direct government intervention. And for many cities, this cause found plenty of support from downtown businesses, banks and politicians who also saw slum clearance as a way to increase property values and tax revenue (Thompson, 2010: 13; Weiss, 1985: 254).

In Toronto, slum clearance first found serious political commitment in the Bruce Report (1934), a survey documenting the city’s substandard housing by judging a dwelling’s health standards and modern amenities, such as central heating and indoor plumbing (George, 2011: 92). The report condemned the city’s most problematic areas – The Ward and Cabbagetown – and called for government action to redevelop.⁷

⁶ Slums in 19th century London for instance were a popular source of attention for royal commissions, select committees, philanthropic organizations, and the public interest (Dyos, 1967). Another example is Friedrich Engels’ pamphlet entitled “the Housing Question” (1882), which argued that slums are a product of the inequality brought about by capitalism (Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009).

⁷ The Ward was located in the centre of downtown Toronto (roughly bounded by the Queen, College, Yonge Streets and University Ave) and was demolished in phases, especially between 1940 and 1960.

While fears over slums persisted, WWII stressed an already bad housing shortage. By that point parts of Toronto were dealing with urban congestion, overcrowding, high rents, and “unscrupulous” landlords (Purdy, 2003: 54). There was also growing support for government intervention into the housing market inspired, in part, by the New Deal programs south of the border (James, 2010: 71). It was in this environment that public housing construction and slum clearance were coupled together to remake large sections of the city’s downtown. Part of Cabbagetown was redeveloped into Regent Park North (RPN) starting in 1947. While it was created mostly through local initiative and finances, every urban renewal project following RPN was the result of cost sharing between the federal, provincial and municipal governments. Ottawa’s initial reluctance to implement public housing programs ended with amendments to the National Housing Act of 1949 and the creation of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)⁸ (Sewell, 1994: 33-34). Similar to the US, the federal government (through the CMHC) was to cover most capital costs while local providers would manage the properties; in Toronto this was first through the Housing Authority of Toronto (HAT) and then through the Ontario Housing Corporation (OHC) in 1964.

The optimism for slum clearance and renewal was initially strong. Regent Park North, for instance, was opened to widespread acclaim.⁹ Urban reformers like Albert Rose (then dean of University of Toronto’s School of Social Work) saw the project as not simply better housing, but a way of transforming residents into better workers, citizens

Cabbagetown was between The Ward and South Riverdale. Today the northern half of this area is still called Cabbagetown while the southern half is Regent Park, following expropriation and construction of public housing in the late 1940s (*Spacing Toronto*, 2013).

⁸ Later renamed Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

⁹ When Regent Park opened, the *Toronto Daily Star* chose the headline, “Seven Families Get Preview of ‘Heaven’ in Regent Park” (*Toronto Daily Star*, 1949).

and family members (Rose, 1958; Kipfer and Peturnia, 2009: 117). Grounded within these views was a trust in physical determinism, positing a clear and predicable relationship between a built environment and relationships between family members, the progress of an individual, and the health of a community.

The End of Napier Place

Napier Place first cropped up as a housing concern in 1956 with the City's commission of *Urban Renewal: A Study of the City of Toronto*. The purported mission driving the research was to identify areas of "blight" where housing was past the option of being "economically repaired" (CTAa). Cities needed to undertake such studies in order to qualify for urban renewal funding. The answer then was to expropriate, bulldoze and rebuild. Almost on a street-by-street basis, the report marked out the neighbourhood's drab appearance, poor building foundations and exteriors, the prevalence of dirty and untended yards, and the unhealthy effects of surrounding industries. But in the minds of the writers, Napier Place was clearly blighted for broader reasons that entwined the physical environment with more sociological and ideological notions of what made a successful neighbourhood. The densities were too high, overcrowding was common,

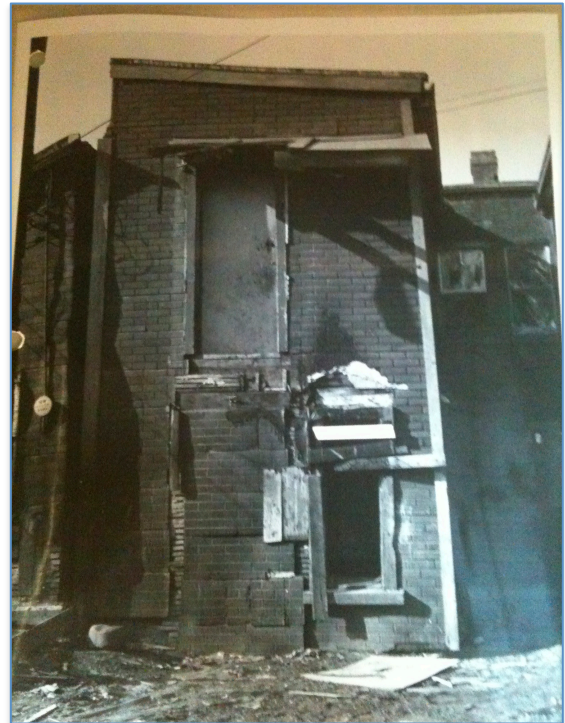


Figure 2.4. Back of a property on Dundas Street circa 1960s. Photo Credits: Property of City of Toronto Archives (CTAd).

children tended to play in the streets, and spaces were not adequately differentiated by use (CTAa). Depictions of inner city streets like this were quite conventional for a time when Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities, Le Corbusier-inspired towers, and expansive suburbs held a burgeoning popularity. Within these perspectives, poor urban neighbourhoods like Napier Place were not simply a collection of substandard housing, but sites of "social decay" (a concept *Urban Renewal* uses; see CTAa).

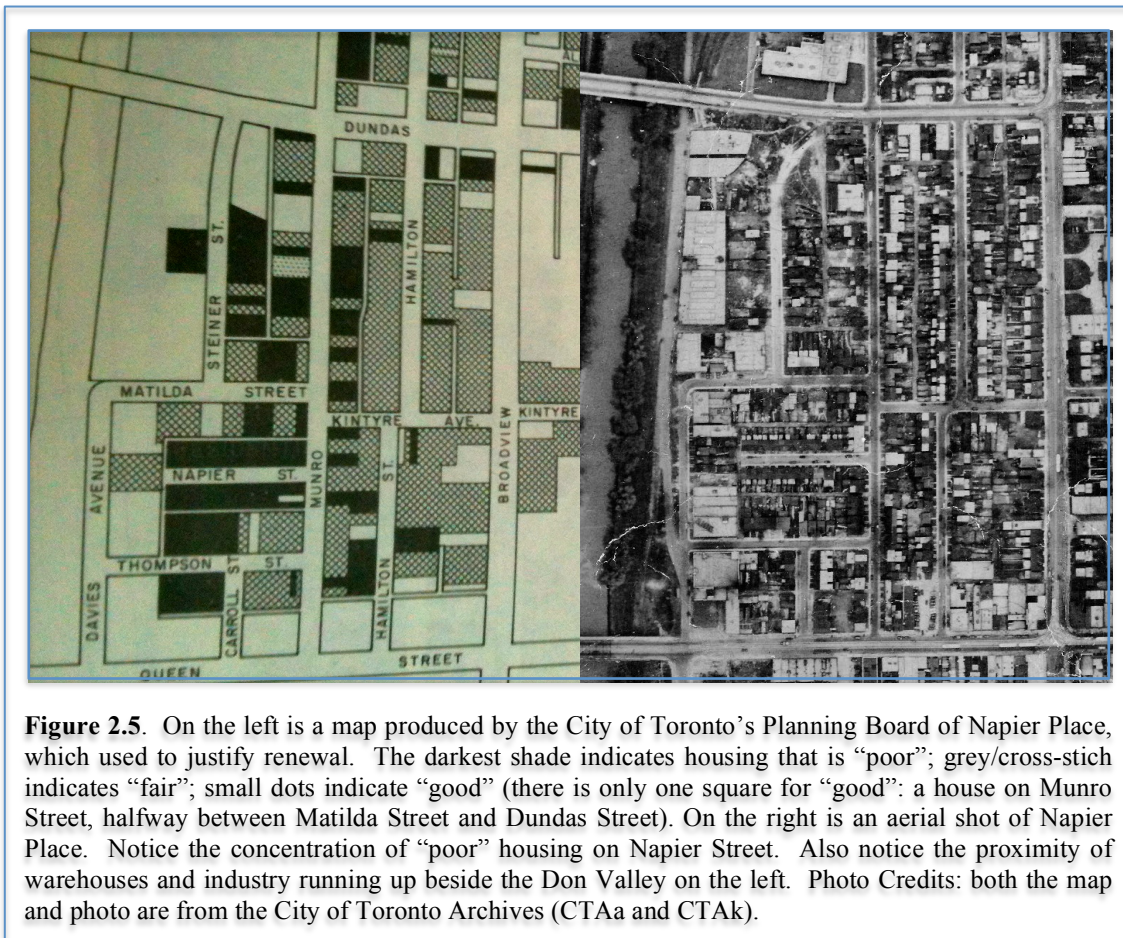
After *Urban Renewal*, Napier Place became one in a total of 27 pockets of concern and ranked third in terms of priority (behind Kensington and ahead of Sackville Place).¹⁰ However, it would not be until the middle of the next decade for renewal to actually begin. For a time, the city was caught up in other projects: Regent Park South (started in 1955), Moss Park (1958), and Alexandra Park (planned in 1956 but with no construction until 1964). Now that word was out about the city's intentions though, property values in Napier Place began to depreciate greatly (Sewell, 1993: 155). Graham Fraser explains this self-fulfilling process:

The threat of expropriation not only affected the area by persuading people to move out and making residents in the area fearful at the prospect of losing their homes, it also played a crucial role in accelerating the physical decline in the area. The vague insidious threat of expropriation and urban renewal always produces a vicious circle: the area is considered for urban renewal because a planner has decided that there is bad housing in the area, and yet once urban renewal is publicly discussed, no homeowner or landlord dares to repair his house for fear he will be expropriated without being compensated (Fraser, 1972: 34).

Hence Napier Place was stuck on a path that would help justify its expropriation.

¹⁰ Kensington is adjacent and slightly north of Chinatown on the west side of downtown (roughly bounded by College, Bathurst, Dundas Streets and Spadina Avenue). Sackville Place is a small area in Cabbagetown, north of Regent Park. Urban renewal plans for both areas failed to be implemented.

This process was delayed until 1965, mostly the result of a deadlock between levels of governments (and in the case of the Ottawa, a temporary loss of interest in new projects).¹¹ Then slums and housing problems were back on City Council's agenda in the mid-1960s, resulting in the commission of another study: (1965) *The Improvement Programme for Residential Areas* (Fraser, 1972: 68). The report recycled much of the data from *Urban Renewal* and reiterated Napier Place's position as a priority.



By the fall of that year, the city had already planned and gained approval to begin the project. The federal government would put up 50%, with the remaining half split

¹¹ See Sewell, 1972: 150. Dealings over Moss Park between the province and Ottawa delayed the project. See also Fraser, 1972: 66-67. There was also a political divide within municipal politics over how to proceed with Alexandra Park. Fraser also argues the federal government at this point showed signs of not caring about Toronto's renewal projects. Rose [1980: 37] identifies yet another factor inhibiting implementation: an economic recession, which the country did not recover from until 1963.

evenly between the province and the City of Toronto (CTAa). In total, they projected an expense of around \$6.7 million (*Globe and Mail*, 1965). The plan was to expropriate 238 properties and displace 1, 200 residents. City planners believed renewal in this pocket made sense for a few reasons: like other projects, residents would enjoy a much better quality of life and new housing would stabilize the surrounding area, which in their opinion was mainly poor but not dire enough to require expropriation and demolition (CTAc). The planners also believed that the project's smaller size meant it would be quicker and cheaper to build than the much larger Alexandra Park – one that was particularly difficult to execute. In part because of political bickering, Alexandra Park went through a number of delays, which exacerbated discontent among residents over losing their homes (Sewell, 1993: 151). Napier Place, it was hoped, would be easier and would “serve as expressions of the City's real intent to take renewal action” (CTAc).

These motives are revealing, considering how late Napier Place was in Toronto's first renewal era. Much had changed since 1948 when a section of Cabbagetown was cleared to make way for Regent Park. Only three years after the report on Napier Place, Regent Park would be deemed a “failure” by one of its chief proponents (James, 2010: 74). And as Purdy reflects, “by the late 1960s, [Regent Park] itself would be increasingly characterized as a ‘slum’, similar in many respects to the Cabbagetown neighbourhood that was destroyed to build it” (Purdy, 2005: 531). Writers and academics were also beginning to criticize the very process of slum clearance and modernist planning. Jane Jacobs devotes an entire chapter to this in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). And as the emerging opposition in Alexandra Park demonstrated, residents were well aware of the risk that renewal presented (CTAh).

Expropriation of Napier Place officially began on January 1st 1966. The plan called for the clearance of all residential properties north of Thompson Street, south of Dundas Street and west of Hamilton Street. This essentially covered all of Napier Place, excluding the strip of houses between Hamilton Street and Broadview Avenue as well as a few houses south of Thompson Street (see fig. 2.5 to get an idea of this area). The City moved quickly on the first phase of clearance; by November of the same year, 177 of the 245 properties had been bulldozed (*Toronto Star*, 1966b). While residents had little warning of the project,¹² a concerted opposition to the project was growing. Some in the neighbourhood were angry at the City for derisively referring to them as “slum dwellers” and opting for such a severe intervention (CTAh). In a letter addressed to Mr. C.E Norris, then City Clerk of Toronto, a resident living on Matilda Street reveals a deep distrust of the project:

This rotten money scheming affair has upset our community and people something terrible...Why should we be put out of our homes after working hard to pay for them...The City has no care the tragic worry and suffering they are causing us people that have worked hard and tried to do the right [sic]. The City will never even half cover the expense. They are just trying to take our homes from us and make us pay double all over again (CTAh).

While government reports were silent on this matter, renewal would erase all of the labour and money residents had put into their homes. Graham Fraser describes a family on Munro St. that had invested in a new roof, chimney, and copper plumbing – steps that are made essentially meaningless when the bulldozers arrive (Fraser, 1972: 108). There were also a number of houses in the expropriated area that City reports admitted were in

¹² A letter written by the Napier Place Residents' Association in 1966 claims that many residents did not hear that the plan was to proceed with any real certainty until late in 1965 (CTAh).

“fair” condition (CTAa).¹³ But the issue that triggered the largest and most active opposition, which would eventually cause significant delays in the project, was the amount of money the government offered residents for their properties. The City held an enormous amount of power in dealing with individual homeowners, an imbalance the latter hoped to rectify by forming the Napier Place Residents’ Association. A letter the group sent to the City in March complains,

The whole position of the homeowner as an individual negotiating with the City is one of inequality. Even with good legal help, which the poor person may be in no position to get, the expertise massed on the other side is overwhelming (CTAh).

Compensation for renewal was tied to Ontario’s Expropriation Procedures Act of 1963, which required the government to give landowners money based on a vague concept of “market value” (Fraser, 1972: 107). Stories in the *Toronto Star* reveal how this process unfairly put residents of Napier Place in precarious situations. The City offered Thomas Craigen, a debt free, elderly resident on Munro, \$8,800 for his home. After looking around for a new place in Scarborough, he concluded that it would cost no less than \$14, 500 to find a similar house, thus forcing him to either move to a substantially smaller, cheaper place or to go into debt at an old age (*Toronto Star*, 1966b). This was by no means a rare occurrence. The Ontario Law Reform Commission found that, on average, homeowners in Napier Place had to pay 56% more for their new properties and this meant an average loss of \$5,450 – no small sum in the 1960s (Fraser 1972: 109). As a result, most residents saw “market value” as substantively inadequate and providing a deal for the government to raze their own homes. What they insisted on

¹³ See Fig. 2.5. The lighter shades of housing on the map to the left are in “fair” condition, which for the City meant not necessarily requiring demolition.

instead was a “home for a home”: sufficient compensation to find a similar house elsewhere in the city (*Toronto Star*, 1966c).

The City, for the most part, showed very little interest in changing its position. Mayor Givens, the Board of Control and officials in the Real Estate Department continually blamed the Expropriation Procedures Act in forcing them to follow “market value” (*Toronto Star*, 1966c). According to them, their hands were tied on the issue of compensation, and renewal should nonetheless continue unobstructed.

It was near the middle of 1966 that the decision was made to rename the neighbourhood Don Mount Village, which residents claimed was the original name of the area (CTAh). In contrast to Rivertowne, it was the residents who asked the City to change the name because they felt Napier Place had become burdened with a “detrimental” reputation, though for this they blamed absentee landlords and unenforced bylaws (CTAh). While the City consented to this request, it would be the only consensus the two sides were able to achieve. To strengthen their opposition, the Napier Place Residents’ Association (which was now called the Don Mount Village Residents’ Association [DMVRA]) joined forces with the Don Vale Residents’ Association and the Trefann Court Residents’ Association – two groups also fighting renewal schemes in their neighbourhoods. Involved with the latter were John Sewell and Karl Jaffary, who went on to be strong voices for anti-renewal on City Council. Together, these groups organized meetings and demonstrations around their neighbourhoods and at City Hall.

While these strategies forced politicians to engage in what became a very well publicized debate, renewal continued unabated. By August 1967, the first phase of construction had already begun on one of side of Napier Place while only five households

remained un-expropriated on the other end. These were Matt Kondrat, Thomas Craigen, Dorothy Graham, R. Hughes, and Thomas Cox.¹⁴ That same month, things came to a head. The City reportedly waited until Matt Kondrat went out for groceries and then ordered construction crews and the police to take over the site (Fraser, 1972: 110). It worked, though residents were so shocked by the tactic, they marched to the homes of Mayor William Denison, Controllers Margaret Campbell, June Marks, Fred Beavis, and Aldermen Oscar Sigsworth and Joe Piccininni (*Globe and Mail*, 1967). Before the City could move on the remaining four, the three neighbourhood groups also organized a demonstration at City Hall. Around 70 residents, along with MPP James Renwick, interrupted a Board of Control meeting to try to stop the renewal before compensation could be dealt with. In response the controllers walked out en masse and had the lights turned off, literally leaving the group in the dark (*Toronto Star*, 1967a). With this continued intransigence, opposition in Napier Place soon ran out of time: three of the remaining four residents accepted the deal – Dorothy Graham stayed on till the following March and was actually able to receive higher compensation (Fraser, 1972: 114).

Napier Place became Don Mount Court and, with the exception of Dorothy Graham, residents received compensation based on “market value” rather than a “home for a home”. But as John Sewell and Graham Fraser argue, renewal of Napier Place and the opposition that sprung against it was a critical step in changing the City’s policies. The controversy became such a plague on the project that the very politicians who helped push renewal through started apologizing or blaming other officials (Fraser, 1972: 114-

¹⁴ R. Hughes was the resident who wrote the letter to the city clerk in 1996 calling the project a “rotten money scheming affair” (CTAh).

115). The other renewal areas – Kensington, Trefann Court, and Don Vale¹⁵ – were all temporarily put on hold (*Toronto Star*, 1967b). A year later, the Province finally passed a New Expropriation Act that factored in funds for relocation and an option for homeowners to get a house of equivalent value if they appealed (Fraser, 1972: 116). Napier Place also gave other neighbourhoods like Trefann Court a sight of things to come, and this undoubtedly helped them to mobilize.

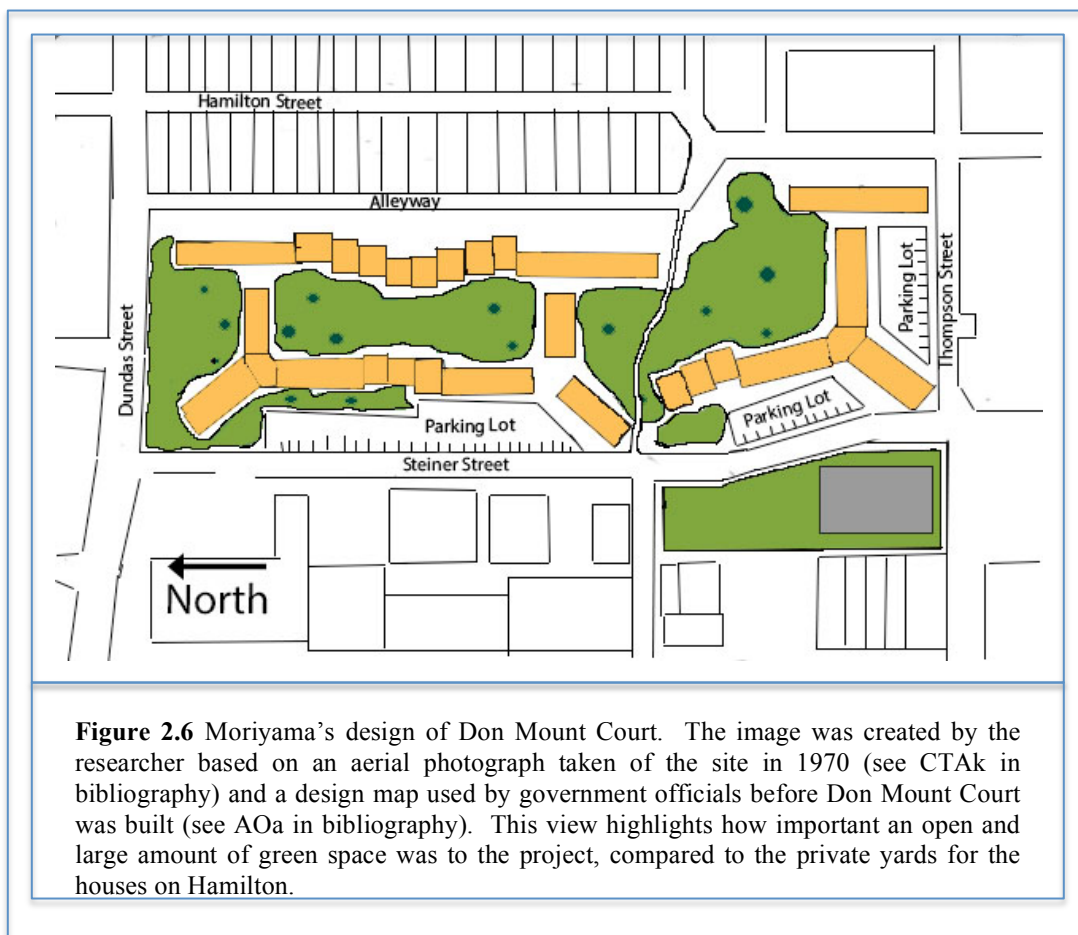
New Life As Don Mount Court

To design the new project the City hired Raymond Moriyama, a rising star in architecture who had already completed some high profile projects, including the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (1958) and the Ontario Science Centre (1964). His plan was to remedy many of the problems outlined in the City's reports of Napier Place. Like other public housing designs around the western world, Don Mount Court was to provide sound living environments through new designs, not replicating what stood there before.

The original street grid was erased in order to create a large open plot, upon which housing was organized in a wide rectangular border. This allowed for an expansive, semi-public inner courtyard, uninterrupted by car traffic. I refer to this as semi-public, because while it is not demarcated for private ownership, the courtyard is blocked from view to people outside of the development (they would also have to pass under short archways through the development for access). The buildings were also set back a distance away from the streets in contrast to the more typical organization east of the development. Emphasis was placed on how the large, expansive green space would give

¹⁵ Don Vale is now commonly thought of as a part of Cabbagetown on the east end of Toronto and Trefann Court is south of Regent Park.

the high number of youth and abundance of recreation space away from the pavement and cars they had previously played around (AOe). While Moriyama's plan removed the private front and backyards of Napier Place, a few private yards were included on ground level units near the parking lots (see fig. 2.7). For Santiago Kunzle, who helped design Rivertowne, the focus on collective green space and rejection of street life essentially made this project "anti-urban" (Kunzle, Interview).



To accommodate almost the same number of families from Napier Place (232 units down from 245), the design turned to a mix of 2, 4 and 6 storey buildings. Residents living in the lower units would have ground level access through their own private doors that faced either the outside parking lots and in-between green spaces or the

inside courtyard. To access the upper units, Moriyama designed ancillary buildings with staircases between sections of the row houses (see red brick section on Photo 2.4). Leading out of the staircases were walkways running along the outside of the buildings to the doors of each unit. Each ground and upper unit of housing was two levels, with private stairs inside. The result are units that are more like small two-storey houses built on top of one another rather than an apartment in an apartment building. The exception was in the 6-storey buildings, which had two upper levels of single-storey units and an elevator for access.



