

Parkdale Community Planning Study

Building a foundation for
decent work, shared wealth,
and equitable development
in Parkdale



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01 Introduction



The Parkdale Community Economic Development (PCED) Planning Project is an 18-month neighbourhood-wide planning initiative for Parkdale. Supported by the Atkinson Foundation, the PCED project is led by Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC), with extensive collaboration among over 25 organizations working in Parkdale. The project combines community action research, stakeholder engagement, and participatory planning to develop future visions of Parkdale, and community strategies to realize them. The project goal is to create a Parkdale Neighbourhood Plan for decent work, shared wealth building, and equitable development.

1-1 Why community planning in Parkdale now?

Parkdale is changing rapidly. This comes as little surprise to those living and working in Parkdale. Neighbourhood change is not new to Parkdale. Indeed, Parkdale has been under constant pressure of neighbourhood change – from the Gardiner Expressway construction in the 1960s, to deinstitutionalization in the 1970s, to the influx of artists and higher-income residents starting in the 1990s (Slater 2004a). And yet, for the past decade, the pace and degree of gentrification has intensified. For example, Parkdale’s main commercial street, Queen Street West, has seen a growing number of new restaurants and bars that cater to outside and high-end clientele, pushing out local-serving businesses. Pressures on the affordability of high-rise rental apartments in South Parkdale have increased rapidly after corporate landlords started to raise rents higher than provincial rent guidelines, resulting in intense eviction pressures. These are only two examples that aptly demonstrate the rapid changes and displacement pressures underway in Parkdale. Increasing pressures from gentrification and real estate reinvestment have endangered local community assets, assets that have kept Parkdale diverse, affordable, and accessible to diverse community members, particularly for low-income and marginalized community members.

What is at stake now is the future of Parkdale. The effects of neighbourhood change are a shared concern. We know that change happens, but we also know that how change happens is not inevitable. Strategies and policy tools to guide neighbourhood change and local economies do exist. In fact, Parkdale is already building those strategies, such as the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, Toronto’s first community land trust that aims to acquire and hold land for community benefits, or the Co-op Cred program that offers decent supportive work opportunities. A unique and remarkable strength of Parkdale lies in the diversity of the neighbourhood’s community-led initiatives. What is needed, then, is to explore how we can align those strategies and work together to address growing inequality and poverty, and build a more equitable neighbourhood. This is why this community planning initiative is vital now to building a shared vision for the future of Parkdale, and identifying community strategies and policy options.

Furthermore, the community planning initiative is particularly timely now. In 2014, South Parkdale was selected as one of the 31 Neighbourhood Improvement Areas in the City of Toronto’s Strong Neighbourhood Strategy, and it is targeted for social investment. In 2015, the City of Toronto also adopted the Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy. A renewed interest in public investment in affordable housing and

public infrastructure by the federal government is another opening. In addition to these political opportunities, there is a growing movement in alternative approaches to community economic development (CED) in and beyond Toronto. The growing socio-spatial inequality, precarious work, and displacement are imperatives to rethink the local economy. There is a pressing need to explore ways to promote shared wealth, decent work, and equitable development. This emerging CED movement encourages us not only to respond to neighbourhood change, but also to proactively build more equitable local economies. Taken together, the PCED project furnishes timely opportunities for participatory planning and community engagement to envision the future of Parkdale that we want to create together.

1-2 Four overarching Parkdale values that guide community planning and action

The PCED project has been informed by four core neighbourhood values that emerged from the community planning process: diversity, affordability, inclusion, and equity (see p. 10 for more details on the planning process). Firstly, Parkdale is a socially, culturally, and economically diverse neighbourhood. This diversity attracts a wide range of community members who choose to live, stay, and socialize in Parkdale. The second value is affordability, which makes it possible for diverse community members – regardless of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds – to call Parkdale their home. This combination of diversity and affordability creates a neighbourhood condition for the third value, inclusion. The fourth value – although more implicit in our planning process – is equity. Equity is an important lens when we think of a question of “differences” in Parkdale.

Our community needs and assets mapping process demonstrated diverse community members have an unequal access to and a varying degree of dependence on community assets. For example, community assets for one community group – a range of fresh food options in Parkdale – are not accessible for other community groups. For some, a local coffee shop is identified as social space, but for others, it is a sign of neighbourhood change that may cause displacement. For low-income and immigrant members, services and programs offered by community agencies are important assets, though these are seldom seen as assets by others.

It is in this neighbourhood context that equity is a critical value not to simply celebrate diversity, but to bring collective attention to different resources, positions, capacities, and access to decision-making power among different community members. Equity is also important because impacts of

neighbourhood change are not equally felt among diverse residents; rather they deepen conditions and effects of inequality and poverty. Low-income and vulnerable community members suggest that they find it increasingly difficult to find a sense of “belonging,” and to stay and feel included in Parkdale. Diversity, affordability, and inclusion are increasingly at risk in Parkdale, and hinge on equitable outcomes of neighbourhood development and improvement. Therefore, this community planning project foregrounds the principle of equitable development.

to inform policy development that can be accountable and responsive to locally specific needs and impacts.

1–3 The purpose and organization of the study report

The PCED project aims to develop a Parkdale Neighbourhood Plan at the end of the project in June 2016. This report summarizes, analyzes, and synthesizes outcomes and findings from all community planning processes and research from the first stage of the project (between January and December 2015). This report offers “a big picture” of the current state of Parkdale, and a comprehensive and relational analysis of community challenges and opportunities that are often discussed in silos. By bringing both various areas of concerns, as well as promising directions in Parkdale together, this report aims to develop a critical foundation that will help to shape the development of a neighbourhood plan. The report will thus be used in the second stage of the project as a reference document. It will inform community decision-making, prioritize actions and partnership development, set concrete goals and work plans, and identify needs and sources for resource development. After the development of the neighbourhood plan, this planning study report will serve as a reference document against which we can contextualize the promising directions we will undertake collectively.

The report is organized to meet these goals. The second section briefly outlines the steering committee members, participatory planning process, and research methods. The third offers a short history of Parkdale to contextualize the current issues within historical and structural changes of the neighbourhood in relation to Toronto. Section four reports on outcomes of the Parkdale Neighbourhood Wellbeing Indicators development, and suggests possible action directions for how to harness these neighbourhood indicators for multiple purposes. The fifth section discusses challenges and assets in seven key areas related to community action and policy options. The sixth section outlines promising directions in these areas. The report concludes with general observations, key highlights, and next steps for the PCED project. It should be noted that some policy options proposed in this report are not necessarily achievable at the neighbourhood level alone, but require policy reforms at different levels of government. This report offers unique neighbourhood-based perspectives

02 Why Community Economic Development?



Rationales for community economic development

As indicated in the project name, Community Economic Development (CED) is a focus of the PCED. It is important to clarify why we focus on CED and how we approach it. There are two rationales for our focus on CED in this community planning initiative. The first is an urgent need to address growing inequality and poverty in Parkdale and Toronto. Such expanding socio-spatial inequality – coupled with the recent global financial crisis, the growth of precarious work, increasing housing unaffordability, and food insecurity – raises questions about how the local economy is organized, and how it could be reorganized to serve community needs (e.g. Rankin 2013).

The second rationale is informed by a social determinants of health perspective. Many of the key social determinants of health – income, employment, housing, and work environments – are related to socio-economic factors, and have considerable impacts on health outcomes. Given high health needs in Parkdale, it is important to explore community-based economic interventions that promote inclusive economic opportunities, while contributing to more equitable health outcomes. It should be noted that these two rationales for CED are not to suggest that other areas of work – social services, transportation, recreation, and education, to name a few – are of less importance.

Three CED approaches

While there are many diverse CED approaches and practices, they can be grouped into three camps. First, some CED approaches traditionally emphasize job creation, neighbourhood branding to draw investment, and business attraction from outside through public subsidies and tax incentives. These strategies are a market-based CED approach. The market-based approach, however, is critiqued because proponents of this approach often see low-income, disinvested neighbourhoods as underutilized markets for market expansion and/or that they have deficits of economic assets and resources that require external interventions (Cummings 2002).

In response, an asset-based CED approach emerged. The asset-based approach aims to build communities from “within” by identifying and harnessing already existing community assets and resources to address local issues (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993; Born et al 2003). While the asset-based approach is more comprehensive in addressing local issues beyond job creation and business development, it is critiqued because of its considerable emphasis on internal resources and resident engagement (DeFillips et al. 2006). Furthermore, both market-based and asset-based approaches are called into question because they fail to address structural causes and processes of growing poverty and inequality, disinvestment, economic restructuring, labour market dynamics, and public policy issues (Cummings 2002; DeFillips et al. 2006).

As alternatives to these approaches, a systems-based CED approach emphasizes movement building to link community-based initiatives with broad-based economic reforms such as a living wage campaigns and labour policy reforms (Cummings 2002). It also aims to build alternative institutions that promote collective ownership and democratic control of three essential areas in the economy: land, money, and labour (e.g. DeFillipis 2004). It should be noted that proponents of the systems-based approach do not necessarily reject market-based and asset-based approaches, but see them as a means, not an end, of addressing local issues with due consideration to systemic issues. It is the context and the purpose for which those approaches are used that are more important (Shrage 2003). For example, an asset-based analysis could identify untapped community resources that can be mobilized for systemic responses.

Recently, emerging CED practices that echo such systems-based approaches are being organized under the umbrella of a “community wealth building” approach. Community wealth building is defined as “a system approach to economic development that creates an inclusive, sustainable economy built on locally rooted and broadly held ownership” (Kelly & McKinley 2015, p. 16). In other words, the community wealth building approach is different from other approaches because of its explicit emphasis on democratizing the ownership of assets. It thus foregrounds economic democracy: Who owns economic assets and resources, and how are they controlled to generate and share community’s wealth (MIT Colab & BCDI 2015). The community wealth building approach has recently been championed by many groups, in particular by the Democracy Collaborative in the US, and the Atkinson Foundation in Toronto.

Parkdale’s approach to system-change CED

Inspired by these responses, the PCED project adopted a systemic, comprehensive CED approach built on the principles of shared ownership, democratic management, and the ethics of care. For Parkdale, the significance of the shared wealth approach lies in the possibility for it to shift attention from the centrality of employment in CED, on to systems and conditions in which the creation and redistribution of wealth is organized. This orientation offers a critical insight into how to address issues in changing neighbourhoods under gentrification pressures like Parkdale. Often, “neighbourhood improvement” is associated with positive outcomes of gentrification – crime reduction, more investment, and social mix, for example. However, the problem is that benefits of improvement are not often equitably shared (Walks & Maaranen 2008).

Vulnerable community members with fewer resources – low-income, immigrant, and marginalized members – face disproportionate burdens of displacement pressures from increased neighbourhood desirability and market demands. It is this inequitable process and outcome of neighbourhood change that has to be exposed. Furthermore, if we understand poverty concentration in inner suburbs in relation to downtown gentrification in Toronto, gentrification could be understood as the accumulation of wealth, which is rarely seen as a problem (Cowen & Parlette 2011). The shared wealth approach thus calls into question how wealth – and benefits of neighbourhood improvement – is produced, and how it can be redistributed equitably and managed democratically for community benefits. For Parkdale, the shared wealth approach should be not just about “building” but also about “redistributing” wealth.

Emerging community practices for equitable economic development

The shared wealth approach may sound ambitious, but various related initiatives are gaining traction in cities like Cleveland, Boston, Buffalo, and Los Angeles. We can also find local examples in Toronto. The City of Toronto is revisiting its procurement practices to emphasize the social impacts of their spending; East Scarborough Storefront and the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) are collaborating to create local economic opportunities through the UTSC campus expansion; and labour and community groups are harnessing large public investments in the Eglinton-Crosstown LRT development to generate local decent work opportunities through a Community Benefits Agreement. This ongoing work is important to Parkdale as well, because local economic challenges cannot be solely addressed at the local level. They also require systemic and policy-level responses. Our work in Parkdale is situated within a growing movement along with other neighbourhoods and groups across the city and beyond.

In fact, Parkdale is already building some of these strategies for shared wealth generation. Examples include: the Co-op Cred program that combines an alternative currency with supportive work placements for low-income and marginalized people; the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, one of the first community-based land trusts in Toronto to promote community ownership of assets; alternative businesses such as social enterprises and a multi-stakeholder cooperative, the West End Food Co-op; member employment programs¹ through community agencies; a range of cooperative housing;

¹ Some community organizations offer member employment programs in which members/users are hired to undertake a range of responsibilities within the supportive environment of these organizations themselves.

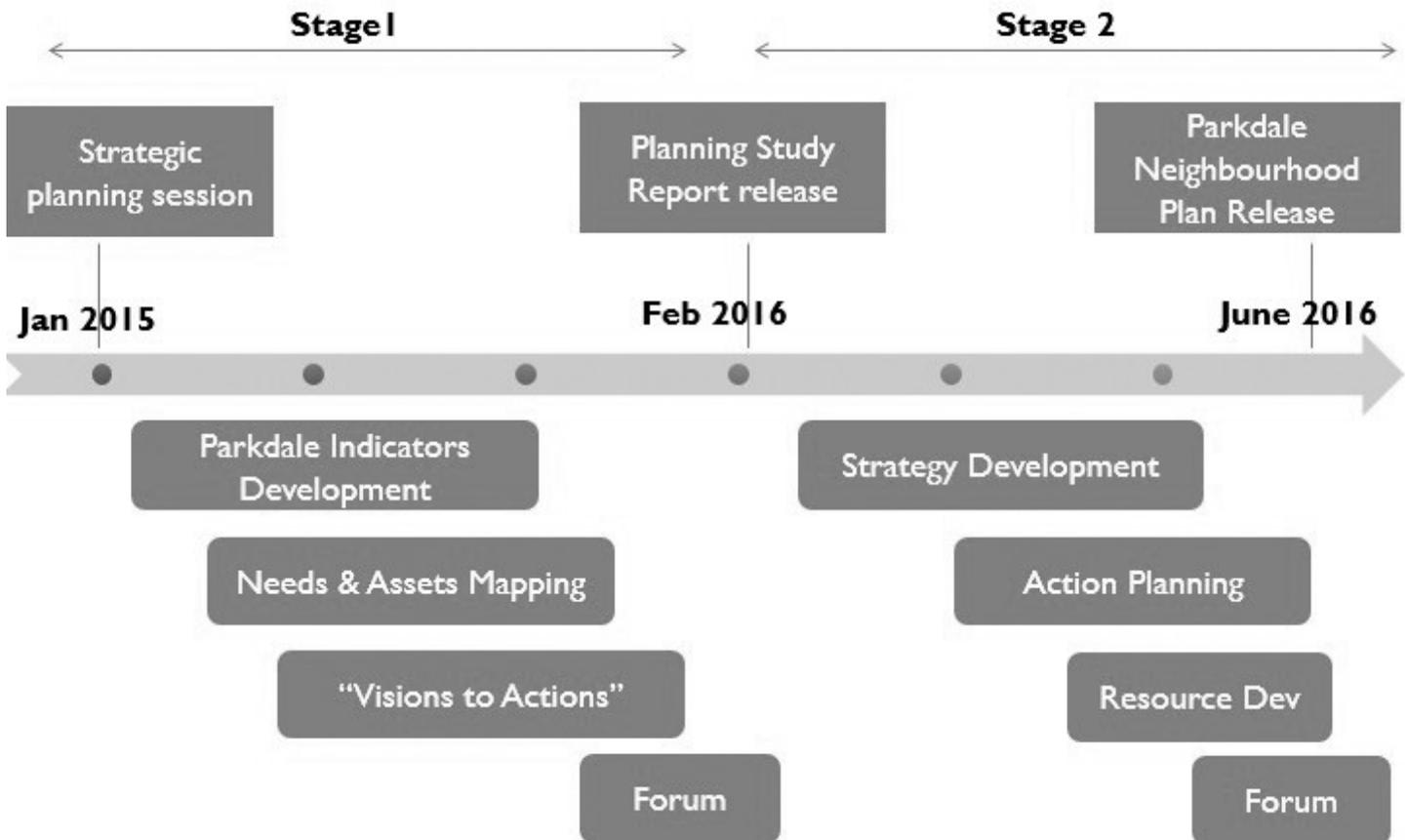
and credit unions. There are already diverse economic alternatives that are built not on profit maximization, but on shared ownership, democratic management, and the ethics of care. A unique and remarkable strength of Parkdale lies in this diversity of community-led economic development initiatives that have the capacity to address multiple aspects of local economies. Thus, the PCED project aims to bring diverse economic development initiatives together into a comprehensive neighbourhood-based economic development approach, while also exploring opportunities for new strategy development, community action, and policy options.