Figure 2.7. A view showing a 4-storey and 6-storey section of housing. The design does not allow any car traffic through the area. Pedestrians would walk through the archway between the two rows to access both the staircases to those units and to get to the inner courtyard. Photo Credits: Erik Twight, 2006. I contacted Erik Twight via his Flickr account but did not receive a reply.

Central to the design was to make Don Mount Court turn in on itself, thereby, contributing to a feeling of community among residents. Figure 2.6 highlights the way the buildings were organized to fit together rather than integrate with the rest of the neighbourhood. The steps taken to create this single autonomous environment – housing facing away from the street, no-through roads – is likely drawn from what is known now as the Radburn style, based on a suburb from the 1920s in New Jersey. In contrast to the norm for automobile-centric suburbs, Radburn was organized around green space and an intricate network of paths and small cul-de-sac roads rather than main through-streets. It was based on the principle of complete separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. With its small scale and composition of low-rise row houses, Don Mount Court did not resemble the massive towers of Regent Park South or the high-rise towers emerging in the inner suburbs – or at least not completely. Moriyama’s design was not a “vertical neighbourhood”, but more like an urban village that utilized aesthetics and creative organizing of space.

His involvement, however, was cut short. Correspondence between him and the government shows a continual desire on the latter’s part to reduce costs (AOe). This helped create such tension that in March 1967, Moriyama felt it was “untenable” to continue on as architect and that he would like to “disassociate” himself from the project (AOe). He would later say of this experience:

We started to see things getting nibbled away, largely inexpensive things like insulation, vapour barriers, weather stripping, all the pragmatic things that were important to the life of the building. We knew that it would be a disaster in a few years (*National Post*, 2007).

With Moriyama gone, the City hired a new architect, Julian J. Trasiewicz, who

followed through on the same basic design. By the summer of the following year, fifteen families had moved into the first phase (*Toronto Star*, 1968). While the battle over expropriation had only been a year before, the opening of Don Mount Court was celebratory. The *Toronto Star* described the apartments as “bright” and “airy” and interviewed a number of happy incoming residents (*Toronto Star*, 1968; 1969). Upon its



Figure 2.8 Celebrating the opening of Don Mount Court. Considering this photo essentially presented the neighbourhood to the public, its composition hints at what many hoped was an answer to cramped urban living. The kids and their mothers are happy and smiling, playing in the inner courtyard in bare feet. No cars or fences to be found. *Toronto Star*, 1968.

completion a year later, Don Mount totaled at 232 units each within a rent-geared-to-income scheme administered by OHC. A project that had first emerged in 1956 was finally complete. Don Mount was now a part of the province’s burgeoning portfolio of public housing along with Regent Park and Alexandra Park. And with Trefann Court’s renewal ultimately getting scrapped, Don Mount Court was the last neighbourhood to undergo this particular form of renewal.

There were indications shortly after opening that Moriyama’s concerns were well-placed. Residents had a list of grievances, from the apartments freezing in the winter, broken floor tiles and showerheads, to inadequate lighting outside (*Globe and Mail*,

1970a). A prime example of this occurred during one the project's first winters when 42 families had to be evacuated after a watermain burst and flooded their units (*Globe and Mail*, 1970b). The biggest problem, however, was that the buildings sat over a flood zone. According to City of Toronto planner Denise Graham, this eventually contributed to mold and structural damage (Graham, Interview). These issues foreshadowed the return of renewal to the area forty years later.

Policy after Renewal

While originally popular, urban renewal had lost much of its support by the time Don Mount Court was completed. A major issue was that the public began seeing the housing projects as “ghettos of the poor” rather than the originally conceived model communities. Even Albert Rose, who had initially written a book celebrating Regent Park's ability to transform lives, was calling the project a failure by 1968 (James, 2010: 25). In response to the growing criticism around the country, Prime Minister Trudeau called for a Task Force to make policy recommendations in regards to low-income housing. Both this report (known as the Hellyer Report) and a similar study by Michael Dennis and Susan Fish (Dennis and Fish, 1972) a few years later concluded that public housing was indeed a problem – too often large and isolating, lacking adequate services, and sites of physical degeneration and stigma (Hellyer, 1969: 53-54).

Following these conclusions, the early 1970s became a major transition period for housing policy in Canada. Most important was a desire for smaller-scale, mixed-income projects that better fit within neighbourhood contexts (Cooper and Rodman, 1992: 40). For policymakers, the answer was in non-profit and co-operative housing.

Ottawa abandoned the urban renewal program and in 1973 amended the National Housing Act to gear its funding toward these tenures of housing. Under Mayor Crombie, Toronto energetically embraced this shift as well after its own study, *Living Room* (1973), came to many of the same conclusions. The report also led to the creation of a municipally run housing authority to spearhead the process, CityHome. Through this provider, the city began pursuing projects – by encouraging private sector involvement – that provided affordable, mixed-income, and deliberately more integrated housing (Cooper and Rodman, 1992: 41).

The design of the St. Lawrence neighbourhood was developed along this model, built on forty-five acres of former industrial land in downtown Toronto. By 1990 when it was almost completed, it housed some 3,500 units, around 39% condominium apartments, 30% non-profit co-operatives, 27% private non-profit, and 4% ownership townhouses (Cooper and Rodman, 1992: 41; GHK International *et al.*, 2003). These forms of social housing achieved levels of income diversity that traditional public housing could not primarily because the former housed a mix of residents paying RGI and others paying market rent. Since the government provides a number of subsidies (including the difference between what is accumulated through rent from RGI payments and what the estimated market value is on those rents), cooperatives/non-profits have often been more affordable even for those paying market rent than in the private realm (Cooper and Rodman: 1992: 37). Social housing proved to be popular; within two decades the federal government had funded almost 150,000 units (Sewell, 1994: 174). But commitment was short-lived. In the mid-1980s, Conservatives in Ottawa found social housing on the whole costly (as the

system relied on government subsidies) and complained that too often units were going to mid-income or high-income residents (Wolfe, 1998: 124; Sewell, 1994: 171-

2). This was a signal of the end. Over the next few years, the federal government

Figure 2.9. Don Mount Court arguably bridges a transition between two periods of design. Here are two other TCHC properties. Above is a part of Regent Park South designed by Peter Dickinson in 1958 (top) and the Hydro Block designed by A. J. Diamond and Barton Myers in 1972 (bottom). Dickinson's design fit within modernist principles of sharp-angles creating a box/rectangular shape with little ornamentation. It is also like other large public housing projects in scale as it dominates the surrounding landscape. The Hydro Block was designed after Don Mount Court. Ontario Hydro (the province's utility company) first purchased the strip, but after protests by anti-renewal activists, it was developed into housing for Cityhome (City of Toronto's Non-profit Housing Authority). The Hydro Block still looks modernist, but is a striking contrast in scale and relation to streetscape to Regent Park South. Don Mount Court follows Regent Park's emphasis on traditional grids, but is similar to Hydro Block's low-rise and internal organization (notice the two levels and the hallway running along the 3rd level to access upper units). Photo Credits: Regent Park South copied from *Toronto City Life*, 2014 (<http://www.torontocitylife.com/2010/03/07/the-projects-project-pt-3-the-photo-essay-one/>). Photo of Hydro Block copied from Docomomo Canada, 2014 (<http://docomomo-ontario.ca/register/works/hydro-block/>).

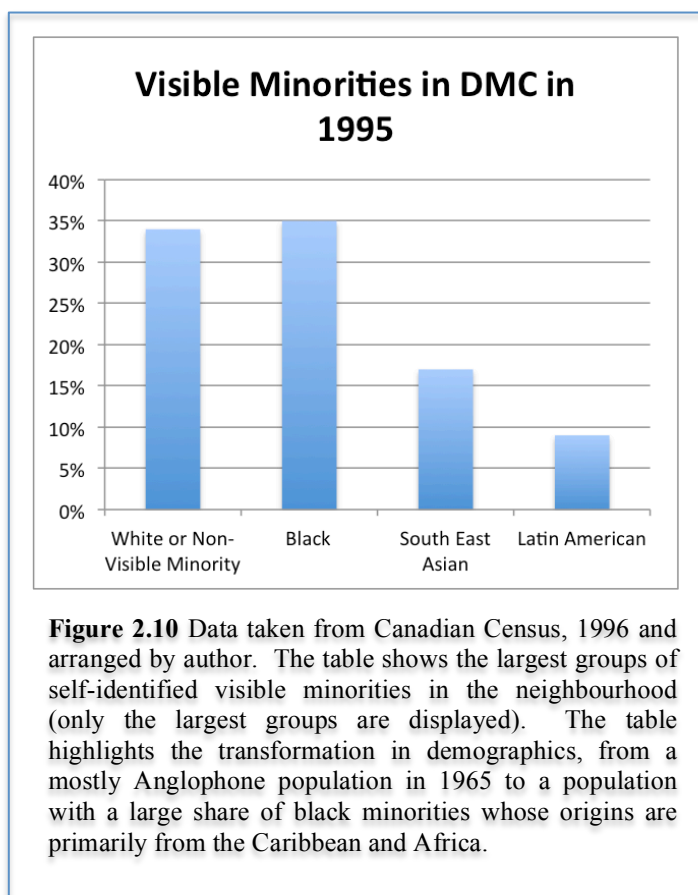


continually reduced its financial support until 1992, when it opted out entirely (Sewell, 1994: 174). While Ontario initially attempted to pick up the slack, it too was soon giving up on expanding social housing.

Changes to Public Housing and Don Mount Court (1970-2000)

While much attention was focused on the turn to social housing, the existing public housing stock was far from static throughout this period. Major changes were initiated in policy and housing provision in Ontario and some had transformative repercussions on Don Mount Court. When the project opened in the late 1960s, the overwhelming majority of the almost 1000 tenants were Anglophone (SC, 1971). The next biggest group were Francophone, followed by smaller numbers of Asian and Southern European ethnicities (SC, 1971). Throughout the next twenty years, the share of Anglophones and Francophones dropped substantially, while being replaced primarily by residents from Caribbean, African, and Asian countries.¹⁶ This shift is in line with other public housing projects in Toronto at the time. Canada's immigration policy no longer favoured Western European countries, and Toronto became the leading city for attracting these new groups (Murdie, 1994: 439). In 1991, the government also extended access to public housing to refugee claimants (Smith, 1994: 911). Both of these resulted in a marked increase of "foreign born" tenants in public housing (Schippling, 2007: 14). Black minorities from Caribbean and African countries were a significant component of this transformation. In 1986, black minorities made up 27.4% of the population of the City's public housing while only about 5% in all of Toronto (Murdie, 1994: 446).

¹⁶ In the 1981 and 1986 censuses, the largest non-Anglophone demographic was "Other". There are two reasons for taking "Other" to mean residents from the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia. During the 1990s, "Other" is replaced by actual countries of origin, and these reflect the areas mentioned above in Don Mount Court's demographics. Murdie (1994) also makes the same connection in his study of Toronto's public housing demographics during the same period.



A decade later, black minorities made up 35% of Don Mount Court (see Figure 2.10). Latin Americans made up 8.5%, Southeast Asians (primarily Japanese and Chinese) at 16.5%. However, unlike projects such as Regent Park, which had a much higher share of foreign-born residents, Don Mount Court was not far from the average in Toronto (SC, 1996; Purdy, 2003; 218). While Anglophones had

decreased significantly in their share of the neighbourhood's composition, this was still higher than in Regent Park (SC, 1996; Purdy, 2003: 220).

In addition to ethnicity, policies in Ottawa began affecting other aspects of the social composition of public housing residents. In the 1980s, the Conservative Government decided to try to reserve public housing to only those who were “truly needy”, a move that followed the United States under the Reagan administration (Dreier and Hulchanski, 1994: 45; Schippling, 2007: 13). When Don Mount Court was built, it was meant to house a mix of low and moderate income working families. These changes in the 1980s were an attempt to save money, by narrowing the eligibility of the populace and thus lowering the demand for housing, which also rested on an ideological belief that

public housing should serve as a refuge to only a small otherwise distressed group. For Toronto, this resulted in a large decline in the number of residents who identified employment as their main source of income – from 57% in 1970 to only 18% in 1989 (Smith, 1995: 907). Echoing the neighbourhood-effects literature, these policies produced a much greater concentration of poverty in public housing developments. In 1988, the average household income in public housing became less than half the average renter household income (Purdy, 2003: 173). Around the same time, public housing also began accepting more residents with mental and physical disabilities, the elderly, parents under 18, and victims of family violence (Smith, 1994: 911). Lastly, public housing also received a much higher share of single parent families compared to the overall population of Toronto.

These changes filtered through to Don Mount Court. Children under 14 comprised 31% (30% overall in public housing), which was almost double the city average of 17.5% (SC, 1996; Schippling, 2007: 14). Most notable was that more than half of the families in Don Mount Court were led by single parents, a much higher rate than in Toronto and other projects like Regent Park (the latter had 37% in 1996).

South Riverdale (1970-2010)

South Riverdale was also changing. Back when it was Napier Place, the area had a large concentration of industries, many within close proximity to residential streets. But by the turn of the century, many of these companies had shuttered or moved elsewhere. Deindustrialization in Toronto had been underway since the early 1950s, and till the 1970s, the number of industrial workers dropped by rates between 25 and 29% each decade (Caulfield, 1994: 76). Caulfield notes that between 1976 and 1986 in

downtown Toronto, “half-million square metres of industrial space were demolished for redevelopment” as industrial companies simultaneously declined on the whole provincially or moved outside of the city to other municipalities (Caulfield, 1994: 76). During this period South Riverdale had maintained an above-average retention of manufacturing jobs but, especially from the 1980s to 2000s, the area had seen a significant drop in operations (Walks and August, 2008: 2615).

Resident-driven opposition to the pollution caused by industries had also had an effect. Donald Keating’s *The Power to Make it Happen* (1975) documents some of the early neighbourhood organizing that took place in South Riverdale against a meat-packing plant a few blocks east of Don Mount Court and Canada Metal Co., located in the south-end of South Riverdale along Eastern Avenue. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were a couple of high-profile cases connected to the deindustrialization of the neighbourhood, including the closure of another meat-rendering plant and the rejection of a proposed garbage incinerator (*Toronto Star*, 1990; Walks and August, 2008). Some of the industrial properties that were not destroyed have become residential loft spaces or businesses like graphic design firms or law offices. On the eastern end of South Riverdale these lofts have replaced factories for Colgate-Palmolive, Wrigley Gum, and Coca-Cola (Walks and August, 2008). In the 1970s, Davies Street (across from Don Mount Court) contained a metal spinning company and a furniture warehouse. By the 2000s, the street had attracted photography and art studios as well as an office for a film entertainment company (CTAj).

Measuring gentrification alongside deindustrialization is a more complicated narrative. By the late 1970s, Walks and August (2008) note that South Riverdale was

positioned as one of the next big sites of gentrification, which had been taking off to the west (in Cabbagetown) and to the north (North Riverdale). Yet the promise of gentrification “largely stalled” between 1981 and 1990s. Walks and August (2008) first attribute this outcome to two environmental factors that hurt South Riverdale’s reputation: a termite infestation starting in the late 1970s, and concerns over air and soil pollution as a direct result of the heavy industries nearby. Officials found that soil contained levels of lead far beyond provincial standards, and that the main culprit was Canada Metal Co., the lead smelter located on the southeast end of the neighbourhood (*Toronto Star*, 1987). It became a popular focus for the media throughout the 1980s, and it would not be until the end of that decade before the government organized efforts to remediate the soil (Walks and August, 2008).

The third reason that Walks and August (2008) identify goes back to demographics in the neighbourhood. As previously mentioned in this chapter, the 1960s and 1970s saw a growing number of residents originating from China. By 1990, almost one-quarter of residents identified as Chinese. Walks and August (2008) believe this large ethnic block had helped slow gentrification because it enabled an “entrenched” population where turnover rates were lower and owners sought tenants from within the community. The size of the Chinese population in South Riverdale remains high, yet in contrast to this possible inhibitor, gentrification especially since the turn of the 21st century has returned in earnest.¹⁷

Articles in the *Toronto Star* between 1999 to 2002 describe this growing attraction – especially for Queen Street East – with one writer calling it a “mini-

¹⁷ Walks and August (2008) only looked at South Riverdale between 1970 and 2000. Yet the ten years after 2000 provide the clearest evidence of gentrification.

renaissance” (*Toronto Star*, 1999, 2001, 2002). Fig. 2.11 shows that both the median family income and the average value of dwellings in the area have clearly risen, surpassing the City and indicating that gentrification has firmly taken hold. Other studies,

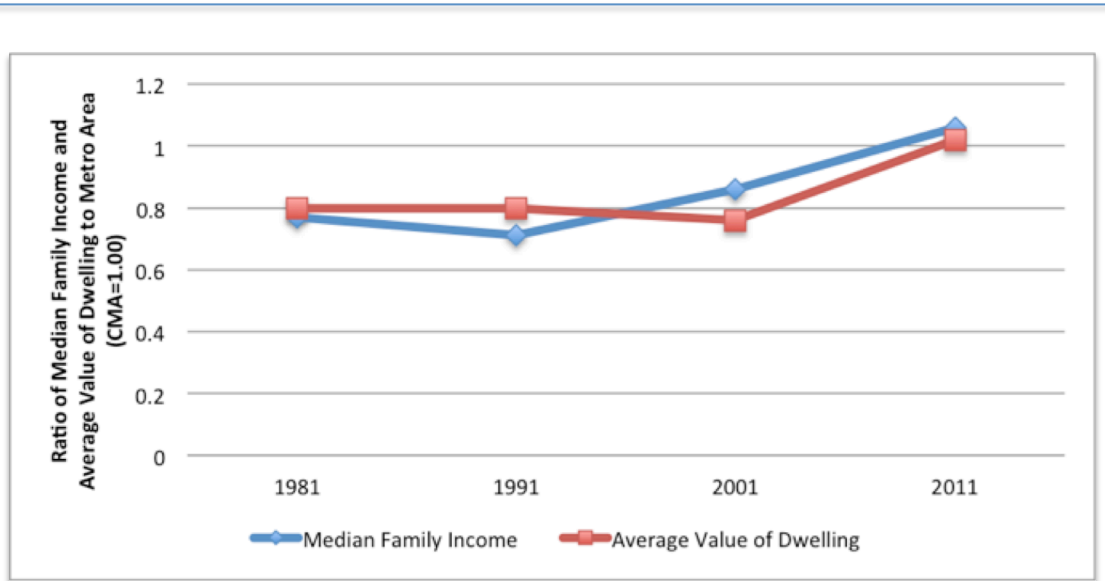


Figure 2.11 Table shows the median family income and average value of dwelling in South Riverdale over the last three decades. These values are expressed as ratios compared to the rest of Toronto (CMA). Toronto = 1. Source: Stats Canada (SC) for 1981, 1991. Data was taken from census tracts by Stats Canada and organized by the author. Similar to the study by Walks and August (2008), this data shows the relative stagnation of gentrification in the area, in contrast to what many predicated between 1980-2000. However, after 2000, both median family income and the average value of dwelling clearly rise, indicating that gentrification has firmly taken hold.

produced by the local Business Improvement Area (BIA)¹⁸, stress the area’s growing appeal for an “upmarket demographic”, notably young professionals (SRRC: 12; Riverside BIA). Along some streets such as Hamilton (see Figure 2.12), this movement can be seen in the upscale, renovated Victorian housing. Several new condominium developments have also been initiated along the commercial artery streets, adding greater density to the area. But the most visible change in the neighbourhood is with Queen St. East, the main commercial strip, which has been transformed by new businesses targeting

¹⁸ The Riverside Business Improvement Area was formed in 1980 under the name Queen Broadview Village BIA. The group changed their name to the current one in the early 2000s (representative at Riverside BIA. personal email communication, January 2014).

a trendier, more affluent market from gourmet food shops to cocktail bars. At least some of these changes have emerged alongside increased rents, property values and new businesses (*The Grid*, 2012). Denise Graham, a retired planner in the area, witnessed many of these changes through her work:

When I first started, somebody called me and said, “my house sold in less than 30 days.” That was unheard of. And after that the area has been evolving and trendy...it is starting to have its own vibe. When I came, it was all vacancies all over the place (Graham, Interview).

Don Mount Court was therefore in many ways surrounded by a changing environment. Industries had moved, housing values were increasing, and commercial streets were beginning to cater to a different crowd. South Riverdale’s working class past



Figure 2.12 Photo of Hamilton Street, 2012. Here are attractive gentrified homes one street over from Don Mount Court that were originally built at the same time as Napier Place. Photograph taken by author in 2012. This strip of housing demonstrates the gentrification of the neighbourhood occurring especially between 2001 to 2010.

– while still certainly a share of the neighbourhood – was no longer quite what it had been. *Toronto Life*, which is a popular magazine for urban trends in the city, now describes the neighbourhood in a way that emphasizes its recent turn:

South Riverdale, which includes the trendy Leslieville,¹⁹ has become the kind of neighbourhood where young professionals and creative types frequent hip cafés and restaurants, chic boutiques and funky furniture stores (*Toronto Life*, 2014).

The Return of Renewal

In the late 1980s there were some musings among planners and policy-makers about redesigning some of Toronto’s public housing projects and generating funds by selling off portions of land. Architectural plans were drawn up for three projects – Edgeley Village, Moss Park, and Finch/Birchmount – but each fizzled with little support from the federal and provincial housing authorities (Sewell, 1994: 160). A decade later, however, the right forces aligned to initiate the return of state-led public housing redevelopment, starting with Don Mount Court. The changes occurring in South Riverdale helped set this stage, but the most critical signal came about through the political restructuring of public housing in Ontario. Ever since the establishment of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) in 1946, Ottawa had played an important role as a large financier for public housing across the country (see page 13). Facing growing deficits and a diminishing interest in the sector, the Chretien Government in the early 1990s froze spending on new projects and then handed down administrative responsibility to the provinces a few years later (Wolfe, 1998: 125). This effectively cut

¹⁹ Leslieville is the next neighbourhood east of South Riverdale. It has a different BIA and during my interviews usually treated as distinct from South Riverdale. Here, they are likely merged because both are becoming trendy areas (see for example, *The New York Times*, 2005).

Ottawa out of the role entirely.



Figure 2.13. Inner courtyard of Don Mount Court. This shows the doors opening up to a central green space. Each unit had its own doorway from the outside; for upper units, the doors were accessed by an outdoor walkway. Photo Credits: Erik Twight, 2004.

For the provinces, this was a massive new burden to shoulder, but in Ontario, the government took it as an “opportunity” to further privatize the housing market (Hackworth and Moriah, 2006: 515). Progressive Conservative Premier Mike Harris, elected in 1995 with a promise to unleash a neoliberal “Common Sense Revolution”, planned to “end the public housing boondoggle” and this first meant cancelling the 17,000 units that were then in the works as well as any future schemes (*Toronto Star*, 2000; Hackworth and Moriah, 2006: 515). Then from 1998 to 2002, the province downloaded

responsibility for social housing onto municipalities, which became formalized in the Social Housing Reform Act of 2000. As a result, the Ontario Housing Corporation was dissolved and its portfolio was handed to 47 newly established bodies under municipal control. From 2002 onwards, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) had become the single provider for all public housing in the city. A major issue, especially troublesome for the City of Toronto, was that municipalities could not easily absorb the costly finances for operating public housing under existing taxing powers (Hackworth and Moriah, 2006; 515). To make matters worse, the TCHC's portfolio included a massive backlog of repairs and a waiting list for new tenants ballooning beyond 50,000 (Hackworth and Moriah, 2006; 516). To give an indication of the size of its burden, the *Toronto Star* reported it would take around \$1.1 billion to repair all of its housing stock (*Toronto Star*, 2007a). With this series of shakeups, Don Mount Court found itself under new leadership with a constrained budget.

As ownership of the property was shifting to the TCHC, Don Mount Court was undergoing some minor repairs. Workers there found “catastrophic” structural damage to the buildings, such that 150 families had to be moved to other units either in the project or around the city (TCC, 2003: 12). TCHC cited problems with “water penetration” as the source of some of this structural damage (TCHC). Residents had also been complaining for years about cracks in the walls, “things falling off”, leaks and the housing authority being slow to reply (Graham, Interview). According to a TCHC cost analysis projection over 25 years, the necessary repairs would only be “marginally less” than bulldozing and starting over (TCC, 2003: 9). And over a longer period, redevelopment would actually be cheaper.

Yet after all of the downloading and cost-cutting measures that had been imposed in the previous decade, the TCHC did not have the resources to redevelop the property on its own. This was even after they successfully negotiated with the province to invest \$9.3 million. To make redevelopment a reality, the TCHC turned to a solution that it felt would provide sufficient funding while also updating the project to contemporary planning wisdom: selling a section of the city-owned land to a developer to build private condominiums, the profits of which are then used to fund the reconstruction of the public housing units. At the time this had never happened in Toronto, though there were precedents in the United States through the HOPE VI program. The TCHC was moving in an entirely new direction. TCHC CEO Derek Ballantyne sold this idea to the public as the only optimistic way forward:

When TCHC was formed, you had two choices – to despair or to see it as a tremendous opportunity. If you're careful, you can get what you want and so can developers. In the end, we didn't have to compromise much. We always insist on good architecture and good planning. Having homogeneous public ownership would simply put that wall of separation back up (*Toronto Star*, 2008).

For Don Mount Court, the viability of the deal went back to the context of South Riverdale. Financing now relied on selling market units, and it was therefore critical that the location was in an attractive real-estate market. At the time, there had been some media attention about South Riverdale's upswing or "renaissance" and the median family income had been steadily increasing since the early 1990s (see Fig. 2.11). Had the area not been garnering this optimism, funding for the project in this way may not have been feasible. On the other side of this, the TCHC also positioned redevelopment as a way to

“reinvigorate languishing real-estate sub-markets” – perhaps as a way to convince the City (TCHCa: 1). In the case of Don Mount Court, it was the notion that redevelopment might contribute to rather than inhibit the area’s upward trajectory.

Now that the TCHC was contemplating redevelopment, they set up a tenant advisory committee and a regeneration committee, which included residents of Don Mount Court and the surrounding area. John Sewell, who had been involved with the Napier Place and Trefann Court expropriation protests, also began working with the residents of Don Mount Court (Sewell Website, 2004). While very little had even been proposed at this point, both committees supported the idea of reconstruction with a number of important caveats, such as significant inclusion throughout the process and minimizing the harm dealt by relocation (TCC, 2003: 6; TCC, 2004: 32). I was not able to interview any of the residents involved in these committees but based on discussions with the architects of Rivertowne and a planner from the City of Toronto, as well as former Don Mount Court tenants, it seems the members of the committees acknowledged that Don Mount Court needed extensive repairs, and that redevelopment carried the potential to provide better housing and physical infrastructure.²⁰ As will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, how former Don Mount Court tenants view redevelopment is far more complex.

In 2002, the TCHC officially decided to move ahead with redevelopment and retained Urban Strategies – a prominent local planning consultant firm – to issue a proposal call to developers. At its head was Frank Lewinberg, who had previously worked on the first master plan of St. Lawrence – a socially mixed neighbourhood of

²⁰ See Valverde, 2012: 125. Valverde mentions that while divided at the beginning, the Regeneration Committee became generally aligned in supporting the plan.

different tenures of housing built in the 1970s (see page 28). Five developers were initially shortlisted, and out of these, the TCHC chose a joint venture between Intracorp and Marion-Hill Development Corp., which had contracted the architectural firms Montgomery Sisam and Kearns Mancini. The project was projected to cost around \$60 million, split evenly between the government and the developer (*Toronto Star*, 2004).

While meetings had been held with residents prior to the proposal call, the selection process was not made public (Lewinberg, Interview). As a result, residents were not able to compare the different designs. Derek Ballantyne, then CEO of TCHC, justified this move by saying, “the criteria were set out by the community...but who gets picked is a decision of the Don Mount Development Corp. It’s the corporation that’s financially and legally liable” (*Toronto Star*, 2003).

The original design involved a single 30-storey tower that would house around 250 market condominiums and set the 232 public units along the streets in townhouses. Part of this was fuelled by economics: a taller tower allowed more market condos and would therefore bring a higher return for the developer (Graham, Interview). But the architects also argued this made sense for a neighbourhood close to downtown and a streetcar line (Sisam, Interview). It was also a very conscious decision early on to have the market condominiums physically separated from the public housing. From an administrative standpoint, both the TCHC and the developer argued it would be overly cumbersome to manage the properties if they were mixed throughout the site (Graham, Interview). Yet there was another fear that reveals more about how “social mix” exists politically in Toronto. If the private and public properties were integrated throughout, there was an assumption that the condominiums would be harder to sell (Sisam,

Interview). There were, therefore, limits on how “social mix” was to be achieved, and it derived from an acknowledgement that the middle class would be less inclined to live door-to-door with public housing. This of course stands in contrast to the ideals behind the designs of the St. Lawrence neighbourhood (planned in the mid-1970s) and the proposed-but-ultimately- doomed Ataratiri project in Toronto (planned in the late 1980s), both of which integrated cooperatives, non-profit and market housing (Cooper and Rodman, 1992; *Eye Weekly*, 1992).

Negotiating

While residents were invited to consultations and received some representation on the Don Mount Court Development Corp., a far more pluralistic and contentious process emerged after the TCHC and Intracorp/Miron Hill sought approval from the City’s Planning Department and showcased their plan to the community. The private tower proved to be the most unpopular aspect. The planners, local councilor Paula Fletcher, and residents of the larger area of South Riverdale all felt it was “out of place” in what they saw as a generally low-density area. Towers from their perspective would only disrupt the character and urban fabric. According to planner Denise Graham, it took almost a year of her department refusing approval before the developers took the tower out (Graham, Interview). The new design converted the tower space to rows of townhouse similar to the ones designed for the public housing. Certainly a part of this fight came down to finances: without the tower, the TCHC and the developers would receive smaller revenue, as it translated to fewer units – 250 condominium units to 187 (TCHCe).

Further consultations with the committees throughout 2003-2004 also brought

two other major revisions to the designs: a better way to house elderly and disabled tenants as well as incorporating a mixed-use community space, which could host meetings, workshops and other events. To satisfy both demands, the architects added a four-storey apartment building (with an elevator) for public housing units. The design was to provide better access throughout the building and host a community room on the ground floor. With the new changes in place, the project had support from the tenant and regeneration committees, city planners, and councilor Paula Fletcher.

It received official approval from City Council in fall of 2004 and the schedule was set to have shovels in the ground soon after. However, a group of residents from the surrounding neighbourhood (Riverside Area Residents Association) became increasingly vocal in trying to kill the project. They took their case to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) – a provincial tribunal dealing with planning disputes. According to Mariana Valverde, who witnessed the hearings, the group “put forward every possible objection [they] could think of,” the main one being the need to save a number of old, large willow trees on the site (Valverde, 2012; 126). But it appears the group’s real fight was in trying to stop public housing from coming back or in at least reducing its share in units. Yet rather than being seen directly opposing public housing, their tactic was to position their argument as primarily environmental. The OMB eventually rejected the case, but it delayed the project by another six months and cost around \$550,000 in legal fees and construction delays (Connelly, 2005: 7).

RARA’s attitude reveals a kind of NIMBY impulse that emerged in parts of the surrounding neighbourhood. According to one resident, some of her neighbours on Hamilton Street saw the empty site (preconstruction) as a “reprieve” from public housing

(R2). From their perspective, redevelopment was not bringing Don Mount Court in line with the rest of the neighbourhood – a concentration of public housing would always be a drag on the area.

The OMB hearings involving RARA in 2005 were the last major roadblock to the planning stages. Construction – divided into two phases – could now begin largely unobstructed. The architects and planners never felt a major resistance from Don Mount Court residents. The project received support from the resident committee, and it appears as if many in the neighbourhood wanted a fix to the physical problem in their housing – leaks, mold, cracks, infestations and so forth. However, there were growing complaints about the delays in construction and frustrations with the handling of the consultations (Sewell, 2004; Graham). There is also evidence that the inclusion of private market condominiums was met with suspicion by some in Don Mount Court. One visible sign was scrawled onto a mailbox during the construction: “the rich are coming.” Chapter Six will unpack contemporary views by former Don Mount Court residents on redevelopment, but it is clear that not every aspect of the redevelopment provided a consensus within the Don Mount Court community.

Rivertowne

After the first half of the project was demolished in 2004, tenants from those buildings were moved to units in the phase two section or into other properties around the city. Graham explains there were also several families from Don Mount Court who chose not to return, some preferring their new location more or had children who were used to another school or group of friends (Graham, Interview). By the summer of 2008, the first half of public housing had been completed and occupied with tenants and the

market townhouses were underway. While selling the market units had been a concern in the planning process, 99% of them had been claimed even before construction had finished.

Like the opening of Don Mount Court in the late 1960s, Rivertowne was marked by celebration. Politicians such as Councilor Paula Fletcher, MPP Mario Sergio (then Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing) and Mayor David Miller came down to welcome the incoming residents. It also received praise and optimism from journalists such as *Toronto Star*'s Christopher Hume and *The Globe and Mail*'s James Rusk. Mayor Miller summed up the political sentiment:

The new Don Mount Court [Rivertowne] provides clear evidence of what can be done to rejuvenate a neighbourhood when governments work cooperatively with the private sector and the local community to meet the needs of residents. It stands as a fine example of responsible city-building that can be followed elsewhere in the future (TCHC web, 2008).

And with that, the neighbourhood entered firmly into the last of its three-part identity. Many saw Rivertowne as the solution to the City's aging and often criticized public housing projects. For them the 1960s renewal had been a grave mistake and the new redevelopment was the only way to unravel these past errors. For the TCHC and the City, Rivertowne was also a trial. Since it was relatively small and the first of its kind, the successes and failures were an on-site training for how to go through redevelopment. "Don Mount Court probably hit every bump in the road" but Regent Park then learned not to make the same mistakes – a reference to the project's delays (Graham, Interview). Rivertowne also received four awards – one being the Project of the Year for a Low-Rise Development – from the Annual Home Builder Awards in 2007 (*Toronto Star*, 2007b).

Rivertowne's demographics are significantly different today than they were when Don Mount Court was slated for demolition. With the condominiums initially being sold at around \$300,000, the residents of the northwestern corner are generally middle class from a range of ethnicities/races, though the reputation I heard during interviews is that they are largely white. Many within the condos described themselves and their neighbours as fairly young professionals and students living alone, with a partner, or a single child. A number of the units are also rented out with owners living off-site.

Across from and south of the condominiums on Munro St. is a strip of TCHC



Figure 2.14 The opening of the long-delayed park in 2012. Photo taken by author. The day included optimistic and celebratory speeches by Councillor Paula Fletcher (standing in the middle) and TCHC President and CEO, Gene Jones (the man wearing a blue baseball hat). Behind is the TCHC-owned four-storey apartment complex, which is home to many of the development's elderly and disabled.

managed units made up mostly of two groups: former Don Mount Court residents and temporary residents from Regent Park who are waiting for redevelopment to finish. The

largest share of non-white racial/ethnic identities are black (with origins from Caribbean and African countries) (SC, 2011). Running along the eastern side of the park is TCHC-owned housing, which is occupied by a higher ratio of newcomer families to Canada and the City's public housing (Houston, Interview). The most frequent nationalities and ethnicities among this section are from South Asia, namely Bangladeshi (SC, 2011). These identities underscore the degree to which redevelopment transformed the neighbourhood. The individuals who once called Don Mount Court home were now but a fraction of Rivertowne. As will be explored in Chapters Six and Seven, these demographics help inform neighbourhood dynamics and politics within the space.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1 Theoretical Foundation for the Redevelopment of Public Housing

There are multiple interrelated causes for public housing's current era of redevelopment, and each project has its own unique context. However, in the following section, I thread together four themes that I believe account for much of the rhetoric used when redevelopment is proposed. They represent a kind of theoretical base, and can be found in academia, public policy and everyday discourse. This will help to explain what I believe are the major causes for why redevelopment currently receives such popular support: (1) concentrated poverty/neighbourhood effects, (2) social mix, (3) contemporary urban design principles and (4) neoliberalism.²¹ The second half of this chapter focuses on two theoretical approaches, "boundary work" and neighbourhood narrative frames, which help to explain neighbourhood dynamics and politics. These two approaches then lead my discussion in Chapters Six and Seven.

As previously noted, the reputation of public housing in North America shifted around the late 1960s, from areas of potential and progress to distress and disorder. Studies in both the United States and Canada began detailing environments of disinvestment, physical deterioration, high-crime rates, lack of social and economic opportunities, further class and racial segregation and a pervasive stigma cast onto the residents and spaces from the outside (Hellyer, 1969; Vale, 2011; Goetz, 2011b). Studies also criticized American public housing authorities for fiscal mismanagement and poor administrative ability (Popkin *et al.*, 2004). Goetz has written extensively on how the turn to redevelopment in the United States was preceded by decades of neglect by public

²¹ In Toronto, the media gives an indication of how popular redevelopment is in the current era. See for example the last section of Chapter 2, where various actors celebrate the opening of Rivertowne and my concluding chapter for samples of headlines from major papers covering the redevelopment.

housing authorities, thereby laying the groundwork for the current era of distressed buildings (Goetz, 2013). Known as “de facto demolition”, housing providers either refused to maintain their properties or kept a large number of their units vacant (Goetz, 2013: 53-54). While Canada’s history of public housing is separate from the United States, the TCHC and its provincial predecessor have been criticized for not being prudent in repairing their properties. The most important impetus behind redeveloping Don Mount Court was that it had “extensive” structural damage and a whole host of needed repairs.

Authors in the United States (Vale, 2011; Goetz, 2013) and in Canada (James, 2010) argue that it is important to realize that public housing was not always in this condition nor did it conjure the negative images seen today. Until the 1960s in the United States, public housing projects were generally depicted as “important slum-clearance efforts that were improving central city areas” (Goetz, 2013: 40). Since then, however, this foundational optimism has become obscured by what Goetz claims is “an exaggerated discourse of disaster” (Goetz, 2013: 40). The Canadian context, with projects such as Regent Park, was very similar as powerful public discourse shifted from treating the developments as a way forward in the cause against poverty to characterizing them as isolated, dysfunctional slums. While the unique contexts of public housing in the United States and Canada should be kept in mind, media from the former have likely contributed to the discourse of the latter. In addition, what is now the current discourse on public housing in both countries is rooted in the same theoretical background.

Concentrated Poverty

A large part of the shift in public image had to do with a view that public housing often constructs islands of poverty. The concentration of low-income housing by way of large-scale projects is now widely seen as physically isolating the poor to certain parts of the city, away from the rest of society. Beyond this image, several academics have attempted to build a fairly sophisticated framework on the premise that being poor within a neighbourhood of concentrated poverty is worse than being poor in a neighbourhood with lower rates of poverty. Or as Darcy puts it, “the geographic propinquity of numbers of disadvantaged households creates a social or cultural dynamic at the local level which compounds and perpetuates their disadvantage.” (Darcy 2009: 3). Thus neighbourhoods with high rates of poverty constrain residents’ life chances in ways that go beyond poverty itself. Public housing in particular has been the primary target of these arguments “due to its construction in areas adjacent to or within at-risk neighbourhoods; the racial, economic and family composition of the tenant population; and the poor management, upkeep and physical design of many projects” (Tach, 2009: 274).

Wilson’s *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987) builds the case for neighbourhood effects in his account of the low-income neighbourhoods in Chicago. He argues that as a result of economic shifts and an exodus of middle class black residents to the suburbs, those left behind in the inner city were trapped in an ever reproducing cycle of poverty. Since then, researchers have examined a plethora of other low-income neighbourhoods and identified a number of ways in which a resident’s neighbourhood affects their life chances. These outcomes include higher levels of unemployment and earnings (Rosenbaum and Popkin, 1991), high school dropout rates and teenage childbearing (Crane, 1991; Overman, 2002), criminal activity (Sampson *et al.*, 1997), and lower

chances for residents to position themselves out of poverty (Buck, 2001). Trying to account for these outcomes is much more difficult, but scholars tend to look at institutional factors, as in a resident's lack of access to schools, cultural and recreational spaces, outside social networks, and the job market. Another focus is on the role of socialization by adults and peers, and exposure to crime and violence (van Ham et al, 2012). These studies emphasize the damaging effects of neighbourhood inequality and highlight the variables and outcomes, which make it difficult for residents to break the cycle of disadvantage.

This body of work – known as neighbourhood effects – has entered into public policy circles, government reports and public discourse (van Ham and Manley, 2012). One can also see similar kinds of themes being explored in the media with the film *La Haine* (1997) and television series *The Wire* (2001). Yet even proponents have noted that while there is an abundance of scholarship on the topic, the empirical results should still be considered “provisional” (van Ham *et al.*, 2012: 10). One of the main troubles is deciding with any finality which mechanisms are responsible for which outcomes, and at what time. Part of this complication is due to the abstruse and varied relationships residents have with their neighbourhood. As Atkinson and Kintrea (2001) argue, there has yet to be a clear and certain understanding of how the “where” becomes causally involved over the role of poverty itself. And if the neighbourhood is indeed a part of the equation, how does a researcher also account for all of the other aspects of one's life that are outside of this realm, since neighbourhoods rarely represent a resident's total life-world.

Some critics believe “neighbourhood effects” also present some political problems by establishing misleading causal relationships (Bauder, 2002). While the neighbourhood may indeed be significant, they argue, the political and economic forces that structure poverty need far more investigative attention. As Joseph and Chaskin note, this was always a part of Wilson’s argument in *The Truly Disadvantaged* (Joseph and Chaskin, 2010: 2349). In other words, the focus on neighbourhood effects may distract from better combating poverty because it targets neighbourhoods instead. And this is especially relevant to public housing. Lupton and Tunstall believe that since neighbourhood effects locate the problem in the concentration of poverty, it actually repositions public housing as “irredeemably problematic” (Lupton and Tunstall, 2008: 114). Sometimes this is explicit. Arthurson examined a government report in Australia calling for redevelopment because it saw the 100% concentration of public housing as a “causal agent in perpetuating crime, violence and immoral and delinquent behaviour” (Arthurson, 2004: 263). This brings up a final unintended danger to the rhetoric of neighbourhood effects: that the area may in fact be further stigmatized as the environment is thought to be either a failure or a producer of negative outcomes.

As Arthurson’s example shows, neighbourhood effects is a powerful school of thought even outside of academia for proposing redevelopment over simply rehabilitating the stock (see for example, Schill, 1993). These claims have since convinced several governments, and some writers now fear the trend may overshadow or even delegitimize the focus on poverty itself. While the extensive structural damage of Don Mount Court means rehabilitation was, according to TCHC, not feasible, the debate over rehabilitation versus reconstruction will undoubtedly be important to future TCHC projects.

Social Mix

One response to the concentrated poverty/neighbourhood effects literature was to think about “social mix” as a key dimension to successful communities. Bringing heterogeneity in terms of class, ethnicity, and age – the thinking went – might solve many of the problems associated with social exclusion. For public housing, this centred on better mixing government owned properties with private sector units. While in many ways garnering unprecedented attention in contemporary urban politics, “social mix” is not new (Arthurson, 2012). In the United Kingdom, mix existed first in 19th century schemes to produce model industrial villages like George Cadbury’s Bournville. Then it later resurfaced after WWII in policy debates over how to achieve a sense of togetherness between classes (Arthurson, 2012: 26). In both periods, proponents believed the middle class would benefit the lower classes as role models and by bringing much needed services to disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Today, these arguments are perhaps less romanticized but are founded on strikingly similar values. In Canada, after support for large-scale public housing projects had diminished in the late 1960s and early 1970s, both the federal government and the City of Toronto began exploring ways to provide affordable housing that was more socially mixed (Dennis and Fish, 1972; *Living Room*, 1973). As discussed in Chapter Two, this led to an era of support for the construction of non-profit and cooperative housing over traditional public housing.

One of the most powerful beliefs is that social mix has the potential to undo the isolation produced by post-war public housing, and thereby, improve the quality of life for low income residents. Some, such as Turbov and Piper (2005), suggest mixed neighbourhoods will produce and hold onto better facilities, service provision and market

retail. New investment in the area could spur improvements in underfunded schools, gyms, parks, grocery stores and so forth.

Others point to the opening up of social interaction between classes and ethnicities, which may lead to direct and indirect benefits. These studies rest on the notion that middle and upper class (or ethnically diverse) residents would either help the neighbourhood and/or the low-income residents. Echoing the 19th century reformers in the UK, Case and Katz (1991) believe middle class role models would have a significant and positive impact on low-income youth. Likewise, Sampson and Groves (1989) believe that mixed income neighbourhoods provide a better chance for greater social control, thereby discouraging deviant or criminal behaviour.

If mixed income neighbourhoods lead to lower crime rates or safety issues, Popkin *et al.* (2004) also argue public housing residents would then likely be experiencing less stress and a higher sense of safety (Popkin *et al.*, 2004: 23). Lastly, these new relationships and interactions may also open up job opportunities or other life chances (Khadduri and Martin, 1997).

From an economic standpoint, mixed neighbourhoods are also meant to strengthen housing markets, providing stability for residents, return for investors, and increased revenue from property taxes for governments (Kleinhans, 2004). In order to retain middle and upper income residents, proponents believe public housing authorities and other neighbourhood actors will have greater motivation to improve their own management and service provision (Popkin *et al.*, 2004). Included in this pressure is ensuring the reputation of the neighbourhood is positive as it would now be more closely tied to the private real estate market.

Like neighbourhood effects, social mix has wide support in policy circles, and everyday discourse on the city. Governments intervening in housing markets to achieve a form of social mix has been an important policy measure in the UK, Sweden, the Netherlands, the US, and Canada (Galster, 2007; August 2011; Bolt *et al.*, 2010). In Canada's case, social mix appeared as an explicit policy in the 1970s with the advent of co-operative housing in developments like St. Lawrence in Toronto and False Creek in Vancouver (Thibert, 2007). But it was not until the last decade that provincial and municipal governments have turned to redeveloping older public housing projects and turning them into social mixed neighbourhoods. This was in part based on a similar program in the United States, HOPE VI, which funds the demolition and reconstruction of large public housing projects in American cities.

While clearly a concept with wide popularity, there is a growing body of critics towards social mix. For starters, case studies have shown that spatial proximity is not enough to ensure social interaction between classes (Buron *et al.*, 2002). Allen *et al* (2005: 2) found that different income groups basically occupied "distinctive social worlds". And there are case studies suggesting that where interaction exists, it is limited to resentment (Sullivan and Leitz, 2008). Beyond everyday experiences, some scholars argue neighbourhood politics are also negatively affected by social mix. Graves (2005) and August (2011), for example, found substantial power imbalances whereby market residents were able to better effect their interests in governing their neighbourhood. A part of governing this new space was an increase in police presence (August 2011; Joseph 2011).

It is not hard to see why social mix is such a popular concept; not many politicians would want to argue on the side of a geographically segregated lower class. There is also a very positive connotation of tolerance and acceptance with the term, social mix (Berrey, 2005: 163). Yet critics have called for the need to be reflexive about what social mix really means. What is the right ratio between public housing units and market tenure (Darcy, 2007: 359)? Is 70% market rate units, 30% public housing better than 50% of each? How should the ratio be decided upon? TCHC has looked to St. Lawrence for these answers, which was initially set at 75% market units and 25% RGI, but considering its high number of cooperatives and non-profits, this type of fine-grained mix (as they were within the same building) cannot really be replicated currently (TCHCd). There are also differences between the distribution of housing produced for Don Mount Court/Rivertowne (45% market and 55% TCHC) and what has been proposed for Regent Park (60% market, 40% TCHC) (TCHCd).²² What effect will this difference in share of tenure have on the proposed benefits to mix?

Turning to language, there is also evidence that terms like “diversity” and “mixed-income” can be deployed by actors working towards contradictory agendas. Berrey (2005) examined a neighbourhood in Chicago where some middle and upper class white residents and community groups aligned these terms with their ultimate goal for gentrification. The effect was to overshadow the kinds of topics that many of the low-income black residents cared about, namely discrimination and tenant rights. This suggests that the incorporation of terms such as “social mix” in real estate markets and urban politics is not necessarily the victory for social justice that some may hope for.

²² The percentages for Regent Park may change in the future.