3-2 Three rounds of participatory planning workshops

The PCED Planning project was divided into two stages. The first stage (January – December 2015) focused on neighbourhood visioning for the future of Parkdale through community action research and extensive participatory planning processes. The PCED team organized three rounds of participatory planning workshops:

- 1) Parkdale Wellbeing Indicators Development
- 2) Community Needs & Assets Mapping
- 3) “Visions to Actions” Planning.

Figure 1: PCED project timeline



Parkdale Neighbourhood Wellbeing Indicators (from May to June 2015)

How do we know that the local economy serves community needs and enhances community wellbeing? Conventional economic measurements such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are limited in that they tend to focus on economic growth and fail to consider complex social, cultural, and ecological aspects that matter equally to the health of the economy and people's daily lives. This prompted us to develop a set of neighbourhood-based indicators to assess what matters to Parkdale, and as a starting point of community visioning. We conducted eight separate workshops with a total of 97 participants – including PARC members, tenants, newcomers, immigrants, agency staff, cooperative members, residents in general and steering committee members. This round of workshop resulted in seven domains of Parkdale wellbeing indicators (see more details on p. 23).

Community Needs & Assets Mapping (from July to October 2015)

Using the set of neighbourhood indicators as a guiding framework, we conducted a second round of workshops on community needs and assets mapping. In this series of workshops, community residents identified trends that have emerged in Parkdale, key issues that require attention and action, and community strengths (assets) that can be harnessed to address local challenges. Similar to the indicators development process, we conducted nine separate workshops with over 90 participants from diverse communities (including individuals from the same groups as above, as well as parents and youth).

Visions to Actions (November 2015)

The preceding workshops helped identify key visions, needs, and aspirations for the future of Parkdale. Building on these outcomes, we then organized the third round of participatory planning workshops. The main purpose was to identify action that Parkdale can take to move from “collective visions” that we have identified to “community actions” that we can work on together. While the previous two rounds of workshops were organized by different community groups to ensure diverse voices were included, the third round of planning workshops emphasized multi-stakeholder engagement, where participants from diverse communities were convened together, rather than separately, to encourage mutual learning. We organized three planning workshops participated in by a total of 74 community members.

Parkdale Community Forum (February 2016)

The forum was organized to launch the PCED Planning Summary report at the Parkdale Library. Almost 120 residents and community stakeholders gathered to learn about the findings and outcomes of the one-year participatory planning and visioning process, and to discuss promising directions for the future of Parkdale. Working groups based on the seven areas of community actions and policy were formed in order to identify detailed action plans and resource needs.

Neighbourhood plan development (From March to September 2016)

After the launch of the summary report at the forum, the summary report was used as an engagement tool and a reference document for organizing “working groups” for seven priority areas (from March 2016 onward). Each working group has been led by different partner organizations whose missions and priorities are aligned with the seven areas. Each working group has been coordinating small workshop-style meetings to develop detailed implementation plans, outline action steps, and identify resource development opportunities.

3–3 Research methods

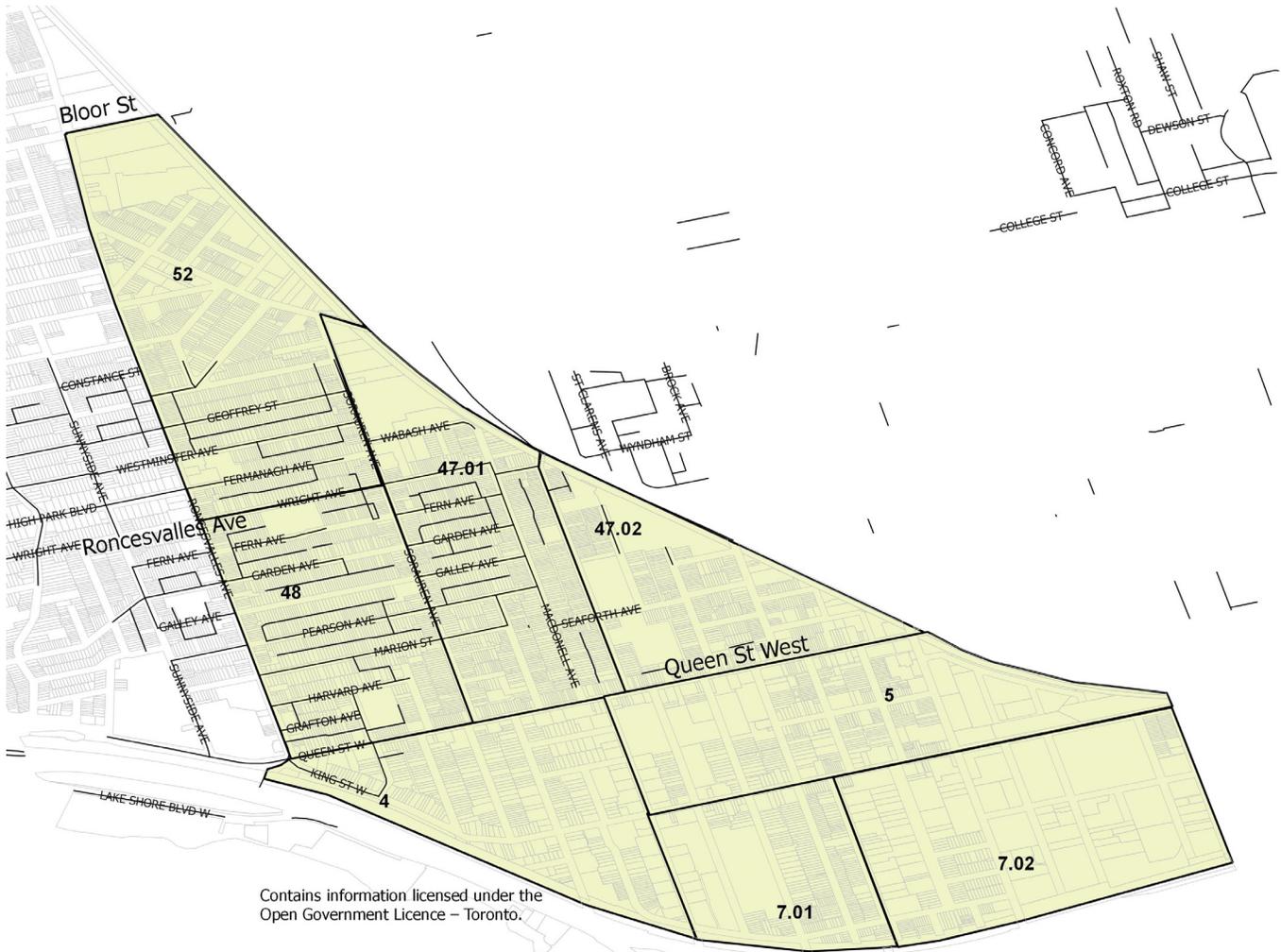
We employed mixed research methods. The participatory planning workshops noted above served as focus group discussions with diverse community members. It should be noted that while these workshops generated rich qualitative data, we were unable to reach out to as many vulnerable community members as we had hoped, such as people in precarious working conditions and Hungarian-speaking people. In addition, we conducted over 50 one-on-one and group interviews with representatives of local community organizations in Parkdale, city staff, and other stakeholders. The PCED project also benefited from ongoing initiatives. For example, the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust held an Expert Charrette session on July 7 2015 to learn from experts in housing, financing, and policy about the challenges and opportunities of implementing the CLT model.

Qualitative data is complemented by quantitative data analysis of neighbourhood change in Parkdale. The loss of the 2011 long-form Census (replaced by the voluntary National Household Survey (NHS)) made it difficult to obtain a consistent data set in order to conduct a long-term analysis of neighbourhood change. It is generally advised not to use and make comparisons with NHS data due to low response rates and unreliable data (e.g. Hulchanski, 2013). In order to address this limitation, we used multiple data sources to complement census data, including the Canada Revenue Agency's Taxfiler data (income), Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation sources (housing), and other administrative data (including some from Wellbeing Toronto). We also benefited from data sharing from the University of Toronto's Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership project, and the City of Toronto's Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA) Division. In addition, we conducted field surveys with local business owners.

For the purposes of quantitative data analysis, we used the following boundaries for Parkdale: Bloor Street West to the north, Roncesvalles Avenue to the west, the lakeshore to the south, and the railway to the east. We understand that this boundary does not necessarily reflect the many ways in which diverse community members understand Parkdale. Yet we chose this in order to facilitate data access and compatibility, as this boundary covers eight census tracts², and overlaps with two of the City's Social Planning Neighbourhood units (Roncesvalles and South Parkdale). Queen Street West is considered the boundary between North and South Parkdale.

² A census tract is a small geographic area that has a population of 2,500 to 8,000 and is often used to organize demographic and socio-economic data.

Map 1: Parkdale neighbourhood boundaries for quantitative data analysis

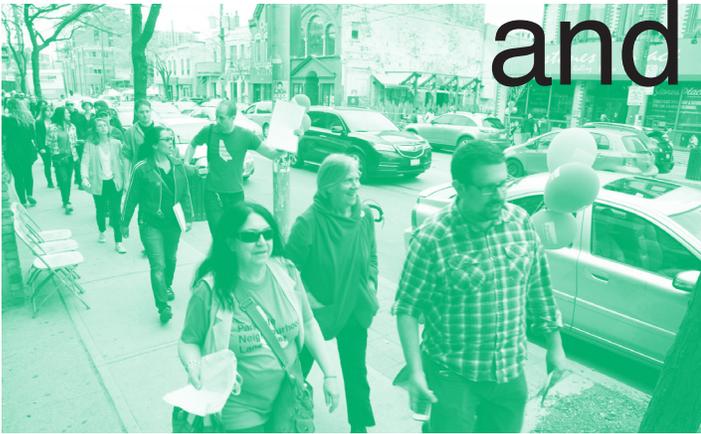


(Data source: Open Data Toronto)

It is also important to note that data and inputs for this report are not exclusively derived from the formal planning and research processes. The project team members have worked and/or lived in Parkdale for many years. Their local expertise and relationships with community members offered important insights, frontline experience, and contextual knowledge about Parkdale. The principal author of this report has also observed changes in Parkdale since 2010, visited various community programs and ESL classes for newcomers, participated in public community forums, talked with agency staff and community members informally, and heard about many issues and aspirations for the neighbourhood on an ongoing basis. People's participation in the planning process are diverse. They are not limited to formal planning processes, which sometimes

fail to accommodate diverse expressions and voices of community members. We thus integrated the analysis of our participant observations, frontline experiences, and ethnographic documentation into the overall data analysis.

04 Parkdale in Relation to Toronto and Beyond



Parkdale is one of a few remaining downtown neighbourhoods in Toronto that are affordable and accessible to diverse community members, including low-income people, people facing homelessness, marginalized populations with mental health and addiction experience, and refugees and recent immigrants. Over the past few decades, Parkdale has seen an increasing wealth gap between North and South. North Parkdale has seen a growth of higher-income residents. However, in South Parkdale, around 90% of residents are renters. Close to 35% of the population lives in poverty. Recently, South Parkdale has been designated as one of the Neighbourhood Improvement Areas for the City of Toronto's targeted social investment to address neighbourhood poverty concentration. To understand how Parkdale got here, it is important to contextualize recent transformations and challenges in Parkdale in its history, broader patterns of (re) investment and disinvestment, and political economic restructuring in Toronto and beyond.

Lasting impacts of housing development and patterns

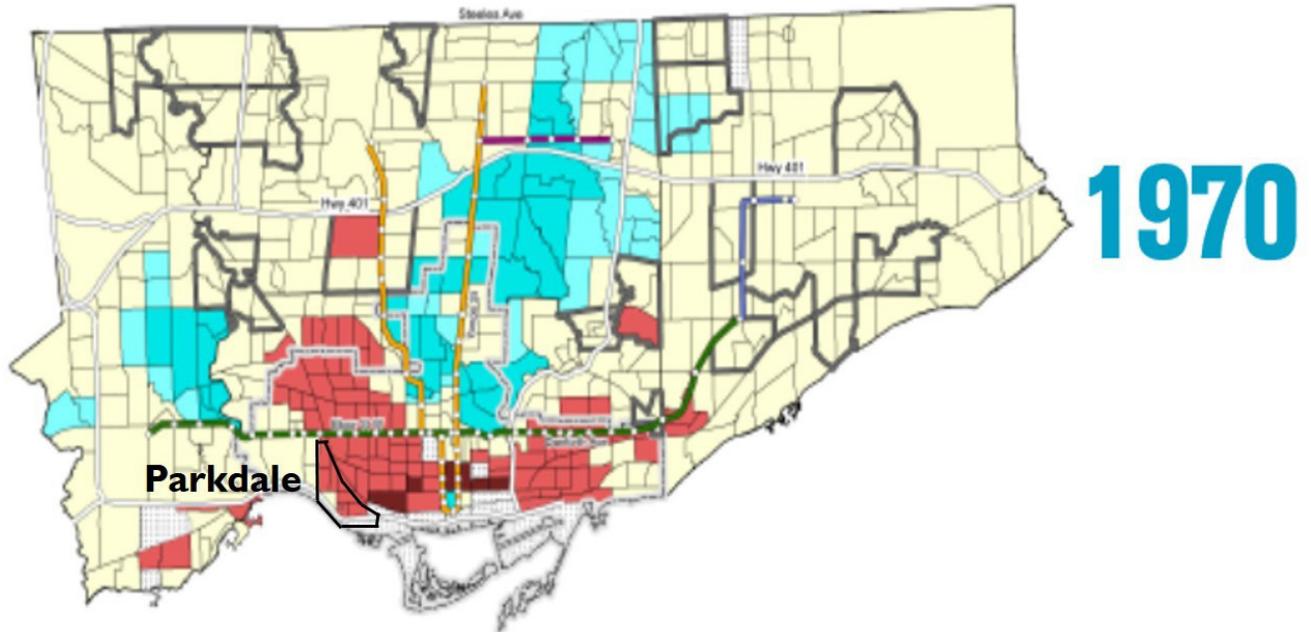
In 1889, Parkdale Village was annexed by the City of Toronto and grew as one of the first commuter suburbs (Slater 2005). It may be a popular image that Parkdale was an affluent neighbourhood until the construction of the Gardiner Expressway in the 1960s. And yet, after the depression in the 1930s that ended the residential construction boom in Toronto, the housing conversion and subdivision into rooming houses and small apartments had already started, resulting in the

growth of working-class tenants (Slater 2005; Whitman 2009). In 1941, 62% of single-family houses were occupied by multiple households; in the 1950s, a label of "slum" was given to South Parkdale by the media and government (Slater 2005).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Gardiner Expressway construction resulted in South Parkdale being cut off from the lake, in tandem with the demolition of hundreds of houses and the construction of two large high-rise apartment blocks along Jameson Avenue and Spencer/Tyndall Avenue (Young 1987). These private high-rise apartments were built for low- and moderate income households with federal government subsidies (ibid). Particularly after the immigration policy reform³ in the 1970s, outgoing residents were succeeded by incoming low-income immigrants attracted to both affordable housing and convenient access to local employment opportunities such as manufacturing (Slater 2004b). By 1970, as shown in the Map 2, Parkdale was predominantly low-income. It should be noted that in 1970, Toronto had many middle-income neighbourhoods while low-income neighbourhoods concentrated in downtown.