Contemporary Designs

Public housing was first and foremost seen as the panacea to slums, and as a result, most of it was designed in opposition to what slums had been. Where the previous areas had been decried as “dark”, “crowded”, unsanitary and un-modern, public housing was to emphasize a clear break from this past (Goetz, 2011: 268). Architects deliberately set the buildings away from streets and marked off large areas for courtyards and pedestrian walkways. No longer were kids to be playing in the streets or sitting on stoops, nor would residents be living in close proximity to industry. Particularly with the need to house so many – and do so over concerns for efficiency and production costs – many public housing projects are massive, monolithic blocks which are highly visible in almost every major North American city. Pruitt Igoe in St. Louis took up an area of 57 acres consisting of a total of 33 11-storey apartment buildings; Cabrini-Green in Chicago housed around 15,000 tenants in 3,607 units; and Regent Park in Toronto was spread over almost 70 acres and was home to around 10,000 tenants. Since these developments occupied such massive areas, even with 10,000 to 15,000 tenants, these examples were large in scale but relatively low in density. They also give a sense of the boldness of cities in this era to address low-income housing supply.

Franck (1998) argues that post-war public housing was also to serve as a break from the surrounding neighbourhood. Like a beacon of stability, the site – all within a common aesthetic – would be protected from falling back into its preclearance state as it was often bordering other low-income areas (Franck, 1998: 92). While separation was key in this regard, the goal inside the projects was to promote a feeling of openness. Architects stressed the need for access to fresh air, sunlight and plenty of green space

(Keating and Flores, 302).²³ This was attempted through “long vistas, lack of spatial endings and closures, and wide spacing” (Franck, 1998: 88). Many felt this would give lower income families their first exposure to a kind of bucolic urban village.

While many of these values and designs were hailed as successes in the beginning, they have become extensively critiqued in the last half-century. While no singular source of influence exists, many of Jane Jacobs’s and Oscar Newman’s ideas have clearly had an effect. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) and *Defensible Space* (1972), these authors disparage the large “isolating” blocks of towers cut away from normal streets that were often central to public housing renewal project. Both proposed shorter blocks, reintegrated and ideally busy sidewalks, and an end to the monotonous block towers (Jacobs, 1961: 182-183; Newman, 1972: 192, 205). Providing safety and crime prevention through residential surveillance were also of key importance for both Jacobs and Newman. The former’s “eyes on the street” and the latter’s “territorialism” promoted the need for residents to have a sense of control and attachment to the spaces near their homes – things they found lacking in large tower blocks with open exterior spaces (Jacobs, 1961: 35, Newman, 1972: 205).

Another interconnected thread in planning theory that has influenced the current depiction of public housing is new urbanism. Now a popular school of thought in North America, new urbanism advances a new model for neighbourhoods in response to what its proponents see as suburban sprawl on the outside of the city, and in America’s case, divestment and flight in the inner city. Their model is meant to turn back to the spatial coherence of the “traditional city” and the principles that it was founded on (Larsen,

²³ This relates to Le Corbusier’s hope to bring “soleil, espace, verdure” (sun, space, and greenery/vegetation) to cities. See Weston, 2004: 100.

2007: 796). New urbanist communities, such as Seaside in Florida and Cornell in Markham, Ontario, draw on postmodernism, mimicking historical styles of traditional architecture using gabled roofs, porches and white picket fences. Interestingly, these neighbourhoods are in many ways trying to achieve the bucolic urban village feel much like some of the post-war public housing had, albeit from a very different design.

Under their Charter, new urbanists emphasize walkable streets that are narrow and hemmed closely by the houses. Like Jane Jacobs, streets are thought to provide a number of processes such as direct social interaction, vibrant community life, and more easily regulated security. They are also to connect closely with a variety of shops, schools and other neighbourhood services (Steuteville, 2002). In line with proponents of social mix and neighbourhood effects, new urbanism also calls for a diversity of ages, races, ethnicities and income levels for residents, as well as a diversity of housing types (Steuteville, 2002). Where both the suburbs and post-war public housing have been critiqued for their lack of community, supporters of new urbanist neighbourhoods claim places like Seaside encourage inclusion and community interaction.

The consequence of this shift in design principles casts post-war public housing as outmoded and a barrier for those residents to succeed. It also accentuates the need to redevelop over rehabilitation because, like neighbourhood effects, the old space is projected as the problem. There is evidence of new urbanism's impact in many of the redevelopments of public housing in the United States and Canada (Larsen, 2007; Tach, 2009). Larsen, for instance, looked at two neighbourhoods that were redesigned to explicitly include new urbanist principles such as a "traditional neighbourhood pattern", walkable streets, and front porches and mixed used spaces (Larsen, 2007). New design

principles also account for the turn to integrated urban fabrics. Since the post-war projects were criticized as closed off spaces, redevelopments now often emphasize their ability to weave areas together, thereby reconnecting public housing with market housing.

Neoliberalism in Housing Governance

A key perspective to explain the emergence of contemporary redevelopment is the shift from a more welfare-state oriented governance over housing to one that promotes devolution and entrepreneurialism. As some have argued “neoliberalism is not...about the weakening of the state per se...it is a re-articulation of the roles and goals of the state” (Defilippis *et al.*, 2006: 675). In conjunction with studies looking at the neoliberalization of the city (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Kipfer and Keil, 2002; Boudreau *et al.*, 2009), scholars have connected redevelopment with significant changes to the funding, management and goals of public housing within the last thirty years. For them, the advent of HOPE VI in the United States and a series of recent structural changes in urban policies in Canada (leading to the SHRA in 2000) represent a new era that favours redevelopment over rehabilitation.

Hackworth and Moriah, for instance, trace the devolution of public housing in Ontario and how it connects with both the larger ideological and geographically specific practice of neoliberalism (Hackworth and Moriah, 2006; Hackworth, 2008). As discussed in the previous chapter, the federal government ended its role in public housing in the 1990s and was followed soon after by the Ontario government handing management over to local housing providers. For Toronto, this meant responsibility for almost 60,000 units and a waiting list of about 50,000. Hackworth and Moriah concluded

that downloading, along with drastic cuts from the federal and provincial governments, has stifled the autonomy and ability of certain public housing providers, resulting in an uneven landscape of service provision (Hackworth and Moriah, 2006: 518). In line with these changes, the TCHC has also increased evictions and contracted more work out to private companies (Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009: 121) as well as selling of some of their smaller properties (*Toronto Sun*, 2012).

Neoliberalist thought, argue Fraser and Kirk, “centers on the view the market should lead urban revitalization and poverty amelioration, while the state should play a supporting role through the provision of incentives to induce private investment” (Fraser and Kirk, 2005: 29). One particularly important articulation of this is with public-private partnerships to fund developments. The TCHC, for instance, has taken to selling portions of its stock to developers in order to fund the repairs in other units or the reconstruction of entire projects.

It is also becoming more popular to use coalitions of private investors, and NGOs, along with the state, to organize development enterprises. A number of scholars in the United States and Canada suggest these networks are part of a larger shift towards an entrepreneurial city seeking to maximize private investment. Newman and Ashton (2004) and Keating and Flores (2000) both found the alliances between municipal governments, business and investment groups, and community development organizations key to initiating revitalization. In their study of a neighbourhood in Atlanta, Keating and Flores note that revitalization was tied directly to the neighbourhood’s proximity to Georgia Tech University, Coca Cola’s corporate headquarters and the site of the 1996 Olympic Village (Keating and Flores, 2000, 288).

These actors aligned to actively promote the demolition of the nearby public housing projects and reconstruction as a mixed-income neighbourhood. A danger, according to Fraser and Kirk, is the downside to a “politics of place” whereby more powerful actors are able to control the agenda of a project. In their case, it was when private investors began pushing for more market-rate housing and commercial space rather than public housing (Fraser and Kirk, 2005: 33).

In this new ideological environment there is also a greater push for homeownership over state owned housing. This occurred both in the UK and the United States, which in the 1980s to 1990s sought to expand homeownership with subsidies and the right-to-buy social housing units (Goetz, 2011a: 270; *Guardian*, 2013). Other scholars have noted that public housing, in its built form, is an artefact of the welfare state and its continuing existence “signals the incompleteness and geographically uneven nature of the neoliberal process” (Thomson, 2010: 23).²⁴ Again with the discourses that treat them as “disasters” or “failures” they become even more visible as emblems of pre-neoliberalism. With many cities now looking to gentrify or revitalize their inner cores, public housing stands as more of a complication to their goals. Newman and Ashton found that in Newark’s attempt to remake its downtown “a resurgent center of the new economy”, it focused on attracting corporate development along with middle to high income housing while simultaneously demolishing its public housing stock (Newman and Ashton, 2004: 1164).

The degree to which the market now participates in development schemes also has an important impact on which housing projects become redeveloped. As Newman

²⁴ Thomson (2010) is summarizing arguments made by Hackworth, 2007.

and Ashton's example showcases, there are numerous public housing projects that now occupy lucrative real estate locations, which help trigger calls for their development. This has been the case in Toronto, where the proposals for Don Mount Court and Regent Park rested on the viability of the developer to receive enough return to take on the project.

Revitalization

The four strands outlined here – neighbourhood effects, social mix, contemporary design, and neoliberalism – provide a general framework for understanding why the redevelopment of public housing is occurring in Europe, Australia, and North America. They are also directly tied to the form of “revitalization” in Toronto. Often eschewing older terms such as “renewal” and “slum clearing” and negatively perceived processes like “gentrification”, policy documents in Toronto now prefer to use “revitalization” (though I will continue to use redevelopment throughout this paper).

It is helpful to see this as a trajectory of similar processes and outcomes: first the state targeting an area of physical deterioration and social “distress”, then demolishing the older buildings, followed by the implementation of large investment schemes through public and private partnerships, and finally planning a new territory that is “normalized” and encourages “defensible space” as well as “eyes on the street” (Goetz, 2011: 272, Pomperoy, 2006: 2, August, 2011: 3-4, James, 2010: 78). Another key component is the advent of mixing public housing with private housing tenures in order to produce a greater heterogeneity of income groups.

The on-going debate over redevelopment draws directly from the theoretical strands outlined above. Proponents see revitalization as a much needed tool to improve

housing standards (Buron, 2002), lower segregation and stigmatization (Popkin *et al.*, 2004), grant better access to resources and services (Kleit *et al.*, 2003), and lower crime rates (Tach, 2009). And echoing the discussion on social mix, there is also hope that the inclusion of middle class residents will provide role models and opportunities for jobs (Khadduri and Martin, 1997; Case and Katz, 1991. Turbov and Piper (2005) sum up what revitalization might achieve.

Public housing families are no longer stigmatized by the place they live. They blend into the community and have the same life opportunities of families of higher means. Residents no longer consider themselves public housing families; they are simple [sic] residents of Centennial Place or one of the other Olympic Legacy neighbourhoods. The children of these communities now have the opportunity to attend high-quality schools where real learning is taking place. The adults have access to job training and employment opportunities and are taking advantage of these opportunities (Turbov and Piper, 2005: 27).

However, critics respond with a range of potential issues, including distress associated with temporary relocation during reconstruction (Schippling, 2007), frustrations with participation in the design process (James, 2011, Sewell, 2003, Bockmeyer, 2000), and for one study in Chicago, a very low rate of former residents returning to the new development (Chaskin *et al.*, 2012). Post revitalization, researchers have also noticed problems with “social mix” (August, 2011, Tach, 2009), greater levels of surveillance and police control (James, 2010, Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009), and worries over gentrification (Goetz, 2011; August and Walks, 2010). Thus, while revitalization typically promises to improve neighbourhoods and residents’ livelihoods, there is cause to critically assess the goals versus the actual outcomes.

An on-going theme within this literature is drawing the similarities current revitalizing projects share with the earlier urban renewal era. The more obvious

connection is that both redevelopment eras involved government intervention in demolishing and rebuilding new residential zones and, therefore, displacing residents – both temporarily and permanently. Studies have also provided greater insight to how both eras rested upon similar assumptions. In the two periods, particular neighbourhoods and spaces become subject to a form of territorial stigmatization, which frames them as “slums”, “blighted”, “deviant”, or “no-go” areas (Purdy, 2005: 530). Through these discourses, the built environment becomes the target as both a cause of the problems and the “panacea” for the neighbourhood’s transition (James, 2010: 80). Thus, negative representations and labelling by groups outside of the neighbourhood tend to initiate redevelopment. There is also an indication that the selection for renewal or revitalization rested at least partially on a concern for the value of real estate in surrounding areas (Wyly and Hammel, 1999; Thomson, 2010; Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009: 111).

Critics of current revitalizing projects also point to how both eras share the same pitfalls. For the United States, both periods disproportionally focus on racial and ethnic minorities (Goetz, 2011a; Goetz, 2011b). There is also substantial disruption in social networks and distress among residents as a result of demolition (Curley, 2008; Manzo, 2008; Thomson, 2010). While governments tend to promote residential participation in the process, some scholars also suggest this can still lead to the same marginalization of voices that was evident in earlier renewal projects (James, 2010).

3. 2 A Framework for Neighbourhood Dynamics

After reviewing the literature, it is clear that redevelopment can possess both advantages and disadvantages and that these are based on the local particularities of the

neighbourhood and the specific processes of each of project. Studies have given a picture of how dynamics on the ground work, but there is still much to be uncovered. What continues to remain unclear is how the goals promoted by the TCHC (thriving community, reintegrated fabric, and lowered stigmatization) are lived through and articulated by residents. Particularly with Don Mount Court being the only fully finished project in Toronto's turn to redevelopment, there is a dearth of information on what life is like for residents (for one exception, see August, 2011). In order to better understand how these goals work on the ground in Don Mount Court, I turn to two theories that are useful in gaining insight into mixed-income neighbourhood dynamics: neighbourhood narrative frames and boundary work.

Neighbourhood Narrative Frames

It has long been acknowledged that neighbourhoods are not just physical or political boundaries or sites of socio-communal interaction but "places" where identities are played out and acted upon. For Robertson *et al.* (2008: 38) a "neighbourhood can be an important way in which individuals locate themselves both socially and culturally and through which they can find a sense of being 'rooted' in the world." Yet other scholars interested in the "politics of place" suggest neighbourhoods-as-places have much to do with power, ideology, and competition through inclusionary and exclusionary strategies (Harvey, 1989; Massey, 1991; Creswell, 1996). A number of ethnographies, such as Modan's *Turf Wars* (2007), emphasize the construction of heterogeneous and fluid identities to place, which are articulated through coded language. As May notes in his examination of a neighbourhood undergoing gentrification, these place identities may

neither be entirely reactionary and closed nor progressive and open, but rather both simultaneously (May, 1996).

Sociologists have recently suggested that residents understand their neighbourhoods and their position within them through the use of neighbourhood narrative frames (NNFs) (Small, 2004; Tach, 2003). Built from Erving Goffman's work on frame devices, NNFs condense "the world out there" through perceptions which are constructed and acted upon (Small, 2004; Snow and Benford, 1992). Small was the first to write about them in his study of a low income Latino community in Boston.

NNFs are the continuously shifting but nonetheless concrete sets of categories through which the neighbourhood's houses, streets, parks, population, location, families, murals, history, heritage, and institutions are made sense of and understood...residents do not merely see and experience the characteristics of their neighbourhood "as it is"; their perceptions are filtered through cultural categories that highlight some aspects of the neighbourhood and ignore others (Small, 2004: 70).

By highlighting how selective themes, concepts, imagery and representations become rhetorical tools, frames have been especially useful in illuminating neighbourhood political contestations (Goffman, 1974; Tach 2003, Elliot *et al.*, 2004; 373). A HOPE VI redevelopment in New Orleans became the site for a "framing contest" whereby proponents and critics cast competing frames of the neighbourhood to build support for their respective sides (Elliot *et al.*, 2004). The developer, which wanted to include Walmart in its project, positioned the neighbourhood as a distressed, low-income neighbourhood in need of jobs and investment, while civic opposition groups articulated a neighbourhood with historically significant buildings in need of protection from big business. The developer along with Walmart eventually convinced the city to

go ahead with the project, which underscores how frames are not peripheral but “have material consequences both in shaping people’s ideas about places and in fostering social action” (Martin, 2003: 733).

Other studies have examined how there tend to be multiple frames competing in a single neighbourhood between different residents. For Small it was a generational divide; the older residents framed their neighbourhood as a historically significant and “beautiful” legacy of something they fought for (Small, 2004: 72). In contrast, the neighbourhood for the younger cohort as well as newcomers was “little more than a ghetto” of structural decay and urban poverty (Small, 2004: 72). In another neighbourhood in Los Angeles, different frames produced a contest over place between mainly white hipsters and working class blacks and Latinos (Deener, 2007). Framing suggests that in redeveloped, mixed income neighbourhoods, residents are significantly influenced by how they perceive their environment and produce a number of outcomes in interactions and relationships, politics, and place attachment. For Don Mount Court frames will help reveal not only the dynamics between residents, but also how the goals of redevelopment become activated, contested or ignored depending on which frame is articulated.

Boundaries and Border Making

Another theoretical strand that is helpful in explaining neighbourhood dynamics and which is also sensitive towards coded language is boundary work. This centres on the “strategies group members employ, and the criteria that they draw upon, to construct a symbolic divide between their group and out-group members” (Lacy, 2002: 43). They are ways in which individuals and groups perform identity by contrasting themselves

against an “other”. One study for example looked how white working class residents in Chicago felt compelled to distinguish themselves against their black neighbours and did so through discussions on lawn care and property maintenance (Kefelas, 2002). Cheshire *et al.* (2010) found a similar process among owners in a master-planned estate, who cast the local renting population as “failed consumers” lacking the necessary values to be good neighbours. Both cases highlight the significance of small and subtle techniques to help groups make claims about legitimacy, belonging, or moral superiority.

As these examples suggest, the markers used to construct and maintain boundaries are largely articulated through coded language. Like Kefelas (2002) and Cheshire *et al.* (2010) scholars have noticed a wide a range of categories deployed in drawing boundaries, including food, clothing, language, activities, and values (van Eijk, 2011; Modan, 2007; Small, 2004). As Martin (2002) and Low (2001) note, this allows residents to maintain boundaries through more “socially acceptable” discourse even though what is really being articulated is differentiations on class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and housing tenure. While these symbolic boundaries do not necessarily lead to “unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources”, Lamont and Molnar point out that they often are a necessary starting point for those outcomes (Lamont and Molnar, 2002: 169).

Sibley argues in *Geographies of Exclusion* (1995) that boundaries are about a drive for purity, making easily classifiable groups and categories. And where they tend to become intensified or stronger is in environments where people feel anxiety, insecurity or fear (Sibley, 1995). These feelings can emerge in neighbourhoods undergoing transformations in demographics and built form such as gentrification (Martin, 2002).

They also help to partially explain the growing popularity of gated communities (Low, 2001).

Low's case also brings up how the strength of symbolic boundaries can lead to demarcations in space. For gated communities it is accomplished through actual walls and fences in order to more directly regulate access to the neighbourhood and restrict people who do not belong. But the same processes exist even without these physical barriers; for as Anderson noticed, neighbourhood "boundaries are created by social habit, situationally shaped and determined by those who share the space" (Anderson, 1990: 47). In Anderson's *Streetwise* (1990) and Suttles' classic *The Social Order of a Slum* (1968), socio-cultural boundaries sliced the material neighbourhood into territories based on the racial/ethnic composition (and economic in Anderson's case) of each area. Residents got to know the boundaries through experience and then maintained them through spatial practice (a resident's daily route through the neighbourhood) and social interaction (young men defending their territories through threats of violence) (Anderson, 1990: 46).

The interplay between cognition/perception, sociality and space highlight the fact that boundaries make little sense without attention to place. Creswell makes this case when he writes about oppositional dynamics set up by place boundaries, such as belonging vs. un-belonging, legitimate vs. illegitimate and "in place" vs. "out of place" (Creswell, 2001). When place (neighbourhood) boundaries are transgressed, it disrupts the normal order or ideology and likely faces some kind of opposition. Creswell uses the example of graffiti in public spaces, but Anderson's look at the kind of harassment inflicted on residents who cross onto the other side of the neighbourhood makes a similar point.

It is clear from the literature that boundaries play an influential role in the dynamics between residents within many neighbourhoods. They reflect tensions between group identities and contestations over place, both of which establish a kind of order over the built environment. As scholars point out, boundaries cause a number of material outcomes, influencing social interaction, spatial practice, and neighbourhood politics (Anderson, 1990; Blokland, 2009; Cheshire *et al.*, 2010, Small, 2004; van Ejik, 2011).

While the relationship between boundary work and NNFs has not been explored, it is my contention that they are interrelated and at work simultaneously within the redeveloped Don Mount Court. As I will discuss in Chapter 7, there is a correlation between certain frames and socio-spatial boundaries in the neighbourhood.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Approaching Rivertowne²⁵

Threading together a historical narrative of the neighbourhood was a necessary first step to contextualize the rise of contemporary Rivertowne and explore the ways in which the two eras of redevelopment compare to one another. Much of this information came from articles written and archived online by the *Toronto Star*, one of the major newspapers in the city, and government correspondence and policy reports from the City of Toronto Archives and the Archives of Ontario. For additional information on the 2000 to 2009 redevelopment, I also examined the City of Toronto's Council Minutes and TCHC's literature/policy papers.

I utilized census data from Statistics Canada, using the smallest available scale: dissemination areas (formerly known as enumeration areas). Based on data from 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, and 2011 I was able to compose snapshots of the neighbourhood's demographics over several decades, paying most attention to ethnic origins and income levels. I left 2006's set out of my analysis as this was during redevelopment. There were also some significant differences in the geographical boundary of 2011's enumeration area and all other previous years. This makes accurate comparisons very difficult. However, I was able to get a general idea of South Riverdale's economic trajectory and Rivertowne's demographics (particularly the inclusion of new ethnic groups from South Asia).

Qualitative Research

Fieldwork in the Neighbourhood

²⁵ The research conducted for this thesis was approved by York University's Research Ethics Board in 2012.

From the fall of 2012 to spring 2013, I held one-on-one interviews with residents from around the neighbourhood, and professionals who were involved in the planning of Rivertowne. These sessions were semi-structured, with a script of questions prepared beforehand meant to draw a basic route of the discussion (Bernard, 2011). Especially with residents, I hoped to maintain enough openness and live interaction that topics were not overly strict or constrained by my input. I found this kind of semi-structure better suited for richer responses dealing with place identities and experiences than I might have had with exclusively pursuing the questions from my script. I also chose one-on-one interviews over focus groups because I was interested in personal and intensive discussions where the interviewees could talk about their own experiences. Relatedly, the content of these talks frequently involved issues including race and class discrimination or police harassment. One-on-one interviews were likely to be a more comfortable setting than with residents talking about one another in a group. For professionals related to the redevelopment, all interviews were conducted in the office in which they worked. As for residents, interviews were located at their choosing, with most preferring one of the nearby coffee shops. Most interviews were between 30 minutes to an hour. For each interview, the participant was given a brief idea of how the interview was going to proceed and asked for their consent following York University's guidelines for conducting ethical research.²⁶ Residents were given anonymity while professionals who were interviewed in relation to their occupation (architects, planners, and community facilitators) permitted me to use their names.

²⁶ A copy of the consent form can be found in the Appendix.

In order to maintain residents' anonymity, I have used codes (R1, R2, and so on) as citation markers in the text rather than their names. In the Appendix is a table listing these codes along with some information about the respondent. Since racial groups and ethnicity were so ubiquitous in discussions over neighbourhood issues, I felt it was valuable to include very general information about the respondent's identity. Some residents identified themselves or others as "white", "black" or "Asian" during interviews.

I integrated two visual methodological components into my interviews. In order to prompt discussions on the spatiality of the neighbourhood – as well as to assist in the description of experiences – I brought 15 photos taken of either Don Mount Court or the contemporary Rivertowne and had each interviewer browse the collection (Appendix II). Similar steps have been taken in other studies (Schwartz, 1989). The second component was an exercise inspired from cognitive mapping studies (Hwang, 2007; Lynch, 1960). I brought in an aerial image of South Riverdale from Google Maps (Appendix II) and asked residents to draw what they perceived to be "their neighbourhood" (Appendix II). While the resulting map was of interest, the primary function of the activity was the discussion that occurred during the process, as interviewees described the reasons behind what they had drawn.

After one condominium owner drew a circle around the condominiums, for instance, he described how his only feeling of connection was with the rest of his housing cohort and explicitly distanced himself from the public housing side. Not only did the map help in encouraging the resident to think about the spatiality of what he was describing, but it was also a useful starting point to talk about community,

neighbourhood, connections/separations, and perceptions about being in-place/out-of-place. For another resident, the mapmaking exercise was useful in eliciting a conversation on how local services, businesses and leisure spaces generated a sense of neighbourhood. The resident argued that his neighbourhood centred along the strip of Queen Street East (rather than any of residential streets in South Riverdale or Rivertowne), since it was the location of his gym, grocery store, park, transportation, and the day-care where he took his children. This kind of reflection fed into other place-based discussions, such as how he framed the gentrification and growing trendiness of Queen Street East. What the map activity accomplished was encouraging residents to consider their personal experiences and attitudes toward the area rather than any objective or official boundaries or tracts. Not only did this help set the tone for the rest of the interview, but it was also very successful in eliciting further detailed discussions about identities, histories, and thoughts on where they live.

In the summer of 2012, before I had initiated any interviews with residents in Rivertowne, I began volunteering at the Ralph Thornton Centre, a community centre near the neighbourhood. At the time, a new community facilitator²⁷ had been hired and was just starting to run a youth leadership program aimed at teenagers from the public housing side of Rivertowne. I assisted the developer in this program, and through this experience spent some time with the participating teenagers and a few other tenants. Initially I snowballed interviews from this network and later advertised my study using a poster. For the first couple of respondents, I was also able to offer a \$20.00 gift card. Each interview I held with both residents and professionals was recorded with an audio

²⁷ I will continue using “facilitator” but some referred to the position as “coordinator” or “animator”; Martine August uses “community developer”. I explain this position further in the next chapter.

device that was later transcribed and coded using Dedoose. By the end, I had formally interviewed three architects, and a planner with the City of Toronto, all of whom had worked on the redevelopment. I also interviewed two community facilitators, one police officer and twenty residents along with several informal discussions with other residents during my time in the neighbourhood. Importantly, my sample of interviews includes former Don Mount Court tenants, new residents of TCHC, surrounding homeowners, and condominium owners in Rivertowne. While limited by time and the conventional size of a MA thesis project, these interviews provide a fairly accurate picture of the different voices in the neighbourhood.

The coding process was iteratively refined, but was largely structured around place-based attributes and experiences, revealing frame narratives and boundary-work. Inspired by neighbourhood ethnographic studies such as Modan's *Turf Wars* (2007) and Small's *Villa Victoria* (2004), I paid close attention to language and the subtle relationships residents draw between everyday life, identities and the neighbourhood environment.

Chapter Five: Transforming a Bounded Space to an Integrated Fabric?

Accumulating backlogs of neglected repairs eventually turned Moriyama's gloomy prediction that Don Mount Court would be a "disaster" into reality (Graham, Interview). There were complaints about cracks in walls, pipes leaking, rat infestations, and things generally falling apart. Demolition was to be the ultimate fix by clearing away the aging buildings for pristine, modern living spaces in an echo of the 1960s rationale for the clearance of Napier Place. In theory at least, residents of Don Mount Court were getting an upgrade. And while cases of public housing redevelopment vary a great deal, some studies suggest the process usually does result in better quality housing (Buron, 2002; Tach, 269).

Perhaps indicative of the current era, where urban redevelopment's goals and public legacy are so divergent, the architects of Rivertowne reveal a greater degree of caution about falling into environmental determinism in terms of how the newly built environment would transform social lives. One of the architects, Santiago Kunzle, reflected on his work in Rivertowne by saying "I don't think we are arrogant enough that we can pretend to know the answers to all the social ills and that with this we can cure all...no grandiose announcements [from us]" (Kunzle, Interview). Echoing the renewal era of the 1960s, however, contemporary redevelopment would not be exclusive to building sound housing. If it was, then the TCHC could simply recreate Moriyama's designs with better materials. Instead, redevelopment was a more complete transformation seeking to reorder the neighbourhood space. As the architect David Sisam put it, "We called it regeneration...because it was like re-making this place" (Sisam, Interview).

Between the TCHC, the architects, urban planners and media, there were no shortages of critiques levelled at the older built environment, some specific to Don Mount Court but more often drawing from discussions over redevelopment around Europe, Australia and North America. Central to the rhetoric deployed by proponents was pitching a kind of oppositional dynamic between the two spaces (pre-redevelopment and post-redevelopment). In one article, for example, the redevelopment was a shift from an “isolated” and “gloomy” past in Don Mount Court to a “thriving” and integrated future with Rivertowne (*National Post*, 2007). In this chapter I will explore how these characterizations narrate a spatial transformation, from a tightly bounded and static space encouraging dysfunction, to one that is open, dynamic and in a sense boundless. Among other things, this rhetoric was about positioning redevelopment as the tool for moving the neighbourhood from failure to success.

Don Mount Court: A Bounded Space

One of the primary and ubiquitous critiques of Don Mount Court by the proponents of redevelopment is how the design was imbued with a feeling of “separation”. Lewinberg argues, “Because of those large tracts of land, uninterrupted by anything...it wasn't functional; it wasn't part of the city. It was a project – an isolated part” (Lewinberg, Interview). What Moriyama had designed as an answer to the overcrowded Napier Place, was now reinterpreted as an island, turned inward on itself. Much of this effect was articulated through a discussion on the design. The buildings were set away from the sidewalks, there was vast green space, cars had no access beyond the perimeter of the site, and the designation of public and private space tended to be ambiguous. Police in particular found the space very difficult to patrol (Macdonald,

Interview). They were limited to walking through the space on foot, found the numbering system for units confusing, and disliked what in their opinion was an excess of



Figure 5.1. The top photo is a view from Thompson Street with Don Mount Court contrasted with a small, semi-detached house on the right. The second photo of a façade on the end of one building highlights Moryama’s unique design as well as how much of Don Mount Court faced away from the streets (the white wall existed only for redevelopment). The difference in architectural style, the distance from other housing, and the scale of the buildings, contributed – for proponents of redevelopment – to Don Mount Court feeling like an isolated fortress. Photo Credits: Top photo was taken by Carol Sutton (undated but was likely around 2000). Bottom photo was copied from *Urban Toronto* (and is dated 2004). Accessed by <http://urbantoronto.ca/forum/showthread.php/701-Don-Mount-Court->

dangerous, open spaces.

For proponents of redevelopment, the aesthetics of Don Mount Court also contributed to its intimidating, “fortress”-like aura. The uniformity and modernist appearance was now said to be “cold”, “ominous”, and for one journalist, little better than “hack-Corbusien” (*National Post*, 2007). This depiction is further accentuated by its context among an increasingly hip and trendy area. In a city where low-rise Victorian housing is now sought after and renovated, the resulting sense is that Don Mount Court had “been dropped down from space” (Kunzle, Interview). Don Mount Court’s design and appearance had supposedly neglected context and connections – a bad fit within Riverdale.

The built environment, thus, maintained a boundary separating Don Mount Court from the rest of the area. But isolation also had to do with demographics and contemporary views of public housing. Echoing the neighbourhood-effects literature, Don Mount Court was condemned as a problem because it concentrated the poor together and, in so doing, offered little hope of neighbourhood improvement without a more severe intervention. One such outcome of concentration was thought to be crime and deviant behaviour. “There were drug dealing, robberies and a few murders. The community was a shambles,” wrote one journalist from *The Toronto Star* (2010). For other writers, it was a “ghetto” – a term particularly powerful in conjuring a relationship between the concentration of poor and racial minorities and the creation of a dangerous and dysfunctional space (*Toronto Star*, 2011).

There was a fairly strong consensus that Don Mount Court and its residents were stigmatized.

Numerous studies have shown that this was an ongoing part of life in the much larger Regent Park (Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009; Purdy, 2003). For proponents of redevelopment, the stigmatized environment of Don Mount Court was only more reason for the city to start over and build something new. Since the old environment in their view was both the cause and target of this stigma, wiping away that landscape would root out the problem. And here is the irony of territorial stigmatization. As Kipfer and Petrunia note, the stigma surrounding a place like Regent Park or Don Mount Court has had the effect of shifting blame onto the physical structures and the “shortcomings of the residents”, thus positing redevelopment as the answer (Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009: 199). Yet in so doing, this notion deemphasizes the potential of non-redevelopment strategies, such as economic redistribution or poverty reduction, combined with rehabilitation. While it appears that repairs were not feasible in Don Mount Court, Kipfer and Petrunia’s point will likely become relevant to the discourse of future TCHC redevelopment projects.

In view of these discussions, a certain interpretation of Don Mount Court emerges. In this reading of the neighbourhood, the site was physically and socially bounded, resulting in the accentuation of isolation felt by low-income, racial minorities from the rest of society. And unlike the rest of South Riverdale, Don Mount Court was portrayed as static within an upward moving neighbourhood – a kind of weight that no longer (if ever) fit in. Redevelopment was positioned as the tool to reorder this space. If Don Mount Court was bounded, Rivertowne was to be its opposite.

Rivertowne: an Integrated Fabric

So the idea was to normalize the situation, create a sense of identity that was different than [Don Mount Court] – these long blocks that didn’t speak too

well about home and place [and] reconnect the neighbourhood by extending the streets through...(Kunzle, Interview).

The degree to which Don Mount Court stood out was argued to be a problem for two overarching reasons. It was a clear identifier as public housing, and the values and theories that gave rise to its design had been thoroughly critiqued. The response was to make Rivertowne look like any other neighbourhood in inner city Toronto. A part of this strategy is in the name change from Don Mount Court to Rivertowne. While numerous other redevelopments keep their name (as Regent Park will do), cities such as Chicago have decided to rename their projects “in order to break [the project’s] identity as former public housing sites” (McCormick *et al.*, 2000). Ida B. Wells/Madden Park becomes Oakwood Shores, Stateway Gardens becomes Park Boulevard, and Henry Horner Homes becomes Westhaven Park. The creation of the name Rivertowne is unclear, but there are some clues. In addition to establishing the same distance from the old identity as Chicago has done, Rivertowne is most likely meant to further encourage a connection between the new development and the commonly used names for the surrounding neighbourhood, South Riverdale and Riverside. The “e” at the end of “-towne” is also revealing. Perhaps this was to conjure a kind of trendy, new urbanist image of colonial history.

The past was not only introduced through its new name but, following many other public housing developments in the United States, the strategy was a post-modernist return to pre-renewal designs – or as Sisam put it “what is old is new again” (Sisam, Interview). The street grid from Napier Place was brought back in, and the block shapes of Don Mount Court were replaced by rows of townhouses running parallel to the sidewalk. The chosen aesthetic was used to achieve their goal of normalizing the

character of the neighbourhood as well. While Montgomery Sisam drew from Federal architecture, a style popular in the United States around the turn of the 19th century, the architects also stressed their desire to fit the aesthetic of Rivertowne seamlessly with the surrounding area of Victorian housing.

Integration is achieved through an archetypal Toronto pattern of urban square, streets and laneways that connect with the existing urban fabric... The surrounding neighbourhood is made up of largely individual or semi-detached Victorian houses. Since it was not possible (or necessarily desirable) to replicate the detailing of these houses within a restricted budget, a simpler more robust vocabulary was developed, picking up on the scale, proportion and material of the existing neighbourhood (Montgomery Sisam, 2011).

This informed much of the look and design, leading to gables, red brick, bay windows, canopies, and stoops overlooking the sidewalk (Montgomery Sisam, 2011). The architects of Rivertowne also argue that Don Mount Court was in some ways anti-urban, primarily because it removed the conventional grid and organized the housing around large open green spaces at a distance from the street (Kunzle, Interview). But the streets were an integral part of Rivertowne's designs as they are now thought to facilitate a number of normative community actions, including neighbourhood vitality/life, social interaction, a setting for activities, encouraging resident driven security, and demarking public and private spaces. Jane Jacobs's "Eyes on the Street" and Oscar Newman's "Defensible Space" were both acknowledged in the planning of Rivertowne. To quote the architects,

Sisam:...the next step is making those streets real streets – rather than roads – that have life on both sides.

Kunzle: Eyes on the street was fundamental. The client [TCHC] was extremely aware of not trying to generate spaces where no one can claim ownership...because that's where the bad stuff goes down.

Sisam: That's where drug deals go down, not usually in a backyard...

Kunzle: So if you look at the planning there are almost no spaces which are in between.

Sisam: It's either public or private. That's a very important concept (Kunzle and Sisam, Interview).

It was also hoped that streets would assist in dismantling the isolation of Don Mount Court from the rest of the area. The normalized pattern and multiple access points would open the neighbourhood up and form a connective fabric between




Figure 5.2 A view of the condominium area in Rivertowne. While much emphasis was placed on the street-centric design of Rivertowne, this does not hold true for this inner area of narrow, pedestrian only walkways. Photo taken by author in 2012.

Rivertowne and the surrounding neighbourhood. There would be more foot and automobile traffic going in and out, and surrounding residents might feel more welcome and comfortable using the park in the centre. Then as a result of this increase in spatial practice, Rivertowne could feel more like a typical neighbourhood in South Riverdale.

The design of the condominium area contradicts these street-centric principles. Unlike the rest of the neighbourhood, the northwestern block of Rivertowne does not have any car access, but is instead closed off into a pedestrian-only enclave. What this suggests is that the focus by the proponents of redevelopment on the transformative benefits of streets is directed mainly at public housing, and less so on market housing. These two sets of spatial rules become an important point in the following chapter.

Including market condominiums in the project was a necessary revenue source, but it was also a deliberate attempt to open the neighbourhood up and reform the space. Clearly influenced by discussions over neighbourhood effects, the TCHC began seeing social mix as a key benefit to redeveloped neighbourhoods. In one of its planning reports, the housing authority suggests that in communities like Rivertowne and Regent Park, social mix could have a positive impact on employment rates, education, and crime rates (TCHC SDP III: 1, 2007). TCHC sees the success of these

**Figure 5.3 Oppositional Dynamic:
A Summary of How Proponents Viewed Redevelopment**

BOUNDED SPACE		INTEGRATED FABRIC
<p>Don Mount Court</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated Fortress • Faces Inward • Sticks Out • Bad Reputation/Stigma • Dysfunctional • Ugly • Outmoded • Anti-urban 		<p>Rivertowne</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opened Up • Normalized • Fits South Riverdale • Normalized • Thriving/Diverse • Attractive • Modern • Street-centric

This table was composed by the researcher as a summary to how Don Mount Court and Rivertowne tend to be characterized in newspaper articles, TCHC documents, and in interviews with the architects and city planner.

goals in establishing a redeveloped neighbourhood as a setting where boundaries – between income levels for example – could be crossed, resulting in social cohesion and inclusion (TCHC SDP II: 2, 2007).

The inspiration to integrate different housing tenures within a neighbourhood, to normalize its design, and to think about its connection to urban fabric draws somewhat from the social housing era of the 1970s and 1980s. As discussed in Chapter Two, Toronto’s St. Lawrence neighbourhood looks markedly different than the renewal era projects and houses a range of income levels by combining cooperatives and non-profits with market housing. There was also attention to streets and trying to make sure the neighbourhood fit seamlessly within the overall area. While there is no longer a mandate to build the kind of mix achieved at St. Lawrence, the TCHC has explicitly looked at the area to influence their redevelopment projects, saying “there is a general consensus that [St. Lawrence] is a healthy community” and has an “integrated community” (TCHCd).

For Rivertowne, the mixture of housing tenure was set at 187 market condominiums on the north end of the neighbourhood, in addition to the 232 replaced public housing units. As Kunzle explains, social mix factored directly into the designs:

[We wanted to] integrate the market-housing component within the overall without creating a distinguishable boundary. “Oh those are market houses, those are the RGI houses.” If you stand on Munro Street and you look one way and [then] the other way, the whole feels like part of the same neighbourhood. That was a very conscious decision of ours. And trying not to stigmatize [public housing tenants] again by designing the market housing differently than the RGI houses (Kunzle, Interview).

Both public housing units and market condominiums share very similar looks, i.e. red bricks and gables, and Kunzle is direct about how this relates to social dynamics between the two groups. Proponents of redevelopment viewed Don Mount Court's built form as a kind of marker for stigma/difference, and so the goal of Rivertowne should be to withdraw this process from the equation by making the dwellings look identical. Thus, ideally the condo residents and the surrounding neighbours would be less likely to see the public housing buildings as special or an unwelcome space. Inherent within this goal is an emphasis on the role of appearances in demarcating place boundaries. By creating a near identical look to the buildings, Rivertowne's purported goal was to produce spaces/places that did not encourage social distinction. Of course, this principle is weakened by the geographical separation of the public housing from the market condominiums. Unlike the kind of social mix within a cooperative, Rivertowne is organized around housing type. Regent Park, once finished, will similarly devote separate buildings for private and public housing.

Encouraging a sense of community was also behind the creation of the park and activities room in the four-storey apartment complex. Paralleling some of the critiques of social mix, TCHC admits that when "left to their own devices, higher-income residents tend to leave the community for services, while lower income residents have fewer choices...and [may] withdraw from activities when they feel unsafe, unwelcome or disconnected" (TCHC SDP II, 2007: 8). To overcome this tendency, the amenity space and park were designed to be settings for face-to-face interaction and relationships. In the former, residents from both housing tenures could participate in BBQs, art and yoga classes, women's groups, and neighbourhood politics (Graham, Interview). The park, on

the other hand, would be for more informal, unplanned experiences: small talk between dog walkers, and activities for children. Again, wrapped up within the discussion are social and spatial boundaries and place making. At least in its ideal, the creation of a communal space is about deemphasizing differences and crossing boundaries. Through this practice, proponents saw the chance of encouraging an undivided, singular sense of place.

Attending to these goals, the TCHC looked to social mechanisms beyond the built environment to support mix. In one report published by the TCHC, the authors argue,

The results are conclusive. Mixed-income communities can work. But social cohesion and social interaction across income and tenure are vitally important to making these communities healthy. Redevelopment processes that took careful account of the social development and social cohesion aspects of new mixed communities were most successful in building healthy and strong communities...(TCHC SDP, II, 2007).

It was in this line of thinking that the TCHC helped fund a neighbourhood facilitator on a two-year contract starting in 2009 to guide “social infrastructure” in Rivertowne. Based out of the Ralph Thornton Centre (RTC), a nearby community centre, the position was involved with scheduling community events, knocking on doors to encourage resident involvement, and designing committees and “action teams” with individuals from TCHC units, condominiums, and Hamilton Street that would make up a rough governing structure for dealing with community issues (Hamilton, Interview; August, 2011). Together with neighbourhood space, the coordinator was there to pursue the goals of redevelopment.

Thus, there are multiple strategies to making Rivertowne more like a typical Toronto neighbourhood. At the core of the design is the concept of social integration, and thinking of the ways in which interactions between residents might be facilitated by the built environment. Rivertowne was to be an open, connected fit within South Riverdale, directly contrasting what was thought to be Don Mount Court's "fortress"-like experience. Proponents of redevelopment also conceived the project in relation to community – a place capable of being inclusive and "thriving" (TCHCb). Worked into the designs were hopes that the differences between the housing tenures would be muted and reflected in the dynamics between people. And finally, redevelopment was to be destigmatizing both to low-income residents and the space where Don Mount Court used to be.

Chapter Six: In the Neighbourhood Part I

Socio-Spatial Boundaries

In spring of 2012, a large cast consisting of tenants, condominium owners, and homeowners on Hamilton Street held a one-night performance of *In Another's Shoes* – a theatrical piece relating to life in Rivertowne. The project was the result of the community facilitator to engage in work that might help facilitate relationships and communication in the new neighbourhood (see pages 132 and 133 for description of this position). The piece wove together a series of non-linear scenes drawing from place-based narratives and current issues facing Rivertowne. It also used the neighbourhood itself as a set. One of the scenes involved a group of Rivertowne archetypes being asked to switch roles with one another; a single mother tenant swaps “shoes” with a businesswoman from the condominiums, a police officer does the same with a black youth from public housing, and an unemployed new Canadian swaps with a self-employed homeowner from Hamilton Street (Hamilton, Interview). Near the close of the piece, the characters then reflect on their “experience” and derive an appreciation for the different positions within the neighbourhood.

On first glance, this sounds like what proponents of redevelopment believed Rivertowne would achieve: a diverse range of people in the neighbourhood interacting and promoting values like cooperation and empathy. Yet *In Another's Shoes* was one in a list of attempts by the community facilitator to confront the troubling lack of these actions and feelings in reality. Throughout the piece there was an implicit acceptance that divisions – or boundaries – between residents had hardened and were negatively guiding a whole host of neighbourhood dynamics. A particularly telling moment is a scene where a “border guard” in a mask blocks access to the condominium area to a

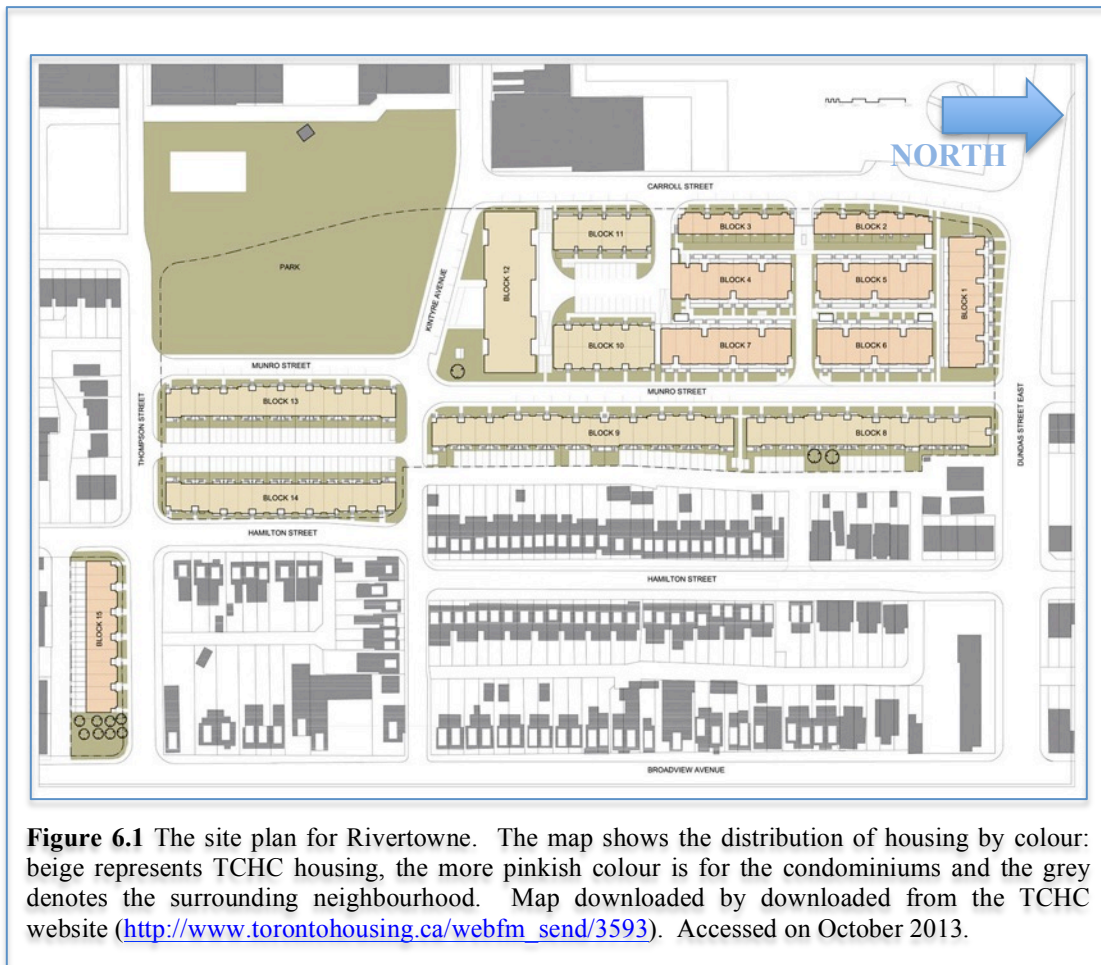
group of public housing tenants, accusing them of being a “street gang” (IAS script, 2012). While no such position exists in reality, it is a symbolic action that hints at how neighbourhood boundaries are at the intersection of identities, feelings, power and the spatiality of the built environment.