³ The points system was introduced to assess immigration applications based on skills criteria such as education, rather than based on nationality. This shift in policy resulted in changes to the main source countries for immigrants; from Europe to Global South areas in Asia, Africa, and Central and South America (Cowen & Parlette, 2011)

Map 2: Average individual income 1970 (Hulchanski 2010)



Census Tract Average Individual Income Relative to the Toronto CMA Average of \$30,800* (estimated to 2001 census boundaries)



(Data source: Hulchanski 2010)

Deinstitutionalization and the root of community social infrastructure in Parkdale

In the 1970s and 1980s, the provincial government made a policy change that had significant local impacts on Parkdale: the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric patients from the nearby Centre for Addictions and Mental Health in favour of community-based care. Coupled with the closure of the nearby Lakeshore Provincial Psychiatric Hospital in 1979, thousands of patients were discharged to Parkdale with limited community support systems and resources, while the provincial government did not offer housing assistance to discharged patients despite its policy agenda of community-based care (Slater 2004a). As a result, many former patients ended up in substandard, unofficial rooming houses, boarding homes, and bachelorettes that were converted from single-family houses in Parkdale. These housing types and conversions mushroomed in the 1970s, and Parkdale possessed one of the highest concentrations of these types of

housing in Toronto (Slater 2004a).

This period might be depicted as one of the troubled moments in Parkdale’s history. However there is another side. During this time, Parkdale was understood as a de facto “priority neighbourhood” that benefited from targeted public investment in response to growing social needs. This investment led to the establishment of various community organizations and improved access to social services and programs that addressed issues for specific communities. Parkdale was a vibrant neighbourhood with community activism and engagement around issues of housing. In addition, Parkdale developed a range of affordable housing options – not just private housing and rooming houses but a mix of public housing, cooperative housing, non-profit housing, and supportive housing. Even today, many of these social investments continue to have lasting impacts on affordability, accessibility, and the wellbeing of Parkdale.

Gentrification and displacement as a common denominator of everyday life

From the 1980s onwards, Parkdale saw an increasing influx of artists and the resettlement of higher-income homeowners and tenants who were attracted to affordability, aesthetically appealing housing types, public transportation access, and a proximity to downtown (Slater 2004a). Gentrification resulted in increased displacement pressures for low-income and vulnerable tenants due to the closure or de-conversion of rooming houses and bachelorettes. As new residents moved in, the concentration of rooming houses and single people generated some community conflicts. In 1996, the City of Toronto enacted an interim control by-law to prevent rooming house and bachelorette development and conversion in Parkdale. The subsequent study by the City resulted in the Parkdale Pilot Project in 1997, a project to regularize and license (illegal) rooming houses and bachelorettes (a further discussion of this matter can be found on p. 32 in the land use and housing section).

In the early 2000s, as more incremental forms of gentrification continued in South Parkdale, North Parkdale (now referred to commonly as Roncesvalles Village), and surrounding neighbourhoods such as West Queen West (WQW) and Liberty Village saw considerable transformations in demographics and neighbourhood landscape. The make-overs of WQW and Liberty Village, characterized by condominium development and a cluster of “creative” industries, were to some extent promoted by municipal zoning bylaws that deregulated the use of former factories and warehouses for new uses (Catungal, Leslie, & Hii 2008; Rankin 2008). Such dramatic changes in the surrounding areas, coupled with the steady influx of more affluent residents into Parkdale, created pressures on housing demand, as well as on commercial space. Parkdale started to experience an influx of new businesses that cater more to high-end and outside clienteles, replacing long-term, local serving, and low-cost businesses. The combined processes of residential and commercial change accelerated displacement pressures, and social space for low-income and marginalized people has started to disappear (Mazer 2008).

Emerging community responses in the context of intensifying displacement pressures

This emerging issue prompted the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC) to commission a research project with the Planning program at the University of Toronto to explore impacts of neighbourhood change and gentrification on affordability and accessibility with a focus on food security. From this research project, the group of graduate

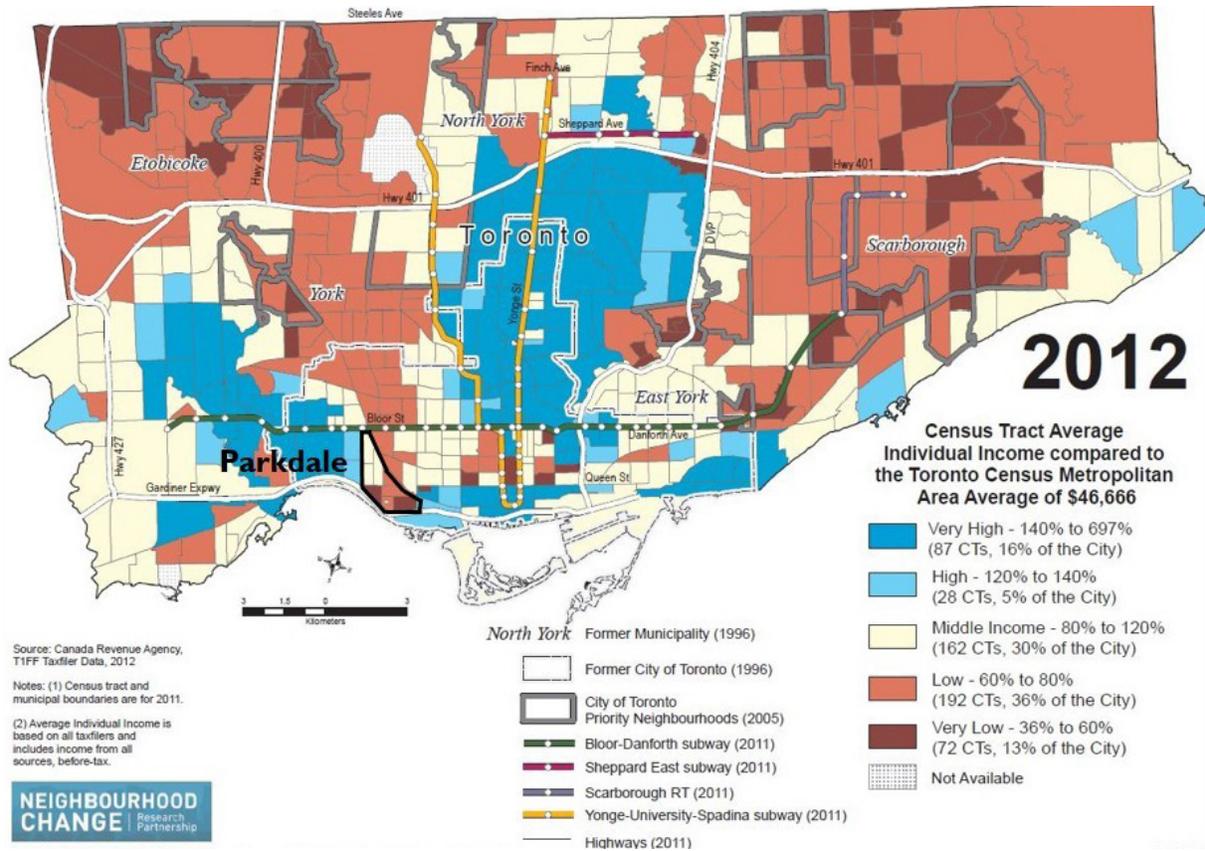
planning students produced the report, *Beyond Bread and Butter: Toward Food Security in a Changing Parkdale in 2010*. Recommending policy options and community-based strategies, this report became a “road map” for community planning and food security initiatives in Parkdale. Since the release of the report, a range of community-based strategies have been initiated such as the Parkdale Food Network, Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, the Food Flow, and the Co-op Cred program.

Meanwhile, structural pressures for neighbourhood change have intensified. The rapid change in the use of commercial space continues, as numerous new restaurants and bars have started to mushroom. This rapid commercial change resulted in the interim control bylaw by the City in 2012 and subsequently the Queen Street West Restaurant Study. Housing dynamics have also intensified due to the rise of corporate landlords purchasing mid-century high-rise apartment buildings, as well as the ongoing de-conversion and closure of rooming houses. As Map 3 demonstrates, the socio-economic divide between North and South has become stark. Compared with 1970, North Parkdale became middle-income areas, while South Parkdale remained as low-income area. It should be noted that two areas in South Parkdale became very low-income.

Structural and policy changes shaping neighbourhood change across Toronto

A brief review of the history of Parkdale reveals that wider processes of political economic restructuring and local policy decisions have shaped the ways in which local neighbourhood change has taken place over time. It is thus important to understand recent neighbourhood change in relation to growing socio-spatial inequality, and citywide patterns of reinvestment and disinvestment: Gentrification in Parkdale should be considered in relation to the suburbanization of poverty (Map 3). By 2012, as compared to 1970 (Map 2), more low-income and very-low income neighbourhoods had emerged in the city’s inner-suburbs (e.g. Scarborough and North York). Meanwhile, more high-income areas became concentrated in downtown and along subway lines. Equally important, it is striking that there were far fewer middle-income neighbourhoods. In short, Toronto has increasingly become a divided city.

Map 3: Average individual income 2012



(Data source: Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership 2015)

Key characteristics of the growing socio-spatial inequality include three inter-related processes: income polarization, residential segregation, and the racialization of poverty (Cowen & Partlette 2011). These have resulted from deindustrialization and the resulting decline in stable manufacturing jobs; the polarizing labour market; lack of social housing investment; and the neoliberal restructuring (e.g. Boudreau, Keil, & Young 2009). Ontario's social welfare restructuring by the conservative provincial government between 1995 and 2001 has had considerable impacts on social policies and people's lives – increasing job insecurity, intensifying the scarcity of affordable housing, and eroding income support systems (Keil 2002). Such structural changes have also fuelled the recent growth of precarious work. For example, a recent report by United Way Toronto and McMaster University (2013) found that 40% of workers in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area are in non-standard employment. The growth of precarious work has come with the disappearance of middle-income jobs, and the increasing gap between high-paying jobs and low and minimum wage jobs (Block 2013).

As such, neighbourhood changes in Parkdale have been a part of the growing trend of socio-spatial inequality in Toronto. This understanding raises both the limitations and possibilities of neighbourhood-based initiatives like the PCED project. Neighbourhood economies depend largely on broader labour, financial and housing markets beyond one neighbourhood, and thus should be seen as part of the urban, regional, and global economies (Teitz 1989). In turn, a neighbourhood is an important scale from which we can better understand combined impacts of public policy issues, political-economic restructuring, and labour market dynamics on the ground. The neighbourhood perspective thus helps understand how such structural and policy issues affect particular patterns of neighbourhood change, how these issues are experienced by people, and what unique barriers exist in promoting decent work and equitable development. It may be from the neighbourhood perspective that we could articulate a more comprehensive, and relational approach to community economic development.

Figure 2: Population change, 1996-2011

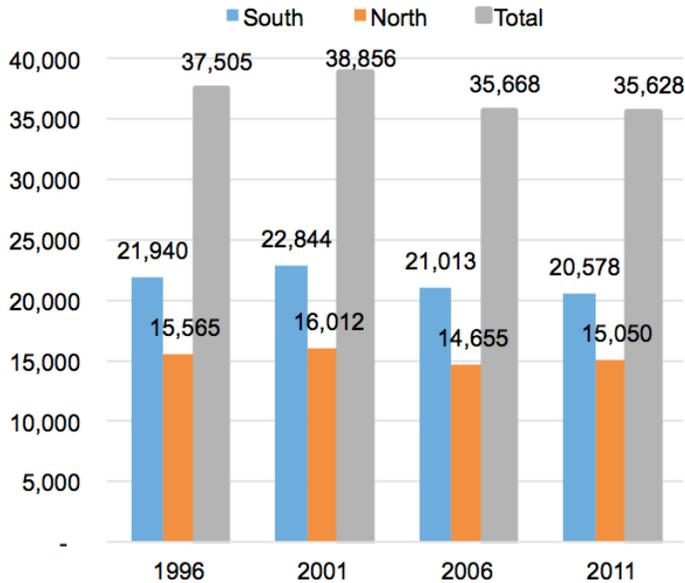
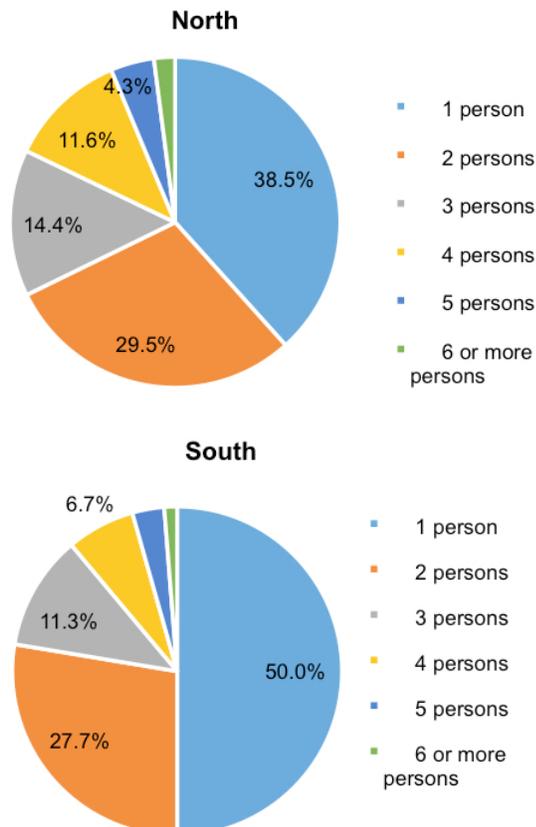


Figure 3: Household type, 2011 (Census 2011)



The remaining charts in this section outline basic demographic and socio-economic changes in Parkdale.

Demographics and age

The total population in Parkdale was around 35,000 in 2011. Compared to 2001, the total population decreased by around 3,000 (2,000 in South and 1,000 in North). Two age groups in South Parkdale decreased over time: children (0-9 years) by approximately 1,000, and working age adults (30-39 and 40-49 years old) by around 1,000. On the other hand, North Parkdale saw a decrease in the younger working adult population (20-29 and 30-39 years old). As shown in Figure 3, 50% of the households in South Parkdale and 39% in North Parkdale were single-person households compared to 32% for the city of Toronto.

What North and South Parkdale have in common during this period is an increase in senior populations. The percentage of the population consisting of seniors in South (8.7%) and North Parkdale (10.7%) is still lower than that of the city of Toronto (13.5%). It should be noted, however, that a higher percentage of seniors in Parkdale live alone (49.3% for South and 35.9% for North) compared to 26.8% for the city as a whole. Taking into consideration the higher number of single-person households in Parkdale, services and programs for seniors, including housing, may be needed in the future. For example, focus groups with Tibetan seniors in Parkdale revealed the increasing anxiety among them due to their reliance on private rental housing that is becoming more expensive, and the need for affordable senior housing.

⁴ Total number in the table refers to the total population whose home languages are other than official languages, not the total population of neighbourhood

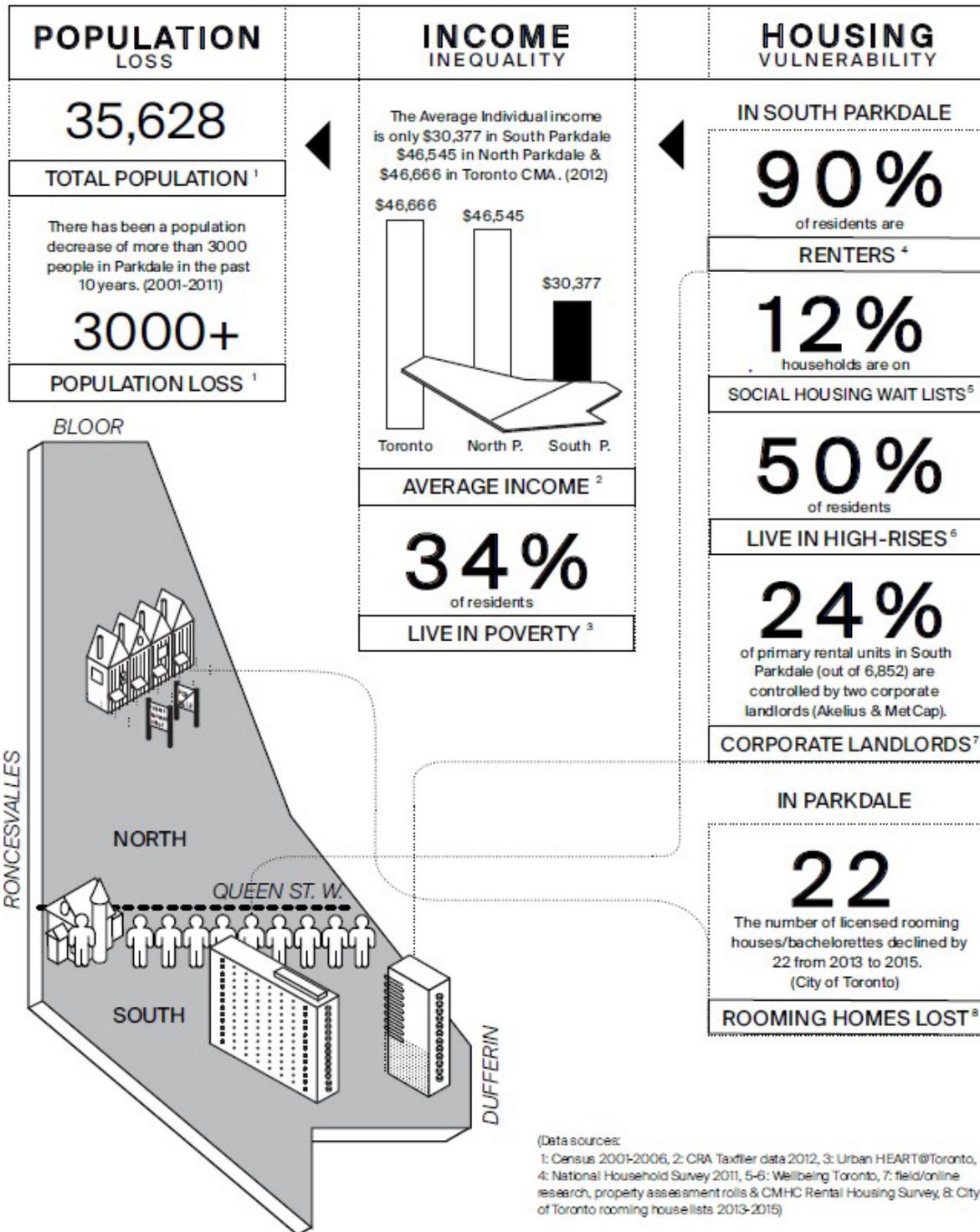
As the below charts show, two demographic groups increased: those who speak Tibetan and Hungarian speaking groups. Because this data shows numbers based on the 2011 Census, the number of Hungarian speakers in Parkdale may have decreased after 2012, when a number of Roma community members faced deportation. It is also expected that Parkdale will soon see an influx of around 200 government-sponsored Syrian refugees.

Table 1: Top 5 language spoken at home (other than official languages) Census 2006, 2011⁴

South		2006		2011	
1	Other languages	1,765	9.4%	Tibetan languages	1595 8.6%
2	Polish	710	3.8%	Hungarian	660 3.6%
3	Vietnamese	600	3.2%	Polish	510 2.8%
4	Tamil	580	3.1%	Tagalog (Pilipino; Filipino)	495 2.7%
5	Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	500	2.7%	Vietnamese	470 2.5%
	Total	18,780	36.2%	Total	18,545 33.2%
North		2006		2011	
1	Polish	565	4.0%	Hungarian	490 3.4%
2	Chinese, n.o.s.	355	2.5%	Polish	425 3.0%
3	Cantonese	320	2.3%	Portuguese	330 2.3%
4	Tamil	305	2.1%	Tibetan languages	310 2.2%
5	Portuguese	290	2.0%	Vietnamese	215 1.5%
	Total	14,190	25.4%	Total	14,365 22.6%

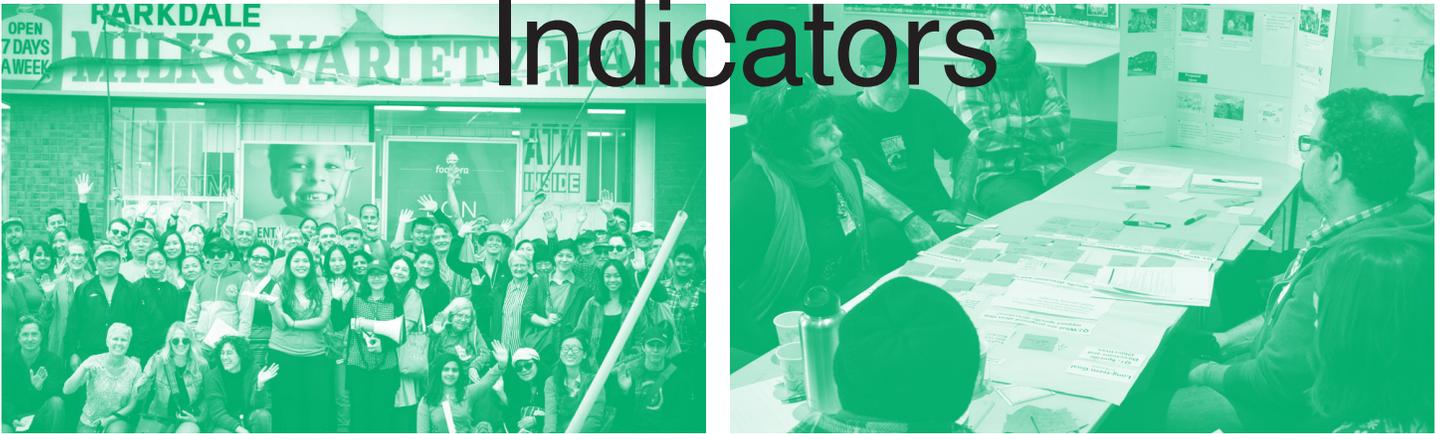
While more detailed statistical data and analyses are provided in each area of Section 6, a snapshot of Parkdale can be found in Figure 4. The population declined in the rapidly growing city. Rents increased at the higher rates than that of the city average in the neighbourhood where around 90% of South Parkdale residents are renters. Corporate landlords are increasing control over such private rental housing. In addition to private rental housing apartments, the number of licensed rooming houses and bachelorettes declined by 22 from 2013 to 2015 (city of Toronto 2013; 2015). While average income growth stagnated, the percentages of social assistance and poverty rates decreased in South Parkdale. Due to the lack of detailed cross-tabulated data, it is difficult to draw a definitive conclusion. Nevertheless, it is estimated that the data might suggest an increasing trend and pressures of displacement of vulnerable populations from South Parkdale.

Figure 4: Parkdale Today: A snapshot



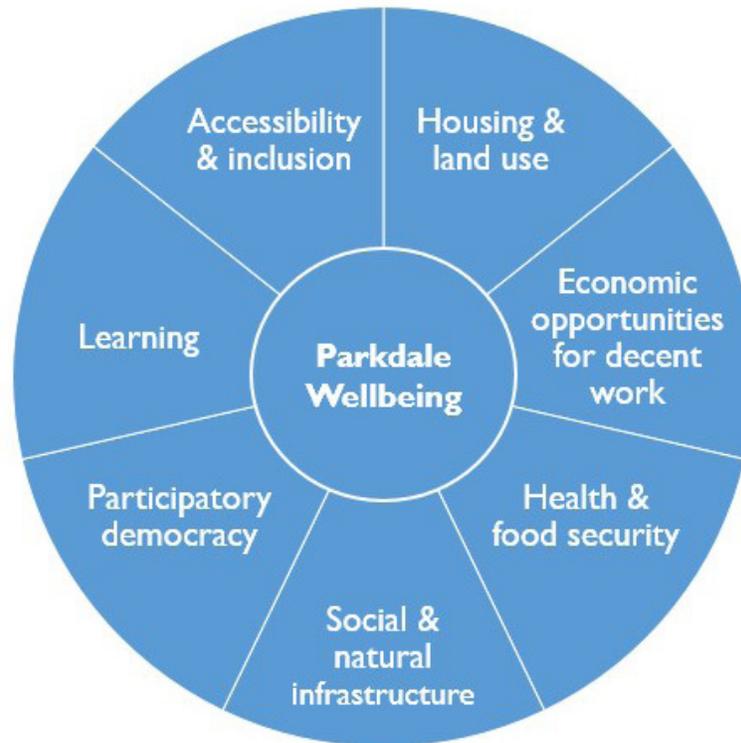
(Data sources:
 1: Census 2001-2006, 2: CRA Taxfiler data 2012, 3: Urban HEART@Toronto,
 4: National Household Survey 2011, 5-6: Wellbeing Toronto, 7: field/online
 research, property assessment rolls & CMHC Rental Housing Survey, 8: City
 of Toronto rooming house lists 2013-2015)

05 Parkdale Wellbeing Indicators



The Parkdale Community Economic Development (PCED) Planning Project is an 18-month neighbourhood-wide planning initiative for Parkdale. Supported by the Atkinson Foundation, the PCED project is led by Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC), with extensive collaboration among over 25 organizations working in Parkdale. The project combines community action research, stakeholder engagement, and participatory planning to develop future visions of Parkdale, and community strategies to realize them. The project goal is to create a Parkdale Neighbourhood Plan for decent work, shared wealth building, and equitable development.

Figure 5: Parkdale Neighbourhood Wellbeing Indicators



The development of PNWI has resulted in three important outcomes for Parkdale. First, PNWI enables community residents and organizations to better understand local economic conditions in Parkdale. Traditional economic indicators may focus on economic outputs, and numbers of employees and business start-ups. In contrast, PNWI is more comprehensive. As articulated by participating community members, local economies are complex and interconnected with multiple aspects of people's everyday lives. Of course, there are existing neighbourhood-based indicators developed by the City of Toronto, such as Urban Heart @ Toronto, and Wellbeing Toronto. PNWI differs in two ways. First, the indicators were developed through a community-driven process, identifying what matters to Parkdale's community members. The results are a reflection of the community's values and priorities. Second, PNWI includes not only indicators of the community's needs, but also its assets and strengths. This inclusion makes PNWI unique and useful, complementing existing neighbourhood indicators.

Second, PNWI can serve as an ongoing monitoring and tracking tool of neighbourhood change. We know neighbourhood change is underway in Parkdale, but we do not to what extent and how the neighbourhood has been changing. In other words, there has not been a systematic

way of measuring and tracking neighbourhood change, according to community needs and priorities. The absence of such comprehensive measurements has been a challenge for planning and coordination across diverse community groups and different agencies as they tend to respond to specific needs of particular community groups.

There is also a challenge in assessing the degree of displacement of low-income and vulnerable people. There are various reasons for, and factors behind people's social mobility. It is difficult to conclude whether the number of low-income people decreases because they move to another neighbourhood voluntarily or are displaced due to increased rents. Some indicators should be interpreted with caution so as not to conflate some indicators, such as increased average incomes and decreases in social assistance recipients, with poverty reduction.

Third, PNWI offers common information for diverse community-based agencies, community members, private sector players, and public institutions to open up a conversation to inform strategic directions for community action and policy options. Coordinated information sharing would help to align organizational strategic planning and public investment with neighbourhood priorities. The loss

of the long-form census in 2011 also prompted us to consider using community-based data that non-profit organizations and public agencies collect. This opportunity was raised by the Mowat Centre report *An Open Future* (Ymeren 2015), which explores the opportunities and challenges facing the open data movement within Ontario's non-profit sector. While the long-form census has been reinstated for 2016, we believe that mobilizing community data can play a unique role in promoting different ways of cross-organizational communication.

Data collection and sharing are means, not ends in themselves. PNWI should be used to inform collaborative planning, service integration, and resource sharing. Since PNWI includes community assets such as resources possessed by organizations, this may open up possibilities for shared programming (such as a shared workforce training program for people with mental health and addiction issues). Moreover, community members identified a gap in knowledge about the neighbourhood. PNWI can help to paint a bigger picture of the current state of Parkdale. It can help keep residents informed and updated about the neighbourhood (this can be housed at Parkdale Community Information Centre and Parkdale Library as a community information hub).

06 Seven Key Areas for Community Action and Policy Option



Our community visioning and research identified the following 7 areas for community action and policy options. These areas do not correspond to the 7 domains of the Parkdale Neighbourhood Wellbeing Indicators. Some domains are used rather as an underlying value that permeates these 7 action areas (e.g. Accessibility and Inclusion) or they are combined. In addition, as indicated in the Section 2, the social determinants of health perspective is critical to the PCED project, and thus embedded into the analysis and planning for action throughout the seven action areas. The key areas are:

- 1) Social infrastructure
 - 2) Affordable housing and land use
 - 3) Decent work and inclusive economic opportunities
-

- 4) Food security
- 5) Community financing
- 6) Participatory local democracy
- 7) Cultural development

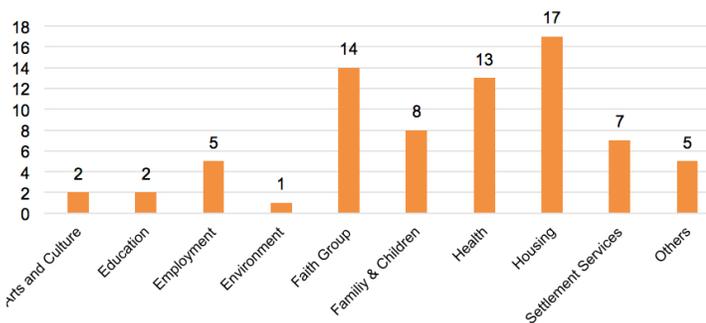
It is important to note that while these areas are discussed separately in this report, they are interlinked and thus should be read not in isolation but in relation to each other.

1) Social infrastructure

Context: A diversity of non-profit organizations

One unique strength of Parkdale is the diversity and concentration of various non-profit community organizations that offer vital supports and programs for community members (see Table 2 for more details). This was stressed by community members throughout the community planning process. There are close to 90 community agencies⁵, 59 of which are charitable and non-profit organizations. The following chart shows the breakdown of charitable organizations and non-profit organizations by main program areas.