In the previous chapter, I outlined how redevelopment was framed rhetorically as a specific transformation: from the purportedly tight, bounded and static space of Don Mount Court, to a normalized, open and integrated fabric of Rivertowne. Based mostly on interviews and participant observation in the neighbourhood, the following section challenges this narrative by exploring the kinds of socio-spatial boundaries alluded to in *In Another's Shoes*. I will focus primarily on the ways in which residents engage in establishing, managing and rejecting these boundaries and discuss what reasons I found during my fieldwork to explain why they have become such an important element of daily life in Rivertowne. It is my contention that this focus provides a valuable way to discuss dynamics in the neighbourhood in relation to place-based goals for redevelopment.

Drawing Lines: Boundaries in Rivertowne

Housing tenure has become a powerful social identifier in Rivertowne. During discussions with residents and the community facilitators it was common to hear the area described as a composition of three demographics: the condominium residents, the TCHC tenants, and the homeowners on Hamilton Street (the residential street east of the development). While not everyone follows this organizational structure, everyone I spoke to seemed to at least be aware that housing tenure was used widely as a social marker or label.

This outcome should hardly be considered inevitable, particularly because it blurs the far more diverse reality. As noted in Chapter Two, within both the TCHC units and the condominiums there are multiple ethnicities, cultures, income levels, length of time in the neighbourhood, and general life experiences. These become blurred largely under the accentuated focus on the three overarching relational identities between condo residents, TCHC tenants, and homeowners. There are a number of forces at work here, but it is helpful to first understand how the layout of the neighbourhood has given these identities a stronger spatial connection. Fig. 6.1 shows the distribution of housing: condominiums are in the northwest section, TCHC tenant housing runs along Munro Street down to the



end of the park, and Hamilton Street shares an alleyway with Rivertowne to the west.

The boundaries that have formed are directly tied to these shapes. They work through the space, drawing from the built environment to denote who belongs where. With the condominiums and tenant housing facing one another along the north end, Munro Street generates especially strong relationally defined identities. A discussion with a white condominium owner in his early 30s over feelings about his neighbourhood, led to a discussion on these divisions:

...right now there's that dividing line and it's East and West Berlin. One side doesn't talk to the other. I've talked to people on Munro Street. They're like "I can't wait to move because across the street it's so bad"... It's an interesting perspective that as homeowners we feel like we've bonded together...If you ask any resident, one would say Munro and across [the street], you would draw a line around the private. Even the gardens are different; the grass is kept nicer on our side and look across the street and it hasn't been cut, so it's small things that you start to notice (R5).²⁸

Another condominium owner (Female, Asian-Canadian, 40s) who actually lives on Munro Street depicted similar feelings:

When I walk [along Munro], you can see them (public housing tenants), looking at me like...when I'm walking my dog I never walk on this side (gestures towards to the TCHC side). I always walk on here (points to condo side). And I feel like they're on the steps; they're staring at me. It's like an envy feeling. Because I'm there and they think they're lower than us. I always feel like they're looking at me. I don't think I'll walk there with my dog. I just don't feel comfortable with them looking at me. It's like we're a totally different people. We are not a community at all. If it was up to me I'd put up a fence there, just to protect the property. I mean we're paying for this (R9).

A central function for boundaries is to establish memberships within a group by excluding others (Lacy, 2002: 43). To that end, residents are also positioning themselves

²⁸ "R5" (R1, R2, R3, and so forth) refers to an interview with a resident. A table listing these codes along with demographic information is provided in the Appendix.



Figure 6.2 A view of Munro Street. Running along the right side are TCHC units with the condominiums facing opposite. While it looks like a regular street with very similar looking buildings, most residents I spoke to argue the street is the site of a very clear boundary. Photo taken by author in 2012.

in the neighbourhood to where they feel they belong. Both condominium owners above articulate these positions using “us/we, our” and “they, them, their” without me prompting the discussion to be framed in such a way. Hyperbole aside, their chosen imagery – East and West Berlin and a proposed fence – also showcase how strongly they perceive these boundaries to be. For the second speaker, her desire is to further eliminate interaction by adding an additional dimension to the spatial boundary, which surely pulls the neighbourhood conceptually closer to a gated community than to a typical inner city Toronto neighbourhood.

Some of the former Don Mount Court tenants who now live opposite to the condominiums on Munro Street also articulate this division. Many of them feel as

though the area across the street is a separate entity, which wants little to do with tenant housing. As a result, they rarely if ever enter the space. After sharing her discomfort with her home now being so close to a street, a black mother in her 30s leads a discussion about the two different spaces of Rivertowne,

When you think about it, you can access all the housing, but you can't access the condominiums. The condominiums are closed like old Don Mount. Like, if you go into the condo area, you go in and it's like all condos, they are all enclosed, no streets going through them. Then the housing area, all the cars are included through (R6).

Later she explains how this relates to boundaries,

People call it mixed income. It's not mixed income. Go through Rivertowne and tell me it's mixed income. Clearly, you see where housing is. And [you] clearly see where condominiums are. And clearly see you are not welcome at the condominiums. You can just feel it. They have a chain. It's the physical; it's the everything. You sense it; you feel it. They are closed in and it's totally different (R6).

Like the two condominium owners, this speaker draws the boundary along Munro Street. She is also explicit about how this is experiential: transgressing the boundary is a sense or feeling that they do not belong in the space. Having been around during the redevelopment, she also was very familiar with the kind of oppositional comparison between Don Mount Court and Rivertowne. What she says instead, however, is that while the public housing has been opened up and integrated with the new network of roads, this does not follow with the condominiums. In fact, she compares the new condominium area to the old Don Mount Court. It is a line of thinking that questions why there are two sets of spatial rules: public housing needing to be opened and integrated, while condominiums face inward. There are other elements of the built environment that have factored into the sense that the two spaces are different and for

different people. The chain (Figure 6.3) that the mother mentions blocks a road entering the condominiums.



Figure 6.3 For some residents, the chain was a symbol of the separation between housing tenures. The photo was taken by the researcher from the public housing side of the street; thus, what some tenants would see as they look across to the condominiums. Photo taken by author in 2012.

For her it stands as a clear example of why the condominium area feels exclusionary. The chain's actual function, which was to block cars from parking in the area (Graham, Interview), becomes irrelevant to its interpretive power: a physical boundary to exclude one group from another.

The chain also came up during a conversation I had with an artist who lives in one of the condominiums. She imagined doing a number of artistic interventions within the neighbourhood that deal with exactly the kinds of boundaries I have been discussing. One project was to have youth from public housing playing on the fence as

a symbolically defiant act. Another issue for her was the wall (Figure 6.4) separating the condominiums and the 4-storey TCHC apartment building to the south:

If you don't live here you might not notice...but one of the inspirations of [my project] is standing here at 50 Matilda (the 4- storey apartment building), seeing the open parking lot that is for TCHC housing, and seeing this wall that is our parking lot and then this assembly you have to go through to experience this luxurious architecture of the condos. So it is very blatant. You literally have to move your body up to be in their space...or our space...and that's what it looks like from the other side of the wall...that we look over to see the masses (R13).

The slippage between “their space” and “our space” is revealing. She later explains to me that she had hoped Rivertowne might be like the cooperative housing where she had previously lived. Instead, the acrimonious divide between housing made her feel “uncomfortable” with being a condominium resident and challenged her previous optimism about “social mix”. Though much of her discomfort came through the built environment, she also disparaged the separation in how the two spaces were managed: two mail systems, two garbage systems, different governance boards, and even two systems of landscaping. On the other side of Munro, residents were attentive to these differences as well. While talking about the disparity between condominium residents vs. public housing tenants in lobbying for their interests, Hamilton (the first community facilitator) recounted an early experience in her position. While tenants had moved in long before condominium residents, it was the latter group who first received landscaping.

In a way it might not seem like a big thing, but it was mud and dust. So they did this strip first and then stopped literally right where the condos began, like a kind of border...so there was this moment where this tenant woman with this young kid... I watched them. They were watching them put in – not big – but reasonably sized trees in front of condo land, in front of the houses and

the little girl said, "oh, look Mommy we are going to get a tree" and the mother said "oh, dear those aren't for us." And it was...one more summer of mud and dust for public housing people (Hamilton, Interview).

What this suggests is that many of the logistical processes keeping the two properties running separately are collectively having an impact on how residents understand their neighbourhood. When work is staggered in phases and based on housing tenure, or general upkeep is visually different, they become wrapped up in the narrative that the neighbourhood hosts two distinct social worlds.



Figure 6.4 The wall was also brought up as a physical divider demarcating the condominiums from the TCHC units. The photo was taken by the researcher standing at the back of the 4-storey TCHC apartment building. To access the condominiums from this direction requires walking up small staircases that are barely visible from this angle. Photo taken by author in 2012.

Lingering Boundaries

The boundaries between the condominiums and public housing tended to receive the most attention but others emerged when thinking about the context of Rivertowne within the larger South Riverdale. Among residents, architects/planners, and media, many agreed that the old Don Mount Court was a separate entity from the surrounding areas. Some of the former Don Mount Court residents felt this way as well, though I most often heard this as a positive rather than a drawback (R6, R11). These speakers depicted the separation more as a source of belonging or inclusion rather than isolation. Part of the goal of redevelopment was in softening the boundary so that Rivertowne would be less visible as a project, and more like the rest of the neighbourhood. As I will discuss later, there is some evidence that this is happening. However, when talking to residents from the surrounding area – especially on Hamilton Street – it is clear that old boundaries remain a part of their experience.

Unlike in the old Don Mount Court, there was now a paid position and grant funding to implement community facilitation between the new project and Hamilton Street. Residents on Hamilton Street were invited to community retreats, BBQs, workshops, and most importantly to voice their interests in meetings and fill neighbourhood political positions. One resident on Hamilton Street remembers some of his neighbours rejecting these invitations outright because they did not want to be associated with social housing (R8). They “took offence” at being classified as a part of Rivertowne. Rather, they positioned themselves as long-time members of the much larger area of South Riverdale. That same resident found those same feelings manifested recently when he tried to find their support for a pedestrian safety initiative

map (speed bumps and other traffic calming devices) because it referred to the area as Rivertowne.

Like Munro Street, the boundaries work through the space. Houses on Hamilton Street and TCHC townhouses both back onto the same wide alleyway. Soon after the redevelopment, the space became a common hang out spot for youth in the neighbourhood, in part because the only other large open spot was the park, which was delayed until 2012 (Hamilton, Interview). Martine August, who attended a series of community meetings in 2010, describes how the alleyway became a site of intense focus for Hamilton homeowners who wanted to limit the space to cars and parking (August, 2011: 11). For them, the alleyway had been taken over by “gangs” and in order to return the space to its “appropriate” function, it needed to be better policed. The tone and content of the dialogue in the often-acrimonious neighbourhood meetings cultivated a sense that the alleyway denoted a clear, physical marker between two groups with very different interests: gentrifying houses on one side, and low-income “slum” development on the other.

The conflict that Hamilton and August describe relates to what I found in my fieldwork, that the perceived boundaries of the old Don Mount Court linger on in the redeveloped site. One factor was that some still saw Rivertowne through the same lens of Don Mount Court. When a resident moved onto Hamilton Street, for instance, she was warned separately by her real-estate agent and a fellow neighbour that across the alleyway was a “sketchy” “project” and to “watch where you go” (R15). An outcome of this lingering sense of Don Mount Court is that some residents in the surrounding neighbourhood continue to be uneasy about going through the area. Another resident

on Hamilton Street had heard stories about Don Mount Court while she was living in The Beaches – a more affluent neighbourhood further east. While convinced she is much happier living on Hamilton Street, the project remains a place to avoid:

...but my daughter wants to go to a party in the neighbourhood. So there are pros and cons to having an interesting mixed neighbourhood...I always tell the kids, “come up Broadview, NEVER cut through the townhouses” (R4).

As with other boundaries in the neighbourhood, time is a factor. Memories of Don Mount Court from both inside and outside are still relatively fresh. But what the discussions with the surrounding residents underscore is that at least up until this point, Rivertowne’s reputation in South Riverdale is tied up in past feelings about Don Mount Court.

I have highlighted some of the dominant boundaries in the neighbourhood, which should give a sense of their importance in everyday life. Fig. 5.1 shows where these boundaries exist and how these connect to housing tenure. While the boundaries have a certain spatial existence, they are neither static nor universal. In the case of the mother talking about her daughter going to the party, the boundary along Munro Street matters little. In fact, the distinction between the condominiums and TCHC housing does not seem to be appear at all. Instead Rivertowne becomes more or less a single entity, perceived as distinct from the surrounding area. Boundary coherence thus rests on relational neighbourhood identities. Not only does this complicate the role of the built environment in boundary work, but it also stresses the need to go deeper into what gives these boundaries their power.

Figure 6.5

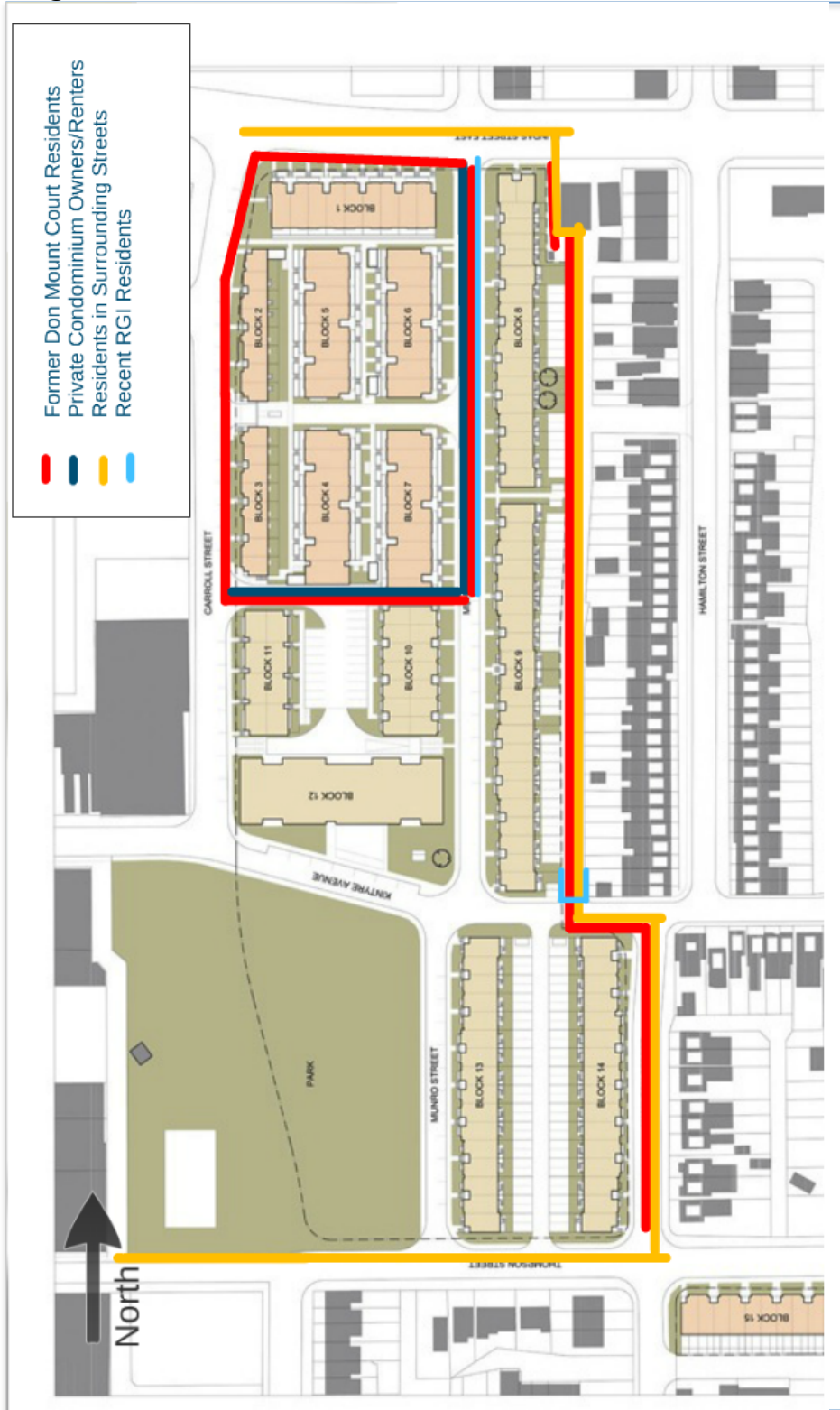


Figure 6.5 A map showing where boundaries were often described during interviews with residents. The red lines, for instance, represents where former Don Mount Court residents articulated a kind of separation or boundary within the neighbourhood (crossing Munro Street for example). I will be exploring these boundaries throughout the chapter, but this image accomplishes a general overview of my findings. The pinkish blocks on the northwest end are the condominiums, the beige blocks are TCHC units and the grey blocks are housing outside of the development. The residents are categorized by housing tenure, which I found to be the overwhelming factor within these discussions. Lines and legends added by researcher. Original illustration (without lines or legend) is a site-plan downloaded from the TCHC website (http://www.torontohousing.ca/webfm_send/3593). Accessed on October 2013.

Boundary and Identities

The people on Munro Street were beside themselves (discussing the period of 2009-2011). What can we do? I can't walk out of my door without a party going on in the street with all kinds of youth. There would be a porch across the road from me with – no word of lie – 15 people hanging out on the porch! Youth as in young ones who could hang out with them but I would say early 20 somethings (sic). So I call that youth but not juvenile. But it was very disconcerting because they were all black. I mean black guys at night with hoodies and dark glasses on, slouching beyond anything you have ever seen. The whole slouch pants...They'd be out there and a lot of women were afraid to walk down the street, incredibly intimidating. People were embarrassed to invite people to their home...They weren't catcalling, in which case you're kind of making it up, aren't you? If they make you uncomfortable but no one is actually doing anything to make you feel uncomfortable, it's kind of a little your problem. But still I know there were other women on Munro Street who were extremely uncomfortable walking down the street (R2- white female, condominium owner, 40s).

A number of condominium residents I spoke to brought up the issue of black men hanging out on the stoops facing Munro Street. Each of them argued it was a widespread issue facing condominium residents; the topic was even debated over the condominium listserv (R2). The scene has much to do with further concretizing the boundary on Munro Street. For the speaker, the area across from her townhouse was dangerous – a perceived threat to her safety – and resulted in her avoiding any interaction or movement through that space.

It is revealing to explore the particular power that emotions such as fear, insecurity, and discomfort have in driving boundary creation and maintenance. As Sibley notes, one can predict that it will be in these environments where boundaries or resistance to “others” will gain in strength and resonance (Sibley, 1995: 1). This speaker was not alone; other residents from the condominiums articulated a sense of concern or anxiety over crime in the neighbourhood. This ranged from minor incidents such as smoking marijuana outside to much more serious issues of police raids and drug busts.

As the speaker admits, the feeling of insecurity has more to do with perception and assumption than with direct experience. Later she points out that she had never actually had a problem with those men. Stories circulating around the condominiums played a role in constructing this perception: multiple residents, for instance, recounted an incident they heard about where an individual was attacked over his iPod. The aggressors were always alleged to be the same demographic that were hanging out on the stoops.



Figure 6.6 A stoop providing access for four TCHC units. Several condominium residents expressed discomfort or intimidation by what they argue were groups of largely young black men “loitering” at night on stoops such as these. Photo taken by author in 2012.

In Modan’s ethnography of a Washington D.C neighbourhood, the most pressing topic for discussion of fear and safety in the neighbourhood was about protecting white

women from Latino men in public spaces (Modan, 2007). This underscores the ways in which (1) fear and other emotions can be inseparable from identities, but also (2) how these identities rely on intricate processes: in this case the power relations between men and women and the local power relations between different ethnicities (Modan, 2007: 120). Returning to the stoops in Rivertowne, to grasp the meaning of the female condo owner's speech, thus, requires careful attention to the two active, composite identities: a white, middle class woman from the condominiums and the object of her focus: young, black men from public housing.

To start, there is a common relational set of identities in Rivertowne: the white (and more rarely Asian) condominium residents and the black public housing tenants. As written elsewhere, this does not accurately reflect the racial and ethnic diversity in both tenures. It does however work into some residents' understanding of the neighbourhood. Often this is articulated through everyday speech, such as youth from tenant housing using "white people" or "rich people" interchangeably as stand-ins for residents in the condominiums (Houston, Interview). Other times the identities deal directly with space and belonging. One condominium resident was explicit about how he uses race as a way to identify which housing tenure people in the neighbourhood were from. While talking about whom he tends to interact with in the neighbourhood, he explains:

Just the neighbours walking to and from their places. It's mostly Asian and whites. So whenever there are black people there (condominium area), you notice they're from outside our complex and you know it. So the only incident we had this summer was there were some people sitting on our steps. We showed up to get in and they said sorry and left – it wasn't even an issue. So we've been pretty lucky (R5).

As his answer demonstrates, race and housing tenure become conflated, where one leads into the other. For him, seeing a black person in the condominium area not only identifies him/her as a public housing tenant, but also prompts a story on an “incident” of trespassing on his property. What is assumed within the speech is a potential for trouble that was avoided. While subtle, this sentiment relates to Creswell’s in place/out of place dichotomy (Creswell, 1996). The presence of certain racial/economic identities is framed as a transgression of the normal or appropriateness of the space. In this sense, those individuals are positioned as “out of place” even though the location could be a small distance from their homes.

Relational Identities Through Proper Behaviour

While race and class emerged as social categories directly, as in the cases above, more often the focus on boundaries revolved around behaviour and value sets. Other studies on boundary work have found this to be a common language strategy to hide or obscure the underlying concerns over axes of identity, such as race or class (Martin, 2008). Modan’s ethnography explored this phenomenon in debates over “proper behaviour” (Modan, 2007: 156). I found similar discursive strategies in Rivertowne deployed mostly by condominium residents as a way to accentuate mainly class differences between them and public housing tenants.

Returning to the stoops once more, a number of condominium residents framed the tenants hanging around outside as inappropriate “loitering” in the neighbourhood. One resident went as so far as to explain the weakness of current bylaw codes on loitering (R2). The issue often served as a way to highlight the relational identities and

to discuss the tension between the two. Notice the use of “they/we” in the following excerpt from a condominium resident:

They are so used to sitting outside. We don't do that, right? You don't see [that in] the private condo[s]; we don't sit out on the porch and talk in the middle of the night. I don't think any of us do that. Maybe we do that once and a while for a party, but that's it. We don't use that as a living room as they do (R9).

The underlying assumption is that using stoops in this regard is fine only in certain conditions, and that part of being a condominium resident is understanding this social etiquette. The centre of this debate is asserting local rules on how to behave properly in Rivertowne. Especially in the first few years, condominium residents and homeowners on Hamilton Street complained – often to the city police, the TCHC’s own security service and in neighbourhood meetings – about the levels of noise in the neighbourhood. In addition to the stoops, the focus was on youth from tenant housing playing road hockey and basketball in the streets and holding parties in the parking lot with loud music. Curbing noise is of course not unique to Rivertowne. It is fair to suppose that noise especially late at night would provoke complaints in most neighbourhoods. What is revealing is how “noise” feeds into the maintenance of relational identities through its use as a boundary marker. It accomplishes this in two ways: first, noise divides the neighbourhood by housing tenure and, second, it often gives rise to justifications for contrasting value sets,

...it was noise. The people that had lived in Don Mount before and had come back and they thought, “oh, I now live in new digs and I’m going to make sure everybody knows I’m here”...so I just had conversations... “I appreciate everybody having fun, but for five hours on a Friday afternoon...blaring music out so I have to hear your music is unfair.

Sometimes your music is good, but you have been drinking since 1 [o'clock in the afternoon], I just got back from work..." (R3).

...and they sit there and they bring their chairs out...and they just sit on their porch and they are smoking cigarettes and drinking beer and they resent you because you are working your ass off over here. I'm trying to pay for this and over there you see this kind of – some of them are thinking you guys are all rich (R2).

In the telling of their experiences, both speakers note their status as employed, while also making some subtle inferences about responsibility. This is contrasted with a scene across the street of people assumed to be unemployed, drinking alcohol and largely indolent. The first speaker also makes it clear he is referring to former Don Mount Court residents.