Figure 6 Charities/Non profits by main program area(#: 59)



Key informant interviews with representatives of community organizations shed light on another neighbourhood strength: the culture of collaboration, rather than competition, among community organizations. This strength was pointed out by many interviewees, and is evidenced by a range of unique partnership initiatives underway in Parkdale: the Co-op Cred program (PARC, West End Food Co-op, Greenest City, and Parkdale Community Health Centre), the Parkdale Interagency Referral Network among four partners working around settlement services⁶, 6 Parkdale Roundtable, Parkdale Food Network, to name a few. While the interviewees also identified room for further collaboration and partnership, how it should be pursued was unclear to many of them.

⁵ This list includes both those organizations whose central offices are located in Parkdale and those that have programming and service locations in Parkdale. For example, West Neighbourhood House's main office is located at Dundas and Ossington, but it has a location in Parkdale with a range of programs and services.

⁶ Four partners are Parkdale Community Information Centre, Parkdale Intercultural Association, Kababayan Multicultural Centre, and Parkdale Community Legal Services.

Figure 7 Charities by revenue size (2014)

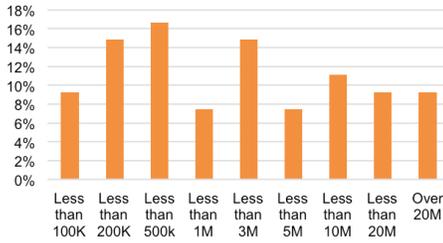
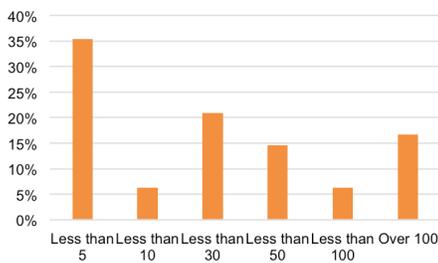


Figure 8 Charities by full time staff (2014)



**Needs: Stability and sustainability of social infrastructure in changing Parkdale
Financial insecurity among smaller non-profit community organizations**

One of the questions asked in the key informant interviews with agency representatives is “what are the top three priorities for your organizations, and how would you like to achieve them?” A common response to this question was organizational sustainability and stability, particularly in terms of financial resources. Ways to address this challenge are similar, too: diversifying funding and fundraising sources, expanding program areas to seek new funding, and/or initiating revenue-generating activities (e.g. fees for service and social enterprises). From the organizational perspective, these strategies are important to enhance the likelihood of raising financial resources and maintaining current service levels in the difficult funding climate. From the neighbourhood perspective, however, a common interest in similar strategies raises a thorny question: If various individual organizations attempt to diversify funding through the same strategies without adequate coordination, this might result in unintended competition for limited resources because the current funding system is characterized by competition. The expansion into new program areas might also have a similar consequence because of potential service duplication.

It is important to contextualize the question of organizational stability in different organizational structures and capacities. The above two charts show the distribution of charitable organizations by the sizes of revenue and numbers of full-time staff. This data was only available for 48 registered charitable organizations in Parkdale from T3010 data by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). In spite of data limitations, the above charts show a crucial characteristic: around 40% of charitable organizations in Parkdale have an annual budget of less than \$500,000 with less than 5 full-time staff. In other words, the diversity of non-profits in Parkdale is characterized by small organizations supported by limited resources and staff.

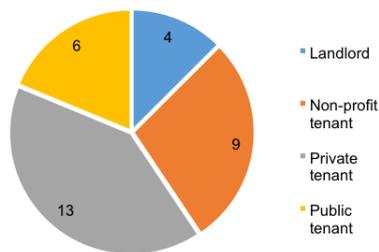
This is not to suggest that the small size of organizations is a disadvantage. It has unique advantages: closeness to community members, faster decision-making, flexibility, and independence. Nevertheless, as discussed, it poses the challenge of organizational stability within the current funding structure, where funding is highly competitive, unpredictable, and based on project funding, rather than core funding. In order to address this issue, many organizations pursue partnership development to share resources, strengths, and costs. And yet, because of the small size of organizations, senior staff in leadership positions are often caught up with administrative duties such as auditing, financial accountability, funding report writing, and board management, to name a few. This administration responsibility limits the extent to which those organizations can focus on delivering broader missions, as well as participating in partnership initiatives, particularly community development initiatives, as many are preoccupied with service delivery and renewal of short-term grants. To add to this complexity, a strategy to diversify funding may come with more accountability and reporting requirements, which would lead to adverse effects for organizational stability.

Decreasing availability and affordability of spaces for community agencies

Another challenge – probably unique to gentrifying neighbourhoods such as Parkdale – is whether non-profit organizations can remain in Parkdale due to increasing commercial rents and decreasing availability of affordable office spaces. Based on the interviews and available data, out of 32 non-profit organizations, only 4 of them own assets in Parkdale (i.e. office space). While two non-profit organizations lease office space to other non-profit organizations (e.g. PARC leases office space to 7 different organizations), the majority are public and private tenants.

Although some interviewees suggested their organizations have good relationships with their landlords, a common concern for tenant organizations is the uncertainty of lease renewal. The absence of secure leases makes it difficult, according to key informants, for many organizations to engage in long-term organizational and program planning. In some cases, the lack of certainty in tenure renders organizations risk-averse to undertake major projects, such as affordable housing development and management. Interviewees also suggests rents/lease fees are the second largest expense after salaries. Often funders do not include rents in their grants nor do they take locally specific real estate conditions into consideration.

Figure 9 Community agencies by tenure



Parkdale’s social infrastructure in the context of citywide socio-spatial inequality

The question of whether non-profit community agencies can remain in Parkdale needs to be considered in relation to changing demographics in Parkdale and Toronto as a whole. As socio-spatial inequality in Toronto deepens, many low-income and immigrant members are being pushed from Parkdale and the downtown core out to inner-suburban neighbourhoods in Toronto (City #3 on Map 3). It could be suggested that community agencies be relocated to where service needs are high. However, whether people are pushed out or choose to move out of Parkdale, it is important to note that many of them come back to Parkdale

to access services and programs, meet friends, and socialize at community spaces and local businesses where they have developed social networks.

Focus groups with service users and agency staff further point out that those displaced community members often feel isolated and do not have good access to necessary services in those inner-suburban neighbourhoods due to limited transit options, lack of walkability, and historical gaps in investment in social services. In contrast, Parkdale has walkable access to various supports and programs. Toronto Public Health (2012) found that low-income apartment neighbourhoods in Toronto’s inner-suburbs have a strong correlation with higher vulnerability to poor health outcomes. In this regard, it is important to note that the City and non-profit partners including United Way have started to direct resources and policy – such as the Tower Renewal program, Healthy Corners Store, and Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy – to reinvest in social infrastructure and redesign built environments in inner-suburban apartment neighbourhoods in ways that increase health outcomes.

Building on the importance of these policy responses, the policy focus could extend beyond issues of the physical environment, disinvestment, and lack of social infrastructure in the inner-suburbs. What should be equally important to address is the processes and forces pushing out low-income and marginalized populations with poorer health from downtown neighbourhoods to neighbourhoods with fewer health-promoting services. In other words, it is a public health concern to tackle the displacement of vulnerable populations, as well as to protect existing social infrastructure that furnishes various health supports (see also Phillips, Flores & Henderson 2015). The social infrastructure in Parkdale has played a critical role in retaining a healthy mixed income neighbourhood while also mitigating displacement pressures.

At the same time, it is important to point out that several representatives from community agencies suggest that agency staff have found it difficult to live in Parkdale, and even in west-end downtown Toronto due to increasing housing prices. This change has resulted in longer commute for staff, a distance from people’s lived experience in communities, and a challenge for local hiring. This in turn raises a thorny question for non-profit organizations in Parkdale: how can they plan for these complex neighbourhood changes within the broader processes of demographic changes?

In addition, major funders – for example the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (TC-LHIN), provincial ministries, and the City of Toronto through its comprehensive review of the state of the community-based sector – are reviewing their funding models to streamline administration for further efficiency. These structural reforms could have considerable impact on individual organizations, as well as a neighbourhood’s social infrastructure. Also, however, the imperative to respond to the changes may also offer opportunities to consider how non-profit agencies can collaborate on the neighbourhood’s integrated social infrastructure, plan organizational structures and deliberate responses to the changing needs of the neighbourhood, and demand transparent long-term public support for social infrastructure.

Assets: A culture of collaboration and opportunities for further cooperation

Rethinking a collaborative social infrastructure should be linked with opportunities in and growing attention to community economic development. As recent research suggest (e.g. Ymeren & Lalande 2015; Kelly & McKinley 2015), non-profit community agencies can play a key role in leading a movement for decent work, shared wealth generation, and equitable development. In Toronto, many non-profit organizations have embarked on community economic development initiatives. Nevertheless, unlike the US, which has a more supportive policy and funding environment, a structural challenge remains in Toronto. Focus groups with community agency staff suggest that the non-profit sector, funding, and organizational arrangements are not currently designed to engage in community economic development. Rather, organizations are often caught up in service delivery and organizational survival.

Addressing these structural challenges requires a shift in strategic thinking, shared infrastructure building, and resource alignment through both neighbourhood-based coordination and system-wide engagement (e.g. the role of public and private funders and needs for long-term commitments). Given the aforementioned opportunities and needs, it is timely to strengthen the role and aspirations of non-profit organizations in neighbourhood planning, organizing, and community economic development as a part of the development of integrative social infrastructure. This is particularly timely when we consider opportunities that arise from a shift in the funding stream proposed by United Way Toronto & York Region. One of the new funding streams is the Anchor Agency Funding Stream. A question for Parkdale is: what kind of anchor organization is needed to amplify the collaborative impact of diverse groups?

Parkdale has a strong base of community assets that can inform creative strategies to address the vexing questions and explore alternative collaborative models. As discussed above, Parkdale’s established strong foundation for collaboration and partnership is one such example. This in fact has greatly aided the formation of the strong representative steering committee and collaborative planning for the PCED project. The PCED process has functioned as a neighbourhood strategic planning exercise that can be aligned with organizational strategic planning. A further asset is the experience and expertise of some organizations in collaboration. This existing organizational experience is a critical asset that Parkdale should build on when the question of organizational stability and leadership is addressed.

Table 2: Examples of diverse contributions to building decent work and healthy neighbourhoods

Greenest City	Jeremiah Community	Arrabon House
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban agriculture • Co-op Cred program • Food literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community building initiatives • Spaces to explore spirituality • Providing healthy meals • Looking for groups for space • Educational initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential care for female youth • Mental health counseling for youth/females
PARC	Parkdale Community Health Centre	Sistering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive housing (recovery-based housing) (3rd floor and Edmond Place) • Healthy meal 7 days a week • The Silver Brush – social enterprise and member employment • Research and planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harm reduction program • Health promotion and services: preliminary care, health promotion, mental health and many others! • Outreach office on Roncy – peer outreach positions through Investing in Neighbourhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food both at Parkdale and Bloor location (Bloor location is open 7 days a week) • Social recreation • Social enterprise (e.g. Inspirations Studio) • Harm reduction
Kababayan Multicultural Centre	Habitat Services	Parkdale Project Read
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors program • Settlement services • Youth program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring boarding homes • Support services to tenants • Peer support (through partnership as well) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy and education • Fair, anti-poverty, and social justice-based approach • Safe, supportive community space
Making Room	Working for Change	West Neighbourhood House
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term engagement in Parkdale • Community celebrations • Community artist work opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and social enterprise opportunities • Advocacy • Leadership development (Voices from the Street and Women Speak Out program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge across ages and languages • Resources: multilingual staff, and relationships in community (hundreds of seniors served through home support) • Multiple program intervention and public policy work/advocacy
Parkdale Community Information Centre	Parkdale Community Legal Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership for youth and senior newcomer programs • Spaces for partnership to increase service delivery • Drop-in space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal literacy • Community capacity building • Community development (around 6 dedicated community organizers) 	

(Results from asset mapping during the ED roundtable on April 20, 2015)

⁷ Rental Housing Disadvantage Index (RHDI) is developed by UofT Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership. RHDI is based on the following four indicators: adequate housing, affordable housing, suitable housing, and income. RHDI differs in several ways from Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation's Core Housing Need. For example, RHDI has a geographic focus, employs a higher a threshold for affordability (50% of income spent on rent as opposed 30% for CMHA's Core Housing Need), and includes the income level to assess disadvantage (for more details, see Maaranen 2015)

⁸ Census Metropolitan Area. CMA includes Toronto and surrounding municipalities.

2) Affordable housing and land use

Context: Compounding vulnerability of affordability

Access to affordable, adequate housing has been one of the central concerns among residents, particularly low-income and immigrant populations. For example, 1,194 (12%) of households in South Parkdale are on a waiting list for social housing. Due to increasing property values, concerns about affordable housing are now being shared by members of the wider community in Parkdale. For example, the recent survey conducted by the Parkdale Residents Association identified affordable housing as one of the top concerns.

The lack of affordable housing is not just a local but a citywide issue in Toronto, where 78,000 households are on a waiting list for social housing. When it comes to supportive housing, more than 10,000 people are on a waiting list in Toronto alone in 2016 (The Access Point). In Toronto, over 45% of residents are renters; 29% of the city's census tracts are "highly disadvantaged rental housing neighbourhoods" (Hulchanski & Maaranen 2015). In South Parkdale alone, about 90% of residents are renters. All census tracts in South Parkdale and one census tract in North Parkdale that includes West Lodge apartments are categorized as highly disadvantaged rental housing neighbourhoods (ibid.).

For those low-income and marginalized groups, aging private high-rise apartments and rooming houses are the few remaining affordable housing options. Close to 50% of residents in South Parkdale (10,800 people and 5,130 households) live in mid-century high-rise apartment buildings (Wellbeing Toronto). Although South Parkdale is not commonly viewed as a tower neighbourhood, this number is the seventh highest among 130 neighbourhoods in Toronto. Like high-rise apartment buildings in suburban tower neighbourhoods, living conditions are characterized by inadequate housing: overcrowding, lack of repairs, ongoing maintenance issues (elevator breakdowns for example), tenant harassment, and so on (Paradis et al. 2014). Recent research (ibid) found that a majority of tenants living in high-rise apartments in Toronto – including those in South Parkdale – face a risk of homelessness.

Table 3: Changes in gross average rents in South Parkdale, 2000-2014

		2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	14 vs 00	Relative to To CMA 14
Gross	South Parkdale	\$ 728	\$ 782	\$ 770	\$ 781	\$ 824	\$ 853	\$ 875	\$ 921	27%	79%
	Toronto CMA	\$ 913	\$ 981	\$ 980	\$ 995	\$ 1,021	\$ 1,048	\$ 1,108	\$ 1,170	28%	-
Bachelor	South Parkdale	\$ 560	\$ 617	\$ 591	\$ 612	\$ 621	\$ 640	\$ 688	\$ 738	32%	82%
	Toronto CMA	\$ 683	\$ 729	\$ 727	\$ 740	\$ 764	\$ 777	\$ 837	\$ 896	31%	-
1 bedroom	South Parkdale	\$ 721	\$ 780	\$ 760	\$ 774	\$ 823	\$ 828	\$ 895	\$ 945	31%	89%
	Toronto CMA	\$ 830	\$ 891	\$ 886	\$ 896	\$ 927	\$ 949	\$ 1,007	\$ 1,067	29%	-
2 bedroom	South Parkdale	\$ 883	\$ 954	\$ 949	\$ 931	\$ 997	\$ 1,074	\$ 1,090	\$ 1,161	31%	93%
	Toronto CMA	\$ 979	\$ 1,047	\$ 1,052	\$ 1,067	\$ 1,095	\$ 1,123	\$ 1,183	\$ 1,251	28%	-

(Data source: Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation Rental Housing Survey)

As Table 3 demonstrates, the average gross rents for South Parkdale are still affordable and lower compared to Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)⁸. When data are disaggregated by unit size, however, rates of rent increases in South Parkdale are higher than Toronto's CMA. Rental housing is getting unaffordable.

⁹ Aggregated data for North Parkdale was not available. CMHC data only include primary rental housing units, excluding other secondary units such as rented rooms and basement apartments, social housing units, rented condo units

While private rental housing sometimes offers relatively affordable housing options, it has been pointed out that vacancy decontrol functions as a de facto incentive for private landlords to pressure existing tenants to leave in favour of new tenants who can pay higher rents; vacancy decontrol allows landlords to charge whatever level of rents to new tenants (Fair & Hulchanski 2008). This disadvantage posed by vacancy decontrol is at the crux of one of the current affordable housing issues in Parkdale. Pressures on the affordability of high-rise rental apartments in Parkdale have increased rapidly after a European property management company purchased 6 of the apartment buildings in Parkdale and implemented above-guideline rent increases. Other corporate landlords are following suit to take advantage of a model based on “rent gaps” between current rents and possible higher market rents. Currently three major corporate landlords in Parkdale – Metcap, Akelius and Wynn – own and/or manage around 2,000 units within 27 properties in South Parkdale, controlling close to 30% of total primary private rental units (6,852 as in Table 4). Akelius alone controls about 300 units in 5 properties in South Parkdale.

As the Table 4 below illustrates, the distribution of apartment unit types is unique and uneven in South Parkdale ⁹. The percentage of bachelor units in South Parkdale is much higher than the Toronto’s average, while the percentage of family-sized units (2 bedroom and 3 bedroom+ units) is particularly low.

Table 4: Private apartment units by types (CMHC)

Units (2014)	Bachelor		1 Bedroom		2 Bedroom		3 Bedroom +		Total
South Parkdale	1,812	26.4%	3,506	51.2%	1,455	21.2%	79	1.2%	6,852
Toronto West	4,497	20.0%	11,585	51.4%	5,667	25.2%	1,137	5.0%	22,527
City of Toronto	23,191	8.9%	110,328	42.3%	102,329	39.2%	25,250	9.7%	261,098
Toronto CMA	24,485	7.8%	128,557	40.7%	129,646	41.0%	33,153	10.5%	315,841

(Data source: Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation Rental Housing Survey)

The above data, coupled with research findings on inadequate housing conditions in high-rise apartment buildings (Paradis et al. 2014), indicate a pressing need for the protection and new supply of family-size apartment units, particularly for newcomer members who live in overcrowded conditions. It is important, however, that the data should not be interpreted to suggest that the number of single-person units is disproportionate. That number is necessary to address unmet community needs for affordable housing, given the large proportion of single-person households in South Parkdale. In the past history of Parkdale, the rhetoric of “a healthy balance” was used by the City during a time of community conflict in the early 1990s to describe the concentration of rooming houses and single people as an indicator of neighbourhood destabilization; the City favoured increasing the number of family households to restore “a healthy demographic balance” (City of Toronto 1997, cited in Slater 2004a).

It is also of critical importance to understand this housing data within the context of the lack of long-term affordable, adequate housing in Parkdale and Toronto to begin with. Thus, this data suggest that while retaining and expanding single-person units, Parkdale should also increase affordable rental housing units with two or three bedrooms to relieve the pressures of existing overcrowded conditions as well as to ensure a mixed-income neighbourhood. Such a priority can be included in a community benefits framework for Parkdale when new development is proposed (see Section 7 Direction 3 in Participatory Democracy for more details). As housing market demands and

pressures have mounted in Parkdale and downtown Toronto, other affordable housing options are also increasingly at risk. The ongoing loss of rooming houses due to closure and/or conversion to single family houses is an illustrative example. From 2013 to 2015, the number of licensed rooming houses and bachelorettes – the least expensive housing options for very low-income and marginalized community members – decreased by 22 in Ward 14 (City of Toronto, 2013 b & c; 2015b & c).

Some community members notice the increase of Airbnb units in Parkdale, which removes potential rental units from the local housing market. In addition, behaviours of local landlords have changed. Housing support workers at local agencies observe that it used to be not difficult to find relatively affordable housing in Parkdale for people on social assistance. They worked with local landlords who saw the shelter allowance as a stable source of rental income. However, it has become much harder now to house people on social assistance because local landlords know that they can reap benefits from potential higher market rents; in some cases landlords ask people on social assistance for credit checks. As a result of the decreasing options in Parkdale, housing workers have to look for housing elsewhere in inner-suburban neighbourhoods such as Mount Dennis (see also the discussion of displacement on pp. 28-29).

These local challenges represent the extent to which Parkdale's diversity, affordability, and inclusivity are at risk. They become more dire when we consider broader structural challenges that shape local processes, such as continued population growth predicted for Toronto (20% increase by 2031; City of Toronto 2010), escalating land values due to the housing boom, widening socio-spatial inequality, and the absence of viable affordable housing policies, funding, and programs (e.g. the absence of Inclusionary Zoning). These acute community challenges demonstrate the pressing need for action.

Needs: Lack of democratic and transparent local land use planning Shifting attention to how land is used

The need for more affordable and adequate housing is apparent. With the lack of secure long-term affordable housing, low-income and immigrant community members expressed mounting concern over their ability to stay in Parkdale. Some of them live in the high-rise buildings owned by corporate landlords, and feel stressed out by the systemic lack of repairs and harassment. For some, intensifying housing insecurity is not just about economic but also health concerns. Focus groups with Tibetan senior newcomers revealed many

of them feel anxiety and uncertainty about their housing security, exacerbating their mental stress from resettlement and low-income status. As affordable housing options become scarce, youth and middle-income renters are also worried about their ability to continue to live in Parkdale. A key question is what does “planning to stay” look like in Parkdale?

Affordable housing is closely related to land use regulation and policy. Attention to land use and ownership, rather than a sole focus on affordable housing, opens up a different approach to addressing wider issues of neighbourhood affordability, because it addresses who owns land and who can make a decision about what can happen on that land. From this vantage point, the community planning workshops and key informant interviews illuminated a fundamental challenge: current land use decision-making is particularly market-driven (failure to prioritize community needs), compartmentalized (without coordination with other stakeholders and competing priorities), and privatized (lack of transparency and accountability). There are a number of local examples that reflect this trend. Some of them include:

- Recently, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) redeveloped a three storey building on 1357 Queen Street West (a former funeral home) into a single-storey, single-use building with an on-site ground level parking space. This decision was short-sighted, given that the site is zoned for the Avenues in the City of Toronto's Official Plan that encourages 5-6 storey mixed-use development. This is a considerable lost opportunity for affordable housing development in the Parkdale neighbourhood where access to land for affordable housing development is particularly scarce and expensive. Furthermore, the future of the former LCBO site at 11 Brock Ave has not been clearly communicated from the Province to the City, the local councillor, and community stakeholders.
- Retaining rooming houses, boarding homes, and bachelorettes is a high priority. A challenge for the retention is that a majority of them are privately owned. Many owners of these housing types are said to be close to the age of retirement without succession plans. These properties often come up for sale without adequate communication to the local community. When they are up for sale, non-profit housing agencies are often unable to respond promptly or as fast as needed to compete against private developers, homebuyers, and investors. For example, many local non-profit housing organizations did not know the Queen's Hotel (a rooming house at 1521 Queen Street West) went bankrupt and was sold to a private developer, until tenants got a 7-day eviction notice.

- One non-profit organization used to manage shelter and support services in two houses in Parkdale. Recently they declared these sites as surplus as a part of their organizational service review and sold them to the City. The City subsequently demolished them, and turned the land into a parkette.

All these examples illustrate the situation of asymmetric distribution of information, and thus the need for a more transparent and democratic process of land use planning and information dissemination. If a more democratic land use planning process had been in place, different outcomes could have been achieved. From the shared wealth perspective, the democratization of land use planning is essential.

Limits to existing measures to protect existing affordable housing in face of uncertainty

The last two examples above require further exploration. First, the recent consecutive closures of rooming houses in Parkdale were dealt with by a collaborative emergency response program among the City's Shelter, Support & Housing Administration (SSHA), WoodGreen Community Services, and PARC, with legal support from PCLS. This emergency response program entailed support for displaced tenants, including the provision of temporary shelters (e.g. a room at a hotel), counselling, and housing search assistance. Without denying the importance of this program, however, the recent events also exposed the limits of the current approach because of its reactionary nature. Due to low vacancy rates and expensive rents, it is difficult to find new homes for displaced tenants within Parkdale and surrounding areas that provide essential services and social networks that tenants rely on.

A further problem is that the current emergency response requires considerable time and energy from non-profit agency staff – often on top of an overburdened workload – for emergency support, lengthy legal procedures, and painstaking housing search. Because of the unpredictable nature of displacement and the necessary response, regular programming and service could be undermined. It is also hard for case workers to extend their support to tenants who are not already in their case due to overstretched and limited staff resources. In other words, the social costs of displacement are assumed largely by the tenants themselves and non-profit agency staff.

Difficulty with long-term planning and protection within the non-profit housing sector

The last example of non-profit asset management mirrors a broader challenge that the non-profit sector faces: the

difficulty of maintaining their current assets – particularly small-size, single-family, scattered housing sites – due to increasing costs of operation and rising property values while operating subsidies and funding have not increased to keep up with inflation. It is particularly difficult for smaller housing providers that have limited organizational capacity and expertise. Furthermore, a few non-profit housing projects in Parkdale will be affected by the end of their federal operating agreements. A further loss of non-profit owned assets in the context of an expensive real estate market in Parkdale would be detrimental to neighbourhood affordability and the ability to address growing affordable housing needs.

Due to the unpredictable and short-term nature of funding for affordable housing, it has been difficult to plan strategically for new affordable housing development. For example, this uncertainty made it difficult for non-profit housing developers to act and develop long-term strategies to acquire and preserve housing properties that come up for sale such as rooming houses. It is particularly challenging in Toronto, where affordable housing developers have to compete for access to land with private condominium developers who can benefit from more favourable financing options (Black 2012).

In addition, despite the long waiting list, it takes considerable time to house new tenants in supportive housing due to particularly long referral procedures and difficulties in finding the right tenant whose needs match services provided by a supportive housing provider. When a vacancy occurs, it is supportive housing providers who have to incur the cost of the vacancy: lost rent revenues and reduced subsidies. For example, one vacancy – depending on how subsidies and rent levels are structured – would cost an organization from \$450 to \$1,500 a month. All of these challenges make affordable housing providers more risk-averse in accommodating vulnerable people. They may also be reluctant to take on new projects where they would have to assume added financial burdens. These structural and local challenges have to be removed to maximize a set of strong local assets in affordable housing in Parkdale.

Assets: Strong community organizing and existing diverse housing options

Parkdale has developed and retained a diversity of affordable housing options, as demonstrated in Map 4. The effectiveness of the diverse affordable housing stock – whether it is supportive housing or private rental housing – has been enhanced by the proximity and walkability to Parkdale's social infrastructure: a range of community supports and programs. In other words, a further strength is the existing non-profit housing

organizations’ experience, assets, and resources in affordable housing development and management, as well as their integration into the social infrastructure in Parkdale.

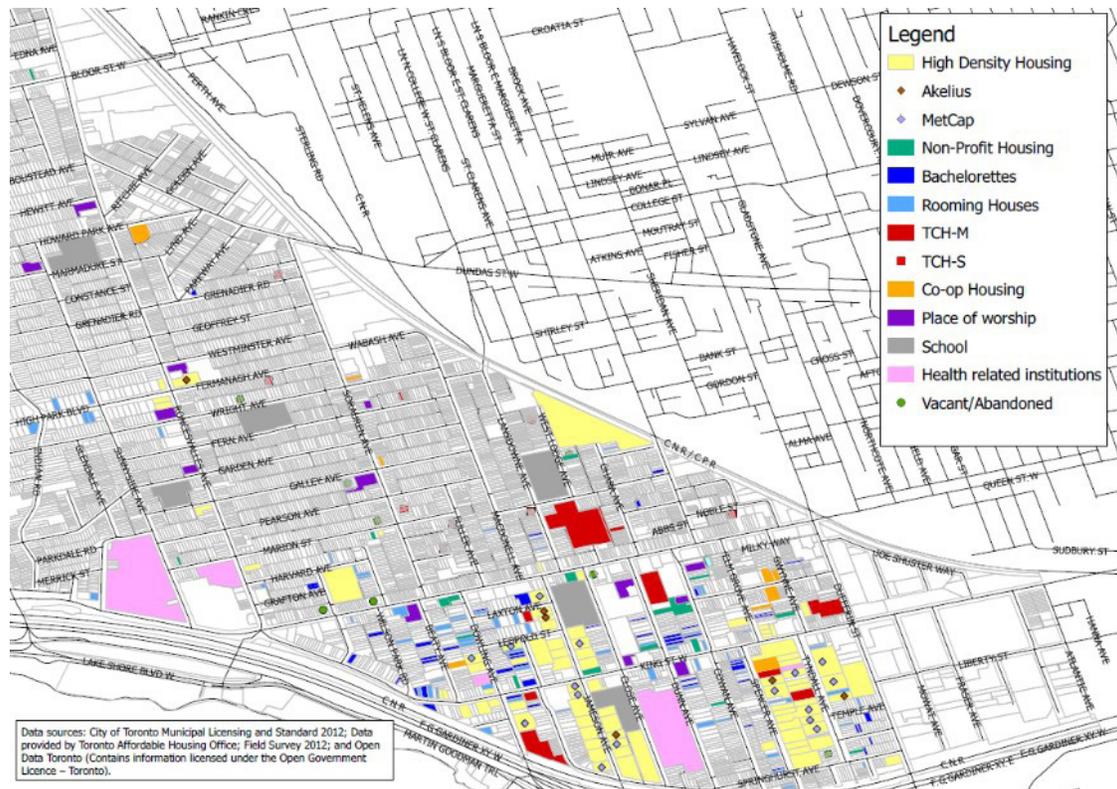
A strong base for community activism and organizing is another asset in Parkdale, evidenced by the leadership of Parkdale Community Legal Services (PCLS) and Parkdale Organize. PCLS offers vital free legal supports on housing issues to low-income and vulnerable community members in Parkdale. Parkdale Organize has helped tenant organizing in individual high-rise apartments affected by corporate landlords’ (in)actions such as above-guideline rent increases, harassment, and failure to address structural repairs. Parkdale Organize has also supported tenant leadership development.

The other unique asset in Parkdale is the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT), the first community land trust in Toronto. The Community Land Trust (CLT) is a non-profit organization that acquires and owns land for community benefits such as long-term affordable housing for low-income residents. The CLT model removes land from the real estate

market, and instead holds it in trust to ensure long-term affordability under democratic community control. The CLT can provide a better model for ensuring long-term affordability than other models, because the CLT focuses on land ownership – who owns and controls land – not just on how many affordable units are supplied (Hulchanski 1983). In short, the CLT model promotes community ownership and democratic control of land.

Conventionally, the CLT focuses on affordable homeownership, but because of the emphasis on ownership, PNLT is exploring a holistic approach to community development by ensuring long-term community benefits, such as affordable rental housing, affordable spaces for social enterprises and community services, and land security for community gardens and open space. Currently, PNLT is working on the first acquisition of land in Parkdale: the Milky Way urban agriculture land in partnership with Greenest City (for more details on Section 7 Direction 4 in Food Security’s). As a key organization that specializes in land use, PNLT can offer a vital base for community wealth building in Parkdale.

Map 4: A map of diverse affordable housing in Parkdale



*TCH-S: Toronto Community Housing’s stand-alone house; TCH-M: Toronto Community Housing multi-unit buildings

¹⁰ The unemployment data is from Urban Heart @ Toronto, which used 2011 National Household Survey. Thus this data should be interpreted with caution.