A similar boundary manifests through discussions over property management. Some on the condominium side described their well-trimmed gardens in the summer and promptly snow-shovelled sidewalks in the winter as signs of visible differences with residents across the street. Litter from the tenant side became a prime focus. While a number of residents framed this as a managerial problem of the TCHC, others used it as an example of value differences in housing tenure. One resident connected this to ownership versus renting (though the focus is interestingly on TCHC renters and not condominium renters):

It's like the union mind set where they all strike or nothing. Public housing is the same. Why would you care? While you own, you have a vested interest in what your neighbours do and what you're doing. We've noticed our neighbours look out for us; we look out for them...we've seen garbage on the steps for weeks across the street and none of the other four units will pick it up. It just sits there. If you don't own it, and are not paying or paying minimally – it's like a squatting pad (R5).

Like Cheshire *et al.* (2010)'s "flawed consumer", the division between the homeowner/condominium owner and TCHC tenant becomes expressed through values and the latter's supposed lack of care or standards in maintaining the neighbourhood. There is also emphasis placed on the contrast between positive neighbourliness among condominium residents and an assumed shortcoming in regard to tenants. What emerges is really an assessment on the appropriate behaviour of a neighbour.

Conflicts over noise and garbage in Rivertowne are, thus, another symbolic step to help organize the relational identities from a condominium/homeowner perspective. They allow residents to describe largely class-based anxieties about living close to public housing by cloaking the issue in values and behaviour. As other scholars have noticed, this discursive strategy affirms the need to pay careful attention to coded language in the creation and management of boundaries (Martin, 2008; van Eijk, 2011). But it also adds another consideration: the inherent spatiality of these discourses. As observable elements, noise and litter strengthen the boundary along Munro Street and the back-alleyway between tenant housing and houses on Hamilton Street. They become descriptive elements to portray the neighbourhood as "East and West Berlin", "the good side and the bad side", and "us and them".

Chapter Seven: In the Neighbourhood Part II

Neighbourhood Narrative Frames in Rivertowne

The previous section gives a sense of how boundaries in Rivertowne operate and some of the dominant forces that shape their resonance in the neighbourhood. First, they are positioned through space and are strengthened by the concentration of housing tenure. They are also closely tied to relational identities, especially drawing from the tension and prejudice along the markers of race and class. Third, as the lingering reputation of Don Mount Court from the surrounding neighbourhood reveals, time and memory in the neighbourhood continue to inform how one “reads” the neighbourhood. Finally, the power of boundaries also has to do with emotions, from anxiety deriving from perceived marginalization, to fear of going outside in parts of the neighbourhood. Together these components mostly parallel what has been discussed in the literature.

But these elements were never discussed in isolation. Rather, boundary-talk always emerged in relation to place identities within Rivertowne. There was a correlation between boundaries and how residents viewed the neighbourhood more fully as a place with characteristics and meanings within a narrative structure. My motive is not to leap into any theoretical causal links that might exist, but to expand the picture of boundaries and neighbourhood dynamics in present day Rivertowne.

Based primarily on Small’s NNFs, I will sketch out three dominant place frames that appeared in my interviews with residents and briefly discuss their relation to boundary work. Similar to what Small found, none of the place narratives will represent “a more accurate description of the neighbourhood; they simply accentuate different aspects of the complex agglomeration of people, historical events, landscape, and institutions” (Small, 2004: 77).

Frame I:
From Disaster to Normal

Unlike other revitalization projects of Toronto's public housing, Don Mount Court was christened with a new name. Rivertowne signified the new identity the redeveloped area was meant to have. Reviewing the marketing behind some of the slogans ("thai not tie"; "espresso, not expressway"), it is likely some wanted to portray Rivertowne as a typical downtown Toronto neighbourhood experiencing an influx of urban centric middle class residents. While this was a strategy to attract condominium buyers, several people I spoke to have internalized a similar narrative frame. The notion was that Rivertowne was moving along a path from the problem-area of Don Mount Court to a neighbourhood that matched the rest of South Riverdale's ongoing gentrification.

Many of these residents were supportive of the changes occurring in the neighbourhood and their position within that movement. When I asked one condominium resident how he describes his neighbourhood, he highlighted the rise of Queen St. East:

...we talk about the Dundas and Queen streetcar and how convenient the transportation options are, and the newly built park and then we talk about how the area is changing, that's key for us. We can see the change already, we haven't tried the new Paintbox restaurant on Dundas but it looks fantastic and we've heard great reviews so we want to go. It just opened in one of the newly built condo towers. It's the first restaurant on that Dundas strip...Queen Street East and how we love it...we always talk about Queen East and how hip it is and how good the restaurants are and how fun it feels (R5).

His comments reflect the value being placed on neighbourhood taste and lifestyles emerging through the growing number of boutique shops and restaurants. The

more development, including the numerous condominium projects being constructed near Rivertowne, is a welcome sign of the area getting a vibrant makeover through a creeping gentrification from the west.

Another signal that adds to this frame regards property values. Early on in Rivertowne, there was uncertainty among condominium buyers. Some residents remember several of their neighbours wanting to move out and expressing fears over being able to sell. At least according to them, this translated into an especially high turnover rate in the first few years. Now however, these same residents were more optimistic about the future and increases in their property values. Like the resident above, the new condominiums and businesses on Queen St. East would bring in more middle class residents to the area and enhance the area's reputation. As one resident noted, this transformation would almost be inevitable with the neighbourhood's proximity to the downtown and access to public transit (R9).

Key to this frame is viewing Don Mount Court as an entity of the past. Several drew on stories they heard about Don Mount Court being a "ghetto" or a "dump", but argued once the buildings came down, Don Mount Court was transformed into the much more positive Rivertowne. Small argues that frames always highlight some aspects and ignore others (Small, 2004). In this case, the frame depicts redevelopment not as a process to improve building conditions for Don Mount Court tenants, but as a new neighbourhood with new people. Much of this narrative has to do with positioning in the neighbourhood. For one, it offered condominium residents a way to legitimize their presence in the neighbourhood. It also gave these same individuals support for asserting

their interests and what they would like to see happen to the area. One resident recounts an early experience with former Don Mount Court tenants:

It was always funny because you'd have the people from Don Mount who had been moved around – living somewhere else, and for some reason they had moved them back. It's like we've taken all these dolphins out of the sea, moved them to Sea World, but now released them where we found them. And they came back...they were like "we are from Don Mount" and I was like, "Don Mount doesn't exist anymore, so whatever you are talking about no longer exists." So...you had these people who had moved out as part of community housing, spread around and they went back to their old ways: partying on the streets, being loud, kids running through the neighbourhood. So the idea was to make sure this works and to make sure these people understand that they are not going to be tolerated behaving the way they used to be behave (R3).

His view is that while the neighbourhood is transforming, long-time residents were at least initially holding it back. By positioning Rivertowne as the new neighbourhood and explicitly rejecting the continuance of Don Mount Court, the speaker can then find greater justification in imposing new behaviours/values/rules on neighbourhood life. For him, this revolves around a new spatial order. And like boundaries, this frame organizes elements such as noise and garbage within the narrative; in this case, as past behaviours being suppressed as Rivertowne takes over.

In addition to securing legitimacy and making sense of the neighbourhood, this narrative frame is therefore an actively political one that helps mobilize contestations over space. It encourages the previous speaker to seek ways to correct these issues by dealing with the tenants directly, complaining during neighbourhood meetings, or in calling the police. For another resident, the frame translated into the need to display the right behaviour in order to act as a role model. She explains, "so when I go out to work and you are on the stoop and I come home and you are still on your stoop that will

hopefully jog you to say, ‘you know what there is more to life than just picking up a cheque’” (R14). This works through the narrative in positioning Rivertowne as way to



Figure 7.1 Place Identities and logo collaboration. A graphic designer from Hamilton Street, who was an active participant in neighbourhood groups, hosted a number of forums with residents in order to gain input for a Rivertowne logo he planned on illustrating. After receiving feedback from tenants, especially from the youth from Don Mount Court, he created a first draft and proposed it to the rest of the neighbourhood. He found several residents from the condominiums and Hamilton Street were opposed. According to him, some residents were wary of creating a single logo to represent all the area because it might negatively affect reputation and property values. And there was another worry specific to the content. Based primarily on a tenant’s idea, the design featured an open hand, which the graphic designer had interpreted as a symbol of inclusivity, with Rivertowne “welcoming” or “waving” people into the neighbourhood. Instead, some in the condominiums believed this might actually be a gang symbol, representing one that harkened back to Don Mount Court. Concluding that this exercise might cause more division than collaboration, the graphic designer discarded the draft and produced some alternatives. Out of these, the result was the more innocuous Figure 7.1 above. The disagreements that emerged over the logo point to the arduousness of these types of exercises in a divided, mixed income neighbourhood, but also to the extent to which some new residents might fear any lingering place identity of the former neighbourhood.

correct some of the social problems supposedly lingering from the Don Mount Court era.

Many of the same condominium residents who articulated boundaries – especially the one running along Munro Street – conceptualized the neighbourhood through this frame. While not clear-cut, this correlation has to do with one of the dominant condominium identities. This frame positions them as legitimate members as they are a part not only of Rivertowne but of a gentrifying area. It also helps them assert their image of the neighbourhood and the changes they would like to see occur. What this suggests is that in conjunction with class, race, and states of being, the boundary along Munro Street is also the site of contestation over place identity.

**Frame II:
Rivertowne as Mixed Income Development**

A counter frame emerged to the disaster-to-normal narrative, and while substantively less popular than Frame I, it was voiced in all three types of housing as well as from different ethnicities. Similar to the first frame, these residents identify with the name Rivertowne. But unlike the gentrification-oriented narrative above, this frame highlights the neighbourhood's existing (or potential) ability to be an inclusive area for diversity. The shared characteristic for this cohort was the length of time in the neighbourhood. Everyone under this frame had moved in after redevelopment: condominium residents, new tenants to TCHC and homeowners on Hamilton Street.

When describing the neighbourhood, these residents would often note their attraction to living in a diverse area they say is for everyone. Even though they are fairly new to the area, many of them are concerned about overdevelopment. Wanting to maintain the current diversity, they see the influx of new modern condominiums as a

negative. Some also pointed to the “disconnect” between what shops were moving onto Queen Street East, such as the cheese shops and coffee houses, and the large number of low-income residents in the area who would likely not be their patrons (R8). The current diversity was framed as something to be protected and a key part of the place identity. A white professional who moved from the more affluent Yorkville to a house on Hamilton Street explains,

...whereas here everyone is different, absolutely different. Every single house has a different situation, different type of person living in it. I don't feel like there is any preconceived notion of what you should be or what the neighbourhood says about you. And just the nicest people I have ever met in terms of neighbours and neighbourhood. People from Hamilton, people from Don Mount Court, they are amazing. We got baby gifts from people in Don Mount Court when she was born (R12).

As her comments suggest this “neighbourhood for everyone” frame stresses the openness of social networks unimpeded by class, race, and other axes of identity. A black mother who recently moved to Toronto into a TCHC unit in Rivertowne also voiced the neighbourliness factor and said little about differences between residents:

I like my neighbours. We are kind of like a family. We all know each other because my daughter – everybody knows her because she plays outside and she is loud and all that...so that's how I came to know everybody. I talk to people. I say hi to them. Even the lady who lives here (points to Hamilton Street)...we say hi to each other, they are not part of this; they live opposite, but we talk to each other, "hi how are you?" (R10).

A central part of this frame is that while the neighbourhood is diverse, interests and goals are ultimately shared rather than competing. And through participation and consensus building the neighbourhood can achieve common aims, from the tenants in public housing to the homeowners on Hamilton Street. In fact, several of the residents listed activism and progressive politics as being a characteristic of the neighbourhood.

Not surprisingly, this cohort had a much higher rate of involvement in neighbourhood initiatives and committees. One white condominium resident, who was a part of numerous projects in Rivertowne, illustrates this sentiment:

...everyone is kind of the same, different backgrounds and levels of income or whatever. But we all have the same interests. We all like to garden, for our kids to play together. And we just want the community to be a nice place and to enjoy it (R7).

What makes Rivertowne unique, according to this frame, is that it is a “successfully mixed income area.” In this light, redevelopment is ultimately positive, for it ensures residents from all walks of life will live in the same social world. The assumption helps inform how these residents understood elements like noise and crime. Under the disaster-to-normal frame, noise and crime were presented as evidence of the area’s troublesome past and inappropriate to the present and future neighbourhood identity. While this new cohort witnessed the same scenes and behaviour, they positioned these elements very differently. One resident felt that while her neighbours would complain about kids in the alleyway, for her it was “nice” that they had a place to play road hockey (R15). Crime was similarly placed. Under this frame, the “realistic” residents of Rivertowne believed that crime was a normal part of urban living:

There was a raid on the community housing that startled me, but I feel like that could happen anywhere. I mean you can have a grow op anywhere, like Lawrence Park (a wealthy neighbourhood in Toronto). And I feel like crime can happen anywhere so I'm not too concerned about it and I certainly feel safe walking around (R12).

Most residents in this cohort emphasized the degree to which they felt safe. Many of them had heard the same stories circulating throughout the neighbourhood, but these tended to become evidence of other residents not being right for the neighbourhood

rather than as an experience to fear. As the last speaker concluded, this frame de-emphasised or entirely ignored socio-spatial boundaries. They felt comfortable walking around, establishing relationships outside of their housing tenure, and buying into the notion of Rivertowne as a progressive, mixed income community. In many ways this is the frame that proponents of redevelopment had envisioned entrenching itself within the neighbourhood. Yet it was a minority within my fieldwork, often depicted as an alternative to Frame I. And while articulating inclusion, this frame found little resonance with former Don Mount Court residents, many of whom now challenge redevelopment's promises.

Frame III

Rivertowne as Takeover/Don Mount Court Continues

I was not able to speak with a former Don Mount Court resident who participated in consultations for redevelopment or dealt with the Don Mount Court Development Corporation – a TCHC governing body to oversee the project. However, based on interviews with urban planner, Denise Graham, and the architects at Montgomery Sisam, as well as Mariana Valverde's writing on the OMB hearings, there was a firm sense that redevelopment had widespread support from Don Mount Court residents. Graham, for instance, insists that the local councillor held "extra" consultations to make sure tenants had input. And the only opposition that the architects remember were the group of residents from the surrounding area that wanted to stop public housing from returning.

Yet at least with the former Don Mount Court residents I spoke to, there was a strong attachment to the past neighbourhood and discomfort with the new identity embodied in Rivertowne. One resident put it this way:

It just feels a whole lot different, like a whole different neighbourhood. Before there was a connection with the homes, now it just feels like a sense of not belonging. Like it is not your neighbourhood anymore (R6).

This is a very clear expression of both missing the past for its strong community and feeling anxiety over living in a neighbourhood that she does not identify with. “A sense of not belonging” is particularly expressive. Another respondent suggested that this was in part because the relocation process was longer and more stressful than originally projected (R11). And given the inclusion of new tenants in TCHC units and residents in the condominiums, it follows that social networks are going to be cut. But she also shares in the previous speaker’s feelings that there is a “sense of loss, and greater sense of injustice” because many feel Rivertowne is not what they imagined it to be (R11).

What emerges through these discussions is a narrative frame that is at odds with Frame I. Here the narrative does not depict the neighbourhood as progressing towards a normal or more attractive area, but one that has lost a lot of its meaning and attachment. As a result, the focus tends to be on the past and contrasting the positive elements of community life in Don Mount Court with the more negative ones in the present day. Under this frame, Don Mount Court continues to struggle on as a place identity in many ways competing with Rivertowne.

Examples of the persisting life of Don Mount Court appeared throughout my fieldwork in the neighbourhood. I found it during conversations with residents from the old neighbourhood, who continue to use “Don Mount” in identifying the area. It is also present in neighbourhood groups like the local hip-hop collective, DMC The Movement, or in the soccer club’s insistence they be called the DMC Soccer Club, even after it was

suggested that they change it to Rivertowne (Hamilton, Interview). The name, at least with people I spoke to, is not just a habit leftover from pre-redevelopment but a practice that conveys significance to their identity. An anecdotal but nonetheless revealing example of this occurred during my time as a volunteer with the Ralph Thornton Centre. I was assisting an employee at the RTC run a youth leadership program aimed at teenagers from the tenant side of Rivertowne. The first day involved an “ice-breaker” where they created collages about themselves. Each collage – if not all of them – had “DMC” or “Don Mount” in prominent positions. When asked, the teens spoke about how much they missed the old neighbourhood and then stressed a larger point: Don Mount Court was where they were from – not Rivertowne.

As these observations suggest, there is still a strong connection with Don Mount Court within the new neighbourhood. One former Don Mount Court resident sees that as her only important connection in the new neighbourhood:

Well the only sense you can really feel is the old Don Mount. We all recognize one another and we all still look over one another. I remember one day somebody said, “...I thought I saw somebody arguing with you, a man on the street”, and two guys ran up, “what's going on? What's happening?” And that's only going to come out from old Don Mount because we have known each other for so long...they'll still go out of their way to say hello to me and I'll go out of my way to say hi to them. They'll ask me “oh did you hear this?”...you still feel that community (R17).

Overall, residents seem to remember Don Mount Court as a positive community experiencing problems, rather than a “problem neighbourhood”. There were gangs, drugs, violence, and ethnic divisions (R11). And the physical conditions of the buildings were indeed awful. Several residents acknowledged that Don Mount Court needed either extensive repairs or complete reconstruction. But in spite of these issues, they all

defended the old neighbourhood as a “real community” where everyone knew each other and a parent would help keep an eye on other people’s children (R16). In contrast to the notion that Don Mount Court was negatively affected by physical and social isolation, some residents considered this to actually be a benefit:

R6: The old Don Mount was an enclosed neighbourhood. Friendly...it wasn't just housing projects you see at Regent (the largest public housing development in the country). It was more peaceful in a sense, more neighbourly. Family oriented...very close-knit community...people say we were more enclosed. I loved it, it didn't feel like – I just liked it. It was huge too, big space, so it's not like you are in one building that is enclosed. It was massive.

Researcher: Do you miss it?

R6: Yes, because the new Rivertowne is so different, just prettier bricks but it's not the same (R6).

An active element within these responses is the present. The current Rivertowne is framed as a place that now contributes to feeling uncertainty beyond the lost social connections and reconstruction of the built environment. In contrast particularly to Frame II, there is a belief that the neighbourhood is necessarily divided because the condominium owners have “different commitments” than the TCHC tenants (R11). In other words, they argue, the interests in Rivertowne are not shared or activated by consensus, but are locked in competition.

According to several residents and community workers, the police play a role in creating this atmosphere. I will be exploring the relationship between the police and narrative frames in Rivertowne further in the next section, but some residents accuse the police of choosing the interests of condominium owners over TCHC tenants (R6). They argue since Rivertowne opened, the police have significantly escalated their presence in the neighbourhood and frequently harass tenants, particularly young black men (see pg.

127-128 for more on this). This hostile relationship between several of the tenants and the police becomes enmeshed within the narrative frame as evidence that Rivertowne was not built for them. One of the community facilitators points to a mother she knows whose son is purportedly targeted by police:

She says she'd rather be back in the old Don Mount in her rundown kitchen, [with] mould [and] rats and she would know her kids would be okay than living here where she has an anxiety attack every time somebody comes to the house because she thinks the police are after her. She says it was never like this before, and it has been hell since the redevelopment, being monitored, living in a fishbowl (Houston, Interview).

These feelings are a poignant example of conceptualizing redevelopment beyond “bricks and mortar”. For this resident, redevelopment is perceived as the change from feeling secure to one that causes “anxiety”. The result is furthering a sense that something vital was lost in the redevelopment, and the resident is willing to give up the positive improvements to housing that Rivertowne achieved. Like Frame I, this narrative correlates to boundaries. The residents constructing this narrative were also the ones that expressed and experienced the boundary running along Munro Street, separating the TCHC and the condominiums. This is in part because the condominiums are a clear component of Rivertowne’s – as opposed to Don Mount Court’s – new identity. There is also a perception that the police are acting the way they do because they are siding with condominium residents, whether they are calling them or not. The result is a boundary along Munro Street that divides two stories: Rivertowne progressing towards the future and Don Mount Court struggling to continue.

Discussion:
Police, Frames, and New Stigma

Police have not figured prominently in studies about redevelopment, but when their role is addressed, different conclusions emerge. There does appear to be a trend towards increased police presence and other heightened enforcement mechanisms in redeveloped public housing in Canada and the United States (August, 2011; Seto *et al.*, 2009). How this increase affects their relationship with residents, however, seems to depend on the demographics of residents, strategies and techniques that police use, and other characteristics determined by local contexts. In some neighbourhoods, the returning residents from public housing were most appreciative of policing in the new development (Tach, 2010). The newcomers (those living in market rent units), on the other hand, became weary or apathetic about neighbourhood life, refusing even to report crimes (Tach, 2010). Looking at a different HOPE VI neighbourhood, Seto *et al.* (2009) found a very different picture emerge. In their study the returning residents of public housing decried the new police presence in the neighbourhood, as they saw it translate into a greater frequency of physical and verbal harassment, primarily targeting black youth.

Writing on some of the early neighbourhood meetings in Rivertowne, August depicts an environment more similar to Seto *et al.* (2009)'s. Condominium owners and homeowners on Hamilton Street were the most active groups in pursuing greater policing, while tenants were alarmed over what they felt was a surge in "racially-targeted" harassment (August, 2011: 9). The presence of police continues to be a large source of controversy. Since redevelopment they have been a highly visible actor in the neighbourhood, leading safety audits (a walking tour with residents, evaluating and advising how to deal with unsafe spaces), being present at neighbourhood meetings and

events (invited or otherwise), and commonly having a unit parked on one of the streets or officers riding through on bikes.²⁹

I interviewed Rob Macdonald, a police officer who not only spends a lot of time in Rivertowne but also remembers what it was like policing in Don Mount Court. While he rejects the notion that there are competing interests in regards to policing in the neighbourhood, he does admit that the condominiums in general have a different “set of expectations”:

...the condo owners, they have a set of expectations of what they expect their community to be. They are trying to achieve them and they are asking us for assistance to achieve what they see the community standards being. Other people may not agree with that, "Oh, well why do they expect this? We never had that. It was never like this." Well everybody has a right to safe and secure living... "So, I'm calling the police, bottom line." And it's the right thing to do. I don't care where you come from; it's the right thing to do. You don't feel safe; you involve the police (Macdonald, Interview).

He is also aware that their heightened presence in the neighbourhood is divisive,

Every time there is a police presence, it is perceived that we are there to cause trouble or wreak havoc...That's not the case. The majority of why we are here is to make sure this is a safe environment for everybody else...We have tried to be more involved but it is a two-way street. We are there quite often on bikes and like I said, for 15 weeks every night there was a presence because it was identified as one of our two highest violent crime areas for our divisions (Macdonald, Interview).

As these two excerpts show, the perspective of the local police is that their role in Rivertowne – like any other neighbourhood – necessarily centres on ensuring a “safe and secure” environment. But for residents there are major disagreements about how the police engage in this goal. When I asked one of the community facilitators about safety in the neighbourhood she responded by drawing this division:

²⁹ Information on the safety audit: August, 2011; City of Toronto Web (2013).

It depends on whose safety. Because do you mean from the perspective of the condo owners or do you mean safety from the perspective of the 14 year old boy who gets stopped by the police all the time. Because he feels incredibly unsafe...(Houston, Interview).

Following the comments by Officer Macdonald and the community facilitator, I found that the issue of safety – and policing in particular – was wrapped up in neighbourhood narrative frames. Especially in regards to the competing narratives between Frame I and III, the police have become influential in shaping the content of the narratives, and as subjects within the contestations defining Rivertowne as a place. Below I compare how two residents – one condominium owner and one former Don Mount Court tenant – perceive the presence of police in the neighbourhood.

For residents who understand the neighbourhood through the filter of Disaster-to-Normal Narrative, the police are an embraced mechanism for achieving neighbourhood goals. They are there to ensure personal safety, and as Officer Macdonald pointed out, this motivation extends into a more collective discourse on community standards. What I found is that several residents connected their frequent calls to the police to the narrative about the transformation of Don Mount Court from the problematic public housing development to Rivertowne, a normal middle-class or gentrified neighbourhood. In some cases, the motivation was in feeling threatened or intimidated; other times, it was perceived as being an active member of the neighbourhood. Here is a white condo owner with a small family positioning the police as part of the benefit for including market housing in the new development:

...if I want to sell my unit and every other unit is a drug den, I'm never going to be able to sell my unit, so if I don't call the police on an everyday basis to clear that shit up, I'm just taking responsibility for my own money.

At the beginning it was back to normal for some of these people. They fell back to normal. And then it changed slowly...it transitioned...they have changed the situation for these individuals. They have more policing; I have more policing. It's a very well-policed area. Well they have a giant police station right over here and they come and do – on my way home I see unmarked police cars...(R3).

These feelings factored directly into neighbourhood politics, a good example being the Community Safety Committee, which was one of the resident bodies to emerge after redevelopment. According to Hamilton, the group soon became “dominated by people who just wanted to call the cops for everything – [they] didn't get the crime prevention piece or building relationships” (Hamilton). Focus turned to complaints about tenants hanging out on stoops, noise at night, gang activity, and possible strategies to better regulate neighbourhood space (one proposal was for video cameras [R3]). An outcome was a growing perception that a significant portion of the neighbourhood, tied to the condominiums, was seeking heightened security and control over the public housing.

A very different image of police appears when talking to residents who see the neighbourhood through Frame III. From this perspective, the police are targeting public housing tenants and particularly young black men and treating them collectively as criminals. They point to frequently being asked to show IDs, monitored intensely by officers driving through, and being forced to disperse even if they are only hanging out on the sidewalk. There are also allegations against the police engaging in physical harassment that are well known in the neighbourhood (Houston Interview, Hamilton Interview). For one resident, the effect is a deep distrust of the police:

R6: Kids are getting stopped everyday...

Researcher: Is it getting better?

R6: It's worse. It keeps getting worse. It's a sense of not belonging... they have a lot of police patrol in Rivertowne, stopping and asking kids questions, asking people for IDs...searching people. I have witnessed this myself many times... but what they don't understand is they are causing all this tension with kids and making kids feel they are criminals. They are a few – just like a few in the condominiums who do crime. But they are mainly targeting the youth, 15 year olds. It's sad. It's the same officers and the things they say to them, the things they do to them, it's really bad.

What this indicates is that beyond the damage to the youth, the police are seen as a damaging force for how these residents even identify with their neighbourhood.

Rivertowne begins to feel as though it were built less for them and more for the incoming group. To refer again to Creswell's in place/out of place duality, the perception is that the young black man is not welcome in the public space the same way their white counterpart might be.

An outcome, which is revealed within this narrative, is the potential for reestablishing a kind of stigma on the very population redevelopment had supposedly meant to help. McCormick *et al.* (2012) introduced this possibility in mixed income developments when they found that public housing tenants experienced stigma from their housing authorities and the incoming residents. Threading together their discussion on stigma, a useful definition is a “social-regulatory” process that devalues certain social identities (race, nationality, mental illness), often connecting them with undesirable stereotypes (disorder, dangerous, uninformed), which in turn shuns or concretizes uneven access to social, economic, or political power (McCormick *et al.*, 2012). In Rivertowne, some believe the heightened police presence is serving this function through the allegedly constant targeting and intimidating of young tenants. The forced upon, stigmatizing attribute in this case is that black youth from public housing are or will be criminals. The

same Don Mount Court resident actually contrasted the former neighbourhood with the present, arguing that people only started feeling stigmatized after redevelopment (R6).

There is clearly a stark contrast in how the police are perceived in the neighbourhood. Much of this has to do not only with positions within the neighbourhood, but also with direct experience. Residents speaking through one frame, for instance, would tell stories they heard about drug busts or muggings, while residents speaking through another frame would recount stories about near-daily confrontations with police. Like other dynamics in the neighbourhood, the police figure into relational identities and how the politics of place is currently unfolding.

Conclusion for the Goals of Redevelopment:

In Chapter Five, I unpacked the place-centred goals for redevelopment – the more qualitative and experiential side of the area’s dramatic state-led transformation. In other words, I focused less on if the reconstruction meant to be an improvement to the physical quality of housing and community infrastructure and more on the meaning and relationships people formed with the neighbourhood and its fellow residents. Drawing on interviews, government documents, and the media, I found an overall narrative envisioned by proponents: the shift from a bounded and problem-ridden space of Don Mount Court to an integrated, and more open space of Rivertowne. As a result of this spatial conversion, the development and its residents would be less isolated, less stigmatized, and belong to a “thriving”, “inclusive” mixed income community. Yet five years after the opening, residents depict a far more complex picture, which challenges many of these optimistic predictions.

To several residents living in the surrounding area, Rivertowne remains a separate, enclosed entity from the rest of South Riverdale. Similar to how they felt about Don Mount Court, residents see the area as a large public housing project and tend to harbour assumptions and fears based on that history. On the other hand, many of the former Don Mount Court residents feel attempts at opening up the neighbourhood, came at the price of losing the community bond of Don Mount Court. Thus, while a built environment may try to “integrate” an urban fabric, the lived experience may reveal quite the opposite.

On the inside, relational identities have hardened into the space, helping to construct coherent boundaries along housing tenure. These divisions affect where residents walk, with whom they interact, and the legitimizing of neighbourhood rules and behaviour. An inclusive mixed-income community measured by this metric is limited. Of course there are several exceptions, but the dominant place identities portray two large groups – the condominium residents and the tenants – as being locked in opposition. One result of this tension is accentuating the visibility and negative characterizations of public housing residents, particularly those of Don Mount Court. Rather than de-stigmatizing the residents, there is a perception by some residents that they are actually more stigmatized than they were in the older neighbourhood.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

“No Looking Back at Don Mount Court” *Toronto Star*, 2011

“Don Mount Rebounds From Ruin” *Toronto Star*, 2008

“Don Mount, er, Rivertowne Gets a Makeover” *BlogTO*, 2009

“East-end Neighbourhood Casts off the Old Model of Public Housing” *Globe and Mail*, 2008

“Inclusive, Not Exclusive” *National Post*, 2009

As these headlines suggest, the TCHC’s decision to begin redeveloping some of its post-war properties into modern, mixed-income designs was met with wide support in the city. Many depicted the move as a chance to reduce geographic disadvantage, promote inclusivity, and improve an aging stock of public housing in need of repair, all the while removing – in their opinion – ugly, unwelcoming spaces. Above all else, this thesis was an attempt to respond to what the public may later see as overly idealistic rhetoric. While scholars in the United States have been complicating or challenging these arguments for several years, the debate in Toronto (and Canada) is still relatively young.³⁰ The first wave of renewal suffered from naïve, overbearing assumptions as well. It would be hazardously myopic to fail to conceptualize this era as unprecedented.

By approaching the neighbourhood through “place”, this research is meant to provide more room for criticism and reflection for the debate currently unfolding. Since a number of other properties in Toronto will be going through a similar process in the near future, it is important for the city to be serious about what may or may not be

³⁰ For some academic critiques from Toronto see: August, 2011; James, 2010; Kipfer and Peturnia, 2009.

achieved, what may be sacrificed, and what new problems this process might create.

Regent Park, which is currently halfway through construction, is particularly relevant to this discussion. It is a unique neighbourhood, with its own history and plan for redevelopment. And yet, there is much to learn from Rivertowne and the problems that continue to hamper everyday life for residents.

The decision to spatially divide the neighbourhood by housing tenure has profoundly shaped the dynamics I described in Chapters Five and Six. According to the architects and city planner, the TCHC and the developer felt that mixing the two properties would make it harder to administer and potentially harm condominium sales. My contention is they did not appreciate the significance of how this might affect the neighbourhood once people began moving in. Concentrating the different housing tenures on either side of Munro Street has had the effect of establishing a kind of “face-off” between two the relational identities. Not only does this contribute to limiting interaction and accentuating housing as a metric of identity, it also allows or even encourages labelling in the neighbourhood, where residents characterize their neighbours based on which side of the street they live on. The problem with separation also includes service provision. The difference in everyday upkeep such as landscaping further fuels this divide. So while a singular, cohesive aesthetic along with other design strategies may have been beneficial towards the project’s goals, their influence is substantively muted. If the hope is to mix, and to pursue the same kinds of goals articulated through the redevelopment of Rivertowne, then the TCHC should reconsider whether separation of housing tenure is worth the benefits to management efficiencies.

Following August's (2011) recommendation, I underscore the need for Rivertowne and future redeveloped neighbourhoods to have permanent full-time community facilitators. Based out of the Ralph Thornton Centre (RTC) and with funding from the TCHC and outside grants, the position has involved scheduling community events, knocking on doors to encourage resident involvement, and designing committees and "action teams" with individuals from TCHC units, condominiums, and Hamilton Street that has made up a rough governing structure for dealing with community issues (Hamilton, Interview; August, 2011). Considering the divisions explored in the previous two chapters, it is clear that the community facilitators have not solved the neighbourhood's problems. Yet, in my opinion the dynamics would have likely worsened without their involvement. A permanent position with stable funding, thus, appears necessary. Ideally, the individual will recognize the unequal power dynamics – and at times competing interests – between housing tenures and work on behalf of those being disadvantaged or marginalized. The presence of police in Rivertowne is perhaps the most salient example. And beyond their roles as facilitators, community development also carries other potential benefits, such as empowering tenants by funding their own envisioned groups (women's groups, after-school homework clubs), or hosting skill-building workshops, (youth leadership, employment centres).

Space in Rivertowne has also proven to be a problem in this regard. A room on the ground floor of the 4-story apartment complex was designed as a mixed-use community room, a welcome space to host a wide range of activities for all residents. Cumbersome bureaucracy has so far limited the applicability of fulfilling this role. To use the room, residents and community facilitators must first gain approval from the head

office of TCHC, which then provides key fobs to unlock the door (Hamilton, Interview). This has led to a lot of frustrations, including the facilitator having to run a dance class in the lobby of the building because approval from the TCHC took too long. For the same reason, a number of Community Safety Committee meetings had to be set in a nearby coffee shop and the condominium's board of directors essentially gave up trying to use that room for their meetings. Having a flexible, well-used space might encourage the more normative goals of social-mix, such as interaction, but it could also undoubtedly strengthen community development (led either by facilitators or residents) that in turn might diffuse boundaries, reduce discrimination, and empower disadvantaged residents.

What comes across most directly in this research is the need for proponents to appreciate the politics of place in redeveloped neighbourhoods. First, resident-constructed place identities may differ from how outsiders perceive the neighbourhood. For many who lived in Don Mount Court, the neighbourhood was not a "ghetto" or "dump", and as a result, they did not energetically adopt Rivertowne and its new image. Instead, many articulated regret that the new neighbourhood felt as though it was built without memory or continuity. They were also offended that so many in the condominiums and the surrounding area portrayed the old neighbourhood so poorly. The incoming residents are also not neutral bystanders in place-construction, but active participants who carry their own values and desires that they want to integrate into the neighbourhood. A place-politics emerged in Rivertowne, inseparable from debates over the police, appropriate behaviour, and the future of the neighbourhood, which had the effect of exacerbating divisions already mired in class (and racial/ethnic) tension.

The degree to which former Don Mount Court residents express “a sense of injustice” or loss as a result of redevelopment clearly suggests there is good reason for proponents and other neighbourhoods like Don Mount Court to reconsider the extent to which the process will deliver on the promised benefits. Perspectives from the mother, for instance, who would rather go back to Don Mount Court, even in its poor physical condition, is to me a striking condemnation of the project that was meant to improve her quality of life.

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Appendix I Interview Codes

Resident Code	Housing Tenure	Racial Group	Gender	Age	Date of Interview
R1	Surrounding Homeowner	White	Female	50-60	March 20 2013
R2	Condominium Owner	White	Female	40-50	January 14, 2013
R3	Condominium Owner	White	Male	30-40	January 8, 2013
R4	Surrounding Homeowner	White	Female	30-40	January 9, 2013
R5	Condominium Owner	White	Male	30-35	November 29, 2012
R6	TCHC Tenant	Black	Female	30-40	March 15, 2013
R7	Condominium Owner	White	Female	30-40	March 12, 2013
R8	Surrounding Homeowner	White	Male	30-40	January 11, 2013
R9	Condominium Owner	Asian	Female	30-40	November 26, 2012
R10	TCHC Tenant	Black	Female	40-50	March 18, 2013
R11	TCHC Tenant	Black	Female	25-30	December 12, 2012
R12	Surrounding Homeowner	White	Female	30-40	November 27, 2012
R13	Condominium Owner	White	Female	20-30	January 30, 2013
R14	Condominium Owner	Black	Female	40-50	December 28, 2012
R15	Surrounding Homeowner	White	Female	20-30	October 24, 2012
R16	TCHC Tenant	Black	Male	30-40	April 20, 2013
R17	TCHC Tenant	Black	Female	30-40	March 1, 2012
R18	Surrounding Renter	Unclear	Female	30-40	February 19, 2013
R19	Surrounding Renter	Black	Male	30-40	January 9, 2013

Professionals	Position	Involvement in Redevelopment	Date of Interview
Frank Lewinberg	Architect/Planner at Urban Strategies.	Helped run the proposal call for the TCHC.	November 5 2012
David Sisam	Architect at Montgomery Sisam	Designed Rivertowne	February 12, 2013
Santiago Kunzle	Architect at Montgomery Sisam	Designed Rivertowne	February 12, 2013
Denise Graham	Urban Planner City of Toronto	Negotiated with architects, developers and TCHC	March 22, 2013
Robert Macdonald	Police Officer	Currently polices in Rivertowne (and had worked in DMC as well).	March 11, 2013
Dale Hamilton	Community Facilitator	Worked in Rivertowne for the first few years and has since returned to the position.	February 11, 2013
Rebecca Houston	Community Facilitator	Worked in Rivertowne after Hamilton left.	January 18 2013

Appendix II Interview Resources

One of the photos I used during interviews. I found these to be useful tools in prompting discussions.



Fig. 4.2. Taken from Google Earth, I asked residents to draw what they believe were the beginnings and ends of “their neighbourhood”.



Appendix III Interview Questions

Residents of the Surrounding Neighbourhood

Revitalization

1. How long have you lived/worked in this area?
2. Where did you live before?
3. What was the old Don Mount Court like?
 - a. What places come to your mind when you think about the old Don Mount Court?
 - b. What did you think of the buildings?
4. How has the neighbourhood changed?
 - a. Has the neighbourhood's reputation changed?
5. What kind of difference do the new buildings and streets have on the neighbourhood?
6. What do you think about the city tearing down and rebuilding homes like it has in Don Mount Court?

Territory

7. Where does Don Mount Court begin and end? (Discuss over a map)
 - a. Has this changed over time?
8. How does Don Mount Court 'fit' with the rest of South Riverdale?
9. What is South Riverdale like?

Experience with the Neighbourhood

10. Do you ever go through Don Mount Court?
 - a. If so, what do you do there? (to get somewhere else, use the park/basketball court, meet people)?
 - b. What is it like going through Don Mount Court?
 - c. Are there areas/times when you don't want to walk around Don Mount Court? Why's that?
11. Did you go through Don Mount Court before it was rebuilt?
 - a. Does it feel different now?
 - b. Do you now walk around different spots in the neighbourhood?
 - c. Once the city finishes the park, do you think you will use it?
12. Do you know people who live in Don Mount Court?
 - a. How do you know them?
 - b. What are they like?
13. What's it like living around Don Mount Court?

Community

14. What makes a good neighbourhood?
 - a. Does Don Mount Court seem like a good neighbourhood?
15. What do you think about the new residents who've moved in to Don Mount Court?
16. What do you imagine Don Mount Court will be like in 10 years?

Former Residents of Don Mount Court

Past

1. When did you move to Don Mount Court?
 - a. Where did you live before?
2. Do you remember what your first impression of Don Mount Court was?
3. What was the old Don Mount Court like?
 - a. What places come to mind when you think about the old Don Mount Court?
 - b. What did you think about the buildings and streets?
4. What kinds of things do you remember about Don Mount Court?
 - a. Special events?
 - b. Weekly/daily activities
 - c. What thoughts or feelings come out when you remember these things?
5. How did you feel when you heard about the plans to tear down and rebuild Don Mount Court?

Revitalization

6. What kind of difference do the new buildings and streets have on the neighbourhood?
 - a. How has the reconstruction impacted you?
7. What do you think about the city tearing down and rebuilding homes like it has in Don Mount Court?
8. How has the neighbourhood changed?
 - a. Has the neighbourhood's reputation changed?

Territory

9. Where does Don Mount Court begin and end? Why these boundaries? Physical? (Discuss over a map)
 - a. Has this changed over time?
10. How does Don Mount Court 'fit' with the rest of South Riverdale? Has this changed? Does it have something to do with the buildings?
11. What is South Riverdale like?

Experience with the Neighbourhood

12. Is the neighbourhood important to your daily life?
13. Where do you spend time in the neighbourhood?
 - a. What do you do? (walk home, use the park/basketball court, meet people)?
 - b. What is it like walking around Don Mount Court?
 - c. Have there been any changes in terms of safety? Safer/less safe? Why's that?
 - d. Does the neighbourhood feel different now?
 - e. Did you like the look of the older neighbourhood? Compare your older home to your new one.
 - f. Has the reconstruction changed where you go in the neighbourhood? (consult map)
14. Do you know a lot other residents in Don Mount Court/Rivertowne?

- a. How do you know them?
 - b. What are they like?
 - c. Do you spend time with them in the neighbourhood?
15. What's it like living in Don Mount Court/Rivertowne?

Community

16. What makes a good neighbourhood?
- a. Does Don Mount Court seem like a good neighbourhood?
 - b. I've heard that the older neighbourhood was in some ways split between the North and the South. Is that true?
 - c. Does the newer neighbourhood feel like one community? How so?
17. What do you imagine Rivertowne will be like in 10-20 years?
18. Do you plan on staying in Rivertowne?

Residents Moving in After Redevelopment

Revitalization

1. When did you move to Rivertowne (Don Mount Court)?
2. Where did you live before?
3. What did you know about Don Mount Court before it was rebuilt into Rivertowne?
 - a. How did you first hear about Rivertowne?
 - b. What made you want to move to the neighbourhood?
 - c. Did you see any of the advertisements? (Discuss over copies of ads)
 - d. Did you have any initial concerns?
4. What do you think about the new look of the neighbourhood?

Territory

5. Where does Rivertowne begin and end? (Discuss over a map)
6. How does Rivertowne "fit" with the rest of South Riverdale?
7. What is South Riverdale like?

Experience with the Neighbourhood

8. Where do you spend time in the neighbourhood?
 - a. What do you do? (walk home, use the park/basketball court, meet people)?
 - b. What is it like walking around Rivertowne?
 - c. Are there better and worse areas and times to walk around? Why is that?
 - d. Does it feel like "home" to you?
 - e. Once the city finishes the park, do you think you will use it?
9. Do you know a lot of other residents in Rivertowne?
 - a. How do you know them?
 - b. What are they like?
 - c. Do you spend time with them in the neighbourhood?
10. What's it like living in Rivertowne?
11. Since moving in, have your views on the neighbourhood changed?

Community

12. What makes a good neighbourhood?
 - a. Does Rivertowne seem like a good neighbourhood?
13. What do you think about the residents who lived and have since returned to Rivertowne?
14. What do you imagine Rivertowne will be like in 10 years?
15. Do you plan on staying in Rivertowne?

Architect Interview

Revitalization

1. What was your role in the reconstruction of Don Mount Court?
2. What is your position in the company?
3. Why did Montgomery Sisam get involved in this project?
4. Montgomery Sisam has designed a range of residential and commercial buildings, but in what ways was the reconstruction of Don Mount Court unique?
5. What do you think about the contemporary revitalization of public housing in Toronto?
 - a. Is Regent Park moving direction? Alexandra Park?

Physical Design

6. What influences are behind the designs for Rivertowne?
 - a. Other residential sites?
 - b. Other sites where public housing has been “revitalized”?
 - c. Architectural principles? New Urbanism?
7. Were the aesthetic choices important?
8. How did the city – in terms of councillors and planners – influence the designs?

Don Mount Court

9. What did you know about Don Mount Court before the revitalization?
10. Did you ever walk around before construction started?
11. What do you think about the older designs? (Discuss over photos)
12. Did the designs for Rivertowne attempt to make up for any shortcomings with Don Mount Court?

Goals for Rivertowne

13. What were the main goals for the project?
14. I’m interested in a couple of issues that were voiced especially by the TCHC and the media (but by Montgomery Sisam as well). Writers from the NP and the Globe, for example, point to how Rivertowne is transitioning the neighbourhood away from its “gloomy” and segregated feel. With this shift, they point to the neighbourhood’s past with gun violence and other crimes.
 - a. What’s your take on this line of thinking?
 - b. How do the new buildings and designs relate to how people think about the neighbourhood?

- c. Do you think it was more of an issue for the returning who lived in Don Mount Court or people who were looking to move in to the neighbourhood?
- 15. Another point of discussion was on the urban fabric and that Rivertowne would better “fit” with the rest of South Riverdale?
 - a. Did this come up in the design process?
 - b. Why is the urban fabric so important?
- 16. The media has also described how revitalization has helped in making the neighbourhood a “thriving” community.
 - a. How do the designs and new buildings relate to fostering community?
 - b. Has Rivertowne succeeded in this regard?

Community Facilitator Interviews

Revitalization

- 1. When did you first start working with the RTC?
- 2. What did you know about the neighbourhood before you started working?
- 3. What do you personally think about the reconstruction? Has it been fairly positive?
- 4. Are there any negative issues/complaints with the design, architecture?

Framing the Neighbourhood

- 5. When you talk to residents about Don Mount Court, how do they tend to describe their neighbourhood?
 - a. What about when they are talking about the reconstruction?
 - b. Do you get the sense that many of them like the new community?
 - c. What issues seem particularly present? the park? The streetscape? The look? The community? The activities? The physical conditions?
- 6. Have you found a difference between how public housing tenants and private tenants feel about their neighbourhood?

The Past

- 7. How is the past described? Do you think there is any nostalgia for the older Don Mount Court?
- 8. When talking about the past, what is continually voiced? The buildings? The residents? The community? The look?
- 9. Especially through the media, there is a sense that the reconstruction moves DMC away from its past negative reputation? What is your take on that? Is it talked about in the RTC?

New Community

- 10. Your work involves a lot of work that strengthens connections between public tenants, private tenants and the outside community. What are some of the issues where these groups tend to agree on in their neighbourhood?
- 11. Where do they tend to disagree?

Appendix IV Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Date: August 8 2012

Place and Revitalization

Researcher: David Mair, MA Candidate
Department of Geography at York University
Dmair@yorku.ca
(416) 830-9645

Purpose of Research: Don Mount Court (also known as Rivertowne) has changed considerably in the last ten years. My research is an attempt to better understand these changes by hearing from a diverse set of people in the neighbourhood. I am interested in the different ways people understand neighbourhood change. The research will be presented at York University. I will also publish articles based on the research.

What Will be Asked of You: Your unique voice is essential to my study. I would like to have an open one-on-one discussion with you about Don Mount Court (Rivertowne). This discussion will last between 30-45 minutes and will be taped using a digital recorder.

Risks: I do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research.

Benefits: As a result of your participation, you are guaranteed a \$20 prepaid VISA gift card.³¹

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence your treatment in the research nor your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

Withdrawal from the Study: You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. If you decide to stop participating, you will still receive the promised \$20 gift certificate. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality: All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. The data will be stored on a private external hard drive and only the research will have access to this information. The data will be stored for three years and then destroyed. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact David Mair either by telephone at (416) 830-

³¹ This was only offered in the first five interviews.

9645 or by e-mail (dmair@yorku.ca). You may also contact the supervisors of this research, Professor Douglas Young (phone: (416) 736-2100 Ext: 77829, email: dogoyo@yorku.ca) and Professor Jon Caulfield (phone: (416) 736-2100 Ext: 30125, email: warbler@yorku.ca). This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I _____, consent to participate in ***Place and Revitalization***
(fill in your name here)
conducted by David Mair. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

_____ I wish to remain anonymous and I do not want my name to appear in any publication or report of the research.

_____ I waive anonymity and agree that my name may appear in any publication or report of the research.

Signature _____ **Date** _____
Participant (parent or legal guardian for minors)

Signature _____ **Date** _____
Researcher

Appendix V
Advertisement for *In Another's Shoes*

In Another's Shoes



an outdoor play & movie
about life in Rivertowne & starring 50 local residents
sat aug 25 8–9:30 pm

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