¹¹ This is based on % of persons living below the after-tax low income measures (LIMs), 2010 T1-Family File, a poverty measure used in Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

3) Decent work and inclusive economic opportunities
Context: Growing gaps within Parkdale

The overall trend of socio-economic changes in Parkdale reflects Toronto's regional trend of growing income gaps between high paying jobs and precarious work. The data also suggest a far more complicated process of neighbourhood change in Parkdale than what a popular image of the North-South divide indicates. Table 5 shows changes in average individual income from 2000 to 2012. In order to measure real income changes, inflation-adjusted dollars were used (2012 as a base year). In 2012, the average individual income in South Parkdale (\$30,377) was 65% of Toronto CMA average (\$46,666).

Table 5: Average individual income changes, 2000-2012 (also refer to Map 1 for census tracts)

Individual Ave Income	2000	2005	2010	2012	Difference 12 vs 00	Relative to TO CMA 12
4	\$ 27,697	\$ 26,616	\$ 24,680	\$ 27,517	-0.6%	59%
5	\$ 25,969	\$ 27,276	\$ 25,292	\$ 33,501	29.0%	72%
7.01	\$ 32,130	\$ 31,621	\$ 29,320	\$ 33,162	3.2%	71%
7.02	\$ 28,627	\$ 26,242	\$ 24,333	\$ 27,328	-4.5%	59%
South Parkdale	\$ 28,606	\$ 27,939	\$ 25,906	\$ 30,377	6.2%	65%
47.01	\$ 40,403	\$ 45,043	\$ 41,765	\$ 54,035	33.7%	116%
47.02	\$ 26,698	\$ 27,678	\$ 25,664	\$ 28,672	7.4%	61%
48	\$ 36,675	\$ 42,536	\$ 39,441	\$ 50,887	38.8%	109%
52	\$ 41,191	\$ 41,987	\$ 38,931	\$ 52,585	27.7%	113%
North Parkdale	\$ 36,242	\$ 39,311	\$ 36,450	\$ 46,545	28.4%	99.7%
Toronto CMA	\$ 45,217	\$ 44,060	\$ 46,202	\$ 46,666	3.2%	-

(Source: Census 2001 and 2006; CRA Taxfiler 2010, 2012 via Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership)

It is striking that average individual incomes of two census tracts (4 and 7.02) declined over time, while census tract 5 saw a higher average income growth by 29%. This may indicate the areas experiencing stronger gentrification pressure in South Parkdale. On the other hand, North Parkdale experienced higher rates of average individual income growth than the Toronto CMA average. It should be noted, however, that one census tract's (47.02) average income and its rate of increase were as low as those census tracts in South Parkdale. This census tract includes two large high-rise apartment buildings on West Lodge Ave. Both in South and North Parkdale, census-tract level differences in income changes seem correlated with the availability and location of certain housing types such as a presence of mid- or high-rise apartments.

The unemployment rate of South Parkdale in 2011 was 13%, compared to 6.4% for North Parkdale and 9% for the city of Toronto ¹⁰. Furthermore, 10-15% of residents in South Parkdale are "working poor" (Stapleton 2015). Both data suggest that more residents in South Parkdale face considerable employment related challenges. And yet, a complicated picture emerges when changes in the poverty rates and the number of people on social assistance (Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program) are accounted for.

According to Statistics Canada T1-Family File data (T1FF), 34% of residents in South Parkdale and 21% in North Parkdale ¹¹ lived below the poverty line in 2010 (Table 6). Compared to Census 2006 data, however, the poverty rate in South Parkdale decreased by 3% while North Parkdale saw a slight increase of around 1%. A similar trend is detected in the number of people on social assistance. From 2008

to 2011, the number of people on social assistance in South Parkdale decreased by around 5%, although the percentage still remains higher than that of the city (Table 7 below); during the same period, however, both North Parkdale and the city of Toronto saw increases. When we think about the population decline in South Parkdale (Figure 2), it may be reasonable to estimate the decrease may be attributed to some degree to mounting pressures of displacement of low-income and vulnerable community members.

Furthermore, recent transformations in the labour market and its (de)regulation coupled with impacts of deindustrialization have had considerable effect on local economic conditions in Parkdale. For example, a loss of manufacturing jobs as a local economic base in Parkdale and adjacent neighbourhoods of West Queen West and Liberty Village was one of the recurring themes in the community planning process. In Liberty Village, the type of employment shifted considerably from manufacturing and heavy industrial jobs to “creative” industries such as design, film, and media (Catungal et al. 2009).

Table 6: Number of people living below poverty line

(persons living below the after-tax low income measures)

	2005	2010
South Parkdale	37.1%	34.1%
North Parkdale	20.3%	21.1%

(Source: 2010- Statistics Canada T1-Family File data via Urban HEART @Toronto, 2005 – Census 2006)

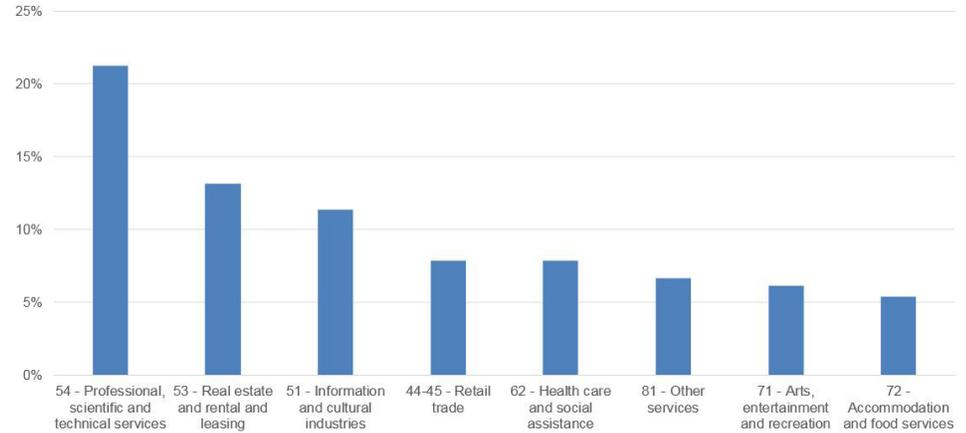
Table 7: Changes in the number of people on social assistance, 2008-2012

	2008		2012		12 vs 08
	#	% to total pop	#	% to total pop	
South Parkdale	5,463	26.0%	4,473	21.1%	-18%
North Parkdale	2,028	13.8%	2,268	15.7%	11%
City of Toronto	247,505	9.9%	261,058	10.0%	5%

(Source: Toronto Employment and Social Services via Wellbeing Toronto)

This trend is to some extent reflected in the composition of existing businesses in Parkdale and Ward 14. Figure 10 shows the top 8 sectors in Ward 14 by the number of locations based on the North American Industrial Classification System (2013). It should be noted that this chart does not show the number of employees in each sector, but indicates the availability of types of local employment. The top sector – professional, scientific, and technical services – includes computer systems design, technical consulting services, and specialized design services. The third largest sector – information and cultural industries – is largely comprised of the motion picture and sound recording industries, which are concentrated in Liberty Village. It is, however, interesting that the second largest sector in Ward 14 is “real estate and rental and leasing,” a majority of businesses within which are lessors of real estate (75%), including residential properties, social housing, and non-residential properties.

Figure 10: Location counts by business in Ward 14



Reflecting on the neighbourhood’s economic transformation, some community members observed a transition from a neighbourhood of production to a neighbourhood of consumption, in particular evidenced by the conversion of industrial lands into condominiums, as well as the recent commercial change and surge in the number of high-end restaurants and bars (34 restaurants opened from 2008 to 2013, City of Toronto 2013d).

Figure 11: General Categories

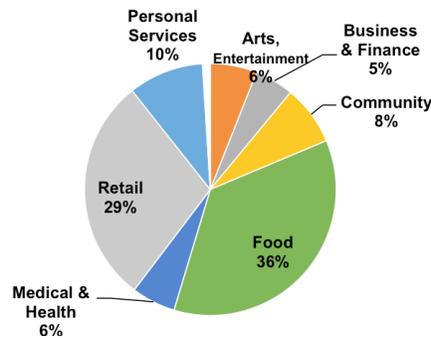
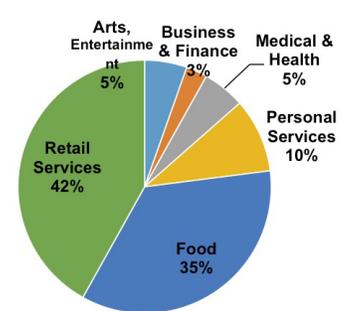


Figure 12: Survey results



Our business survey results mirror these recent trends of neighbourhood change in Parkdale. Figure 11 on left shows the breakdown of all businesses by sector in the Parkdale BIA area, while Figure 12 on right shows the breakdown of the businesses that we surveyed. Out of over 300 businesses within the Parkdale Village BIA catchment area, we surveyed nearly 25% of them (73 businesses). Sample businesses were selected randomly while ensuring a fair representation of different business sectors. We did not include those in the Community category in our survey, in order to focus on the assessment of the types and perspectives of local small businesses.

As shown in Figure 13 below, the businesses that we surveyed fall largely into two groups: long-term businesses (operating for more than 15 years, 31%) and recent businesses (operating for 0-2 years and 3-5 years, 55% combined). Considering the rapidly changing commercial street in Parkdale, it is interesting to see the high proportion of long-term businesses. This may be explained by the fact that while only 19% of the businesses we surveyed own properties, a majority of them are long-term businesses. Owner-occupancy is identified as one way to attain business stabilization in gentrifying neighbourhoods (Rankin 2008).

Figure 13: Businesses by the years of operation

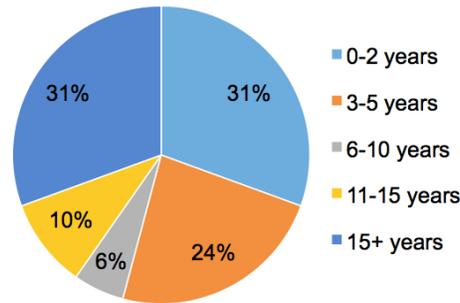


Figure 14: Business characteristics

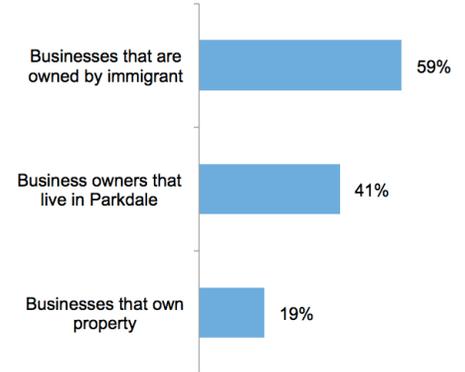


Figure 15: Owners' ethno-racial backgrounds by years of operation

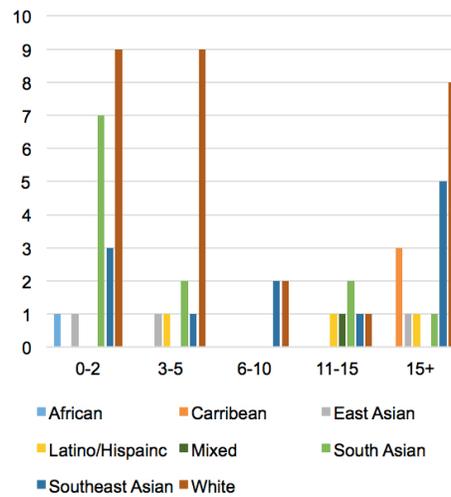


Figure 16: Business types by years of operation

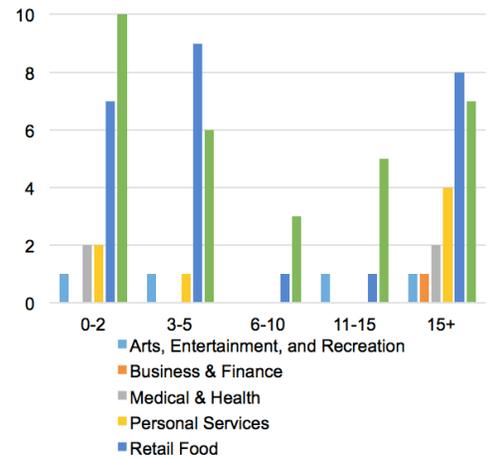


Figure 14 shows that 41% of business owners live in Parkdale while 59% of businesses are immigrant-owned. Three groups predominate: Whites (45%), South Asian (19%) and Southeast Asian (19%). In Figure 15, cross-tabulating with the years in operation reveals immigration patterns in Parkdale: Southeast Asian business owners (e.g. Vietnamese and Filipino) concentrate in the category of the long-term business (15+ years) while South Asian business owners (e.g. Indian, Pakistani, and Tibetan) predominate in the categories of recent businesses (0-2 years and 3-5 years). White business owners are well represented in both the recent and long-term ownership categories. Figure 16 on the right demonstrates that food services businesses are prevalent in both long-term businesses and recent businesses.

Needs: Multiple, interrelated challenges experienced in people's day-to-day lives

The community planning process uncovered systemic challenges and diverse needs for decent work by differently positioned community members in Parkdale. In particular, low-income and marginalized community members often face interrelated challenges that prevent them from fully participating in the economy and accumulating economic wealth. These challenges are detailed in the following.

People on social assistance programs

Community members who are unemployed and/or have mental health and addiction experience often rely on social assistance programs such as Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program. In Parkdale, around one in five residents are on social assistance (21% in South Parkdale and 15.7% in North Parkdale). These programs have proved to be inadequate in supporting their engagement in the workforce (Stapleton 2007). For example, both programs set a limit of \$200 of eligible employment income without reducing benefits of social assistance. After the \$200 earned income exemptions, however, benefits are reduced by 50 cents per \$1 earned. As such, the more people on social assistance work, the more “clawbacks” they face.

This income restriction has been identified as a considerable disincentive for people to seek more work hours (e.g. Stapleton 2007; Stapleton, Procyk, & Kochen 2011). Making a smooth transition into the workforce is hard because there are fewer decent entry-level jobs to move people out of poverty. This is particularly challenging for people on ODSP, as it is difficult to find full-time decent jobs in supportive work environments that can accommodate unique needs for flexibility due to unpredictable health conditions. A social policy analysis by John Stapleton (2013 p. 7) aptly summarizes this:

[ODSP] restrictions all serve to reinforce the insistence that a recipient must live in poverty in order to receive benefits. Each of these rules reinforces systemic stigmatization of recipients by disallowing recipients to improve their situations in ways that most Canadians would take for granted (e.g., saving money, moving in with someone else to reduce expenses, or obtaining help from a family member).

Similar issues are also true for OW. A more complicated challenge emerges when people's earned incomes interact with other benefit programs such as rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing. Social assistance benefits decrease with the

addition of earned incomes, which at the same time will increase RGI rents (i.e. reduction of RGI benefits).

Newcomers and immigrants

Newcomer and immigrant community members suggested that a challenge is not just unemployment but also underemployment. Even though they have brought extensive work experience, skills, and educational backgrounds from their home countries, they face the challenges of limited language proficiency, unrecognized credentials, and lack of Canadian experience, all of which push them into low-wage jobs outside their fields under poor working conditions (Access Alliance 2013). A key informant interviewee observed that many newcomer members in Parkdale are in unpredictable, precarious work: day labourers hired by temp agencies and picked up by a van in the early morning to work in construction and factory jobs elsewhere; personal support workers who have to respond to unpredictable calls and have multiple appointments but are not compensated for travel time between appointments; and many other low-wage jobs such as physical work at the Ontario Food Terminal, taxi driving, and restaurant work. The recent workers rally for decent work at the Ontario Food Terminal is such an example.

Parents

For low-income immigrant parents, these challenges are compounded by the lack of affordable childcare spaces. City of Toronto suffers from not only a shortage of child care spaces but also the high cost of them; it is estimated that a licensed full-time day care costs over \$20,000 annually on average in downtown Toronto (Keenan 2015). A focus group with immigrant parents suggested that they may be able to find jobs far from Parkdale, but they are often minimum wage jobs, and require a long commute and high travel costs. They also noted that they have been on a waiting list for subsidized child care; when considering the costs of expensive unsubsidized childcare, these minimum wage jobs are not desirable options. The lack of affordable child care also prevents them from even taking job training and skills development workshops. Moreover, the parents identified a further complication: families need to access recreational programs for their children. If both parents work and earn more than the eligibility criteria, then they are not qualified for the benefits and subsidies of the City of Toronto's Welcome Policy. Such interwoven challenges serve as disincentives for them even if they aspire to build necessary Canadian experience.

Youth

The combined effects of the disappearance of decent entry-level jobs and the lack of employers' investment in workforce development (Zizys 2014) hit youth hard. As

organizations and firms move to a networked model rather than an integrated model, entry level positions are often disintegrated and outsourced to other organizations (including temp agencies) that focus on low-end and temporary jobs with no prospect of job advancement (ibid.). A key concern raised in the focus group with local youth is access to good entry-level jobs after graduation. The jobs that youth can get are those precarious jobs in the fast food and service sectors, ones that not only lack job security but also fail to provide essential skills development and prospects for better jobs in the future. This is particularly a challenge for some of the youth who have to contribute to household incomes and rents due to barriers and issues that their parents face to entering the workforce (e.g. language, health, and unrecognized credentials).

Informal workers

The growth of precarious work, policy regulations, and structural barriers to enter the formal labour market has pushed vulnerable populations to move into “informal” economies for survival (SCH 2014; Nasima, Sevgul & Diane 2013). Some community members explained that they benefited from informal, flexible work arrangements, such as babysitting friends’ children and catering from their home. Others expressed concerns and issues based on their experience, such as a sudden termination of “contracts” for informal childcare when a better fee was negotiated, and the lack of safety and security when physical work was involved. Some youth raised their concern and frustration because informal work is one of the few remaining options for survival.

Common grounds

While different challenges are felt differently by diverse community members, community members identified some common challenges for decent work. First, community members expressed that their skills and knowledge are not valued nor recognized, but marginalized in the current labour market. Second is the lack of information and connections to access local jobs. Many planning workshop participants mentioned that they would like to stay in Parkdale because of convenient access to public and social services, walkability, and a sense of community. Yet the lack of local decent work in and nearby Parkdale, coupled with increasing rents, act as displacement pressures for them. Third is the lack of supportive and meaningful “transitional” work opportunities.

These diverse challenges resonate with a point that one key informant interviewee raised about the limits of current employment services and programs that focus on resume writing, interview skills, and Canadian work culture seminars. The emphasis on individual behavioural changes

has limited impacts when not many decent jobs exist in the precarious, polarized labour market to begin with. Although focused on immigrant experience, findings from the Access Alliance’s study, “Where are the Good Jobs?,” also make a critical point:

Private corporations and ‘temp agencies’ are often blamed for the rise in precarious employment and immigrant underemployment. In reality, businesses and ‘temp agencies’ are mediators and beneficiaries of these trends. The root causes go deeper and have more to do with discrimination, structural inequalities, policy and enforcement gaps, information gaps, and ineffective services (2013, p. 8)

The challenges identified by both community members and research are systemic in their nature. They require structural reforms in labour market policy, regulations, and practices. A range of community organizations and groups in Toronto such as the Workers’ Action Centre are leading policy reform campaigns around the minimum wage and employment standards, while other groups are advocating for change in social assistance and income security programs. It may be also possible to remove these barriers and to start to articulate a neighbourhood-based vision for decent work, one that could complement and inform broader policy change efforts to address the systemic nature of income and labour insecurity.

Visions for decent work in Parkdale

The PCED planning process entailed community visioning for “decent work” in Parkdale. The concept of decent work is of critical importance, given the growth of precarious work, one of the major contributing factors to income polarization (PEPSO, 2013). What emerged from the visioning process are multiple aspirations for decent work, a diversity that reflects the diverse circumstances and challenges of different community members. Some examples of the decent work visions include: full-time work that would ensure a life-work balance with sufficient income; work that would make it possible to engage in community volunteering to contribute to improving the neighbourhood; work that would enhance workers’ mental and physical wellbeing through cooperative and supportive work environments; and work that would allow for a gradual transition to the workforce in the face of multiple barriers. This diversity is the uniqueness as well as complexity of the neighbourhood-based approach to decent work, because people’s visions are organized around shared locality not by shared workplaces.

Although this diversity of decent work visions may pose difficulties for organizing and planning, there is some

common ground. First, community members emphasized that decent work goes beyond the workplace, and is embedded in their overall day-to-day lives. This way of understanding of decent work offers an important point of departure for Parkdale. Community members – in particular newcomers, marginalized community members, and those living with low-incomes – face complex challenges in accessing and ensuring decent work. These challenges include lack of secure affordable housing, stigma attached to mental health, unpredictable health conditions, food insecurity, limited access to childcare, unrecognized credentials, and reliance on inadequate social assistance programs.

These interwoven challenges could not be addressed solely by furnishing employment opportunities, especially given that both Toronto and Parkdale have seen considerable development pressures and compounding housing unaffordability. Rising housing costs and tenure insecurity could destabilize not only decent wages and but also workers' participation and transition to decent work. For example, from the experience of existing supportive work initiatives such as the Co-op Cred program, the members' participation in work placements is often disrupted and discontinued by pressures of housing eviction. In other words, the meaning of decent work needs to be assessed from the perspective of social income that includes non-wage community benefits such as affordable housing and healthy food. In short, building a decent and equitable neighbourhood is a condition for decent work. Creating decent work opportunities should be linked in tandem with other solutions that would improve overall economic wellbeing.

There is another commonality: the need for supportive and meaningful “transitional” work opportunities – even if they are not full-time – that lead to better work and fulfilment of personal aspirations. For example, community members suggested that local part-time work could be decent work if it is built on community support and assets such as affordable housing, access to healthy food, and community services. This understanding reflects people's experience in eroding social security systems and supports in general. In this regard, an essential condition for decent work is building a healthy, decent neighbourhood that furnishes such community supports and assets that equally matter to promoting overall individual and neighbourhood wellbeing. Addressing this critical gap is important for achieving equitable development and inclusive workforce development in Parkdale.

Parkdale's decent work vision is further extended to a common concern for the future of commercial space in Parkdale: commercial gentrification has resulted in the loss of affordable commercial space, local-serving businesses,

and local work opportunities (e.g. immigrant entrepreneurship). And yet, business owners' views on neighbourhood change are mixed. Our business survey results reveal that a quarter of the business owners see neighbourhood change – often referred to as the influx of more families and a younger population – resulting in the reduction in crime, drug use, and prostitution as well as the improvement of safety. While some business owners see these changes producing positive effects for the business environment, others are unsure of the effects of neighbourhood change on the viability of their business. Some of these business owners instead offered critical insights into systemic challenges facing local economies, such as the lack of better jobs and high unemployment. For example, one business owner noted that a lot of improvements have taken place, but have not generated resources for community members in need.

The survey results indicate that 81% of the businesses in Parkdale are tenants (Figure 14 above). This is high compared to other neighbourhoods such as Bloordale (62%) and Mount Dennis (69%) (Rankin et al. 2013; 2015). In the absence of any form of commercial rent control, some long-term, immigrant-owned and low-income businesses are facing pressures and risks of displacement. Around 10% of the businesses that we surveyed already raised increasing rents as a difficulty in running businesses in Parkdale. Furthermore, there is an intricate relationship between residential and commercial changes (Jacobus & Chapple 2010). Processes and consequences of commercial change that accompany the influx of businesses catering to higher income groups and outside clientele often fuel pressures on housing demands and attractiveness for new real estate investment. The retention of affordable commercial space is, therefore, a high priority for ensuring neighbourhood affordability and diversity as well as for ensuring local decent work opportunities.

Assets: Supportive workforce efforts that can advance Parkdale visions for decent work

Taken together, Parkdale visions for decent work are multi-faceted and complex. And yet, over time Parkdale has developed a set of local economic assets, a building block that is an important starting point for planning for decent work opportunities at the neighbourhood level. What follows are existing initiatives and programs in Parkdale. These assets are a basis of building a coordinated approach to decent work development efforts in Parkdale.

The Co-op Cred program

One viable starting point in Parkdale is to harness the Co-op Cred program, a partnership initiative among PARC, West

End Food Co-op, Greenest City, and Parkdale Community Health Centre. The Co-op Cred program addresses economic and food security challenges by offering supportive work placement opportunities for people with mental health experience and for newcomers in Parkdale while keeping people's OW/ODSP benefits. The Co-op Cred program is a proven model that strategically connects supportive work opportunities with key community economic assets. Currently, there are around 30 members of PARC and Greenest City participating in the program. They engage in placements at a range of settings: West End Food Co-op's production kitchen, grocery store and farmers' market; PARC's kitchen for its meal program; Greenest City's urban food production; and Parkdale Community Health Centre's diabetes program.

Since its establishment in 2013, the Co-op Cred program has helped participants rebuild their confidence, readiness, and work experience after long-term unemployment, recovery, or resettlement. The program is important as it helps rebuild people's relationship between work and quality of life, one that has been damaged by the ongoing challenges of poverty and economic marginalization. This is particularly crucial as current social assistance programs tend to emphasize immediate employment outcomes over longer-term recovery, skills development, and accommodating pathways back into the workforce. Some Co-op Cred participants have moved on to secure employment, become peer leaders, and pursue other personal development goals. The Co-op Cred program is thus situated as an effective entry point..

Social enterprises and member employment programs

Another supportive entry point is social enterprises and member employment programs managed by non-profit community organizations. A majority of non-profit organizations interviewed expressed a difficulty with prioritizing a "local hiring policy" due to funding requirements and their emphasis on qualification. And yet, through the City of Toronto's Investing in Neighbourhoods (IIN) program, 8 organizations created 22 positions in 2015 alone. Various community-based organizations in Parkdale have created around 15 social enterprises and member employment programs.

Given the cluster of community organizations that work with community members with mental health and homeless experience, there is a common interest in collaborating on peer member employment. There are variations among different organizations in how peer member employment programs are designed. Some organizations hire members (service users) of their own organizations to work as peer workers for their organizations. Others hire peer workers who have lived experience in general. In light of the

different designs, cross-organizational collaboration has to be carefully planned in collaboration with members and peer workers. Cross-organizational collaboration may be suitable to address several challenges identified by key informants, such as internal conflicts between peer workers and service users, difficulties with finding and retaining good candidates, and limited training resources. A neighbourhood-wide, cross-organizational collaboration at a neighbourhood scale could open up placement and employment opportunities beyond one organization (See Section 7, Direction 8 in Decent Work).

While these organizational commitments and capacities are a sign of strong local assets, challenges remain. Agency staff also notice the changing nature of such member employment related programs: more liability over accommodation, limited training opportunities for ODSP recipients, and rapid turnover rates of member employment positions that constantly require staff to repeat orientation and initial training. Available training and employment programs under the City's administration often have eligibility requirements that restrict them to OW recipients, excluding ODSP recipients.

Developing social enterprises is an important intervention but has limits in the absence of long-term stable core funding support. Major funding for social enterprises is designed to decrease over time in order to encourage self-sustainability from revenues. Some social enterprises can achieve this goal by developing a strong business plan and employee training programs. A key informant interviewee, however, argues that the social enterprises that focus on people in recovery from mental health and addiction find this funding design particularly challenging because of the need for ongoing supervision, on-site support, and unique accommodation. These social enterprises face a challenge of long-term planning and expansion if they know their funding will decrease over time.

Local businesses

Local businesses could also play a crucial role in building inclusive local economies and decent work opportunities. Our business survey highlights immense community contributions that local businesses have already made. Close to 25% of the business owners suggest that they have made contributions and donations to local non-profit and charitable organizations. In addition, 15 % of the businesses hire locally. Several business owners have also made other contributions such as furnishing social space for cultural activities and community building. These are important foundations for building stronger partnerships with local businesses for local hiring and apprenticeship. Government

wage subsidies and tax credits programs may be useful for creating incentives to work with community partners to create decent work opportunities.

Community consultation identified one of the challenges facing local businesses: they are unable to generate many full-time positions. Our business survey results confirm this, as over 60% of the businesses surveyed hire less than 2 employees (some are family-run). Part-time positions, although limited, may match with the needs for those in transition. For example, the focus group with parents suggested that if designed with flexible and supportive accommodation, parents who cannot afford daycare services could work, when their children are in schools or when their partners are at home to look after children. Part-time positions could be decent work for people in recovery, if other necessary supports are ensured. As an example, West End Food Co-op has committed to food security and workforce reengagement and created around 12 part-time supportive placement opportunities through the Co-op Cred program.

Anchor institutions

One of the untapped community assets in Parkdale is large non-profit and public institutions. Recently the Atkinson Foundation and Mowat Centre at the University of Toronto (Dragicevic 2014) released a report that highlights an emerging practice in community economic development. This promising idea is called “anchor institutions.” At the heart of this idea is that large institutions such as hospitals have considerable purchasing and hiring capacities. A key question is, if anchor institutions have large spending capacities, then how and where are they spending their resources? How can current institutional practices be shifted to create local community economic benefits?

The anchor institution model is a proven approach based on the experience of Cleveland, Ohio. This idea may sound very ambitious, but it is gaining traction in Toronto. The City of Toronto is revisiting their procurement practices to emphasize social returns on their spending; East Scarborough Storefront and University of Toronto Scarborough are working together to create local economic opportunities through the UTSC campus expansion; and St. Michael’s Hospital is exploring ways to create decent work opportunities for its primary care clients.

In Parkdale and surrounding areas, there are large health institutions such as St. Joseph’s Health Centre, University Health Network’s Long-term Care Centre, and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). For example, St. Joseph’s Health Centre alone employs around 1500 full-time staff and 900 part-time staff with an annual budget of \$279

million. The role of health institutions is vital for community economic benefits from the social determinants of health perspective. Many of the key determinants – income, employment, and work conditions for example – have economic implications for health outcomes. It is estimated that people’s socio-economic status contributes to over 50% of health outcomes (Toronto Public Health 2015). Health institutions are increasingly encouraged to undertake an anchor institution role to tackle causes of poor health outcomes through community-based economic interventions (Zuckerman 2013).

There are signs of readiness from community agencies in Parkdale. Working for Change has an experience of divestment at CAMH to start social enterprise cafés, and West End Food Co-op has started a conversation with St. Joseph’s Health Centre about replacing an existing café with a co-op café that can offer supportive work opportunities through the Co-op Cred program. PARC and a range of non-profit and institutional partners such as Toronto Public Health and Student Nutrition Toronto are collaborating to redesign how non-profit food procurement can be reorganized through aggregated food purchasing (FoodReach). Building on these, Parkdale can work together with those anchor institutions to create community-benefiting economic opportunities such as social procurement and local hiring programs.

4) Food security

Context: Seeking food security in high health needs neighbourhood

Health equity issues are of great concern in Parkdale, where many low-income residents have experience with mental health, addiction, homelessness, and other life challenges. According to the City of Toronto's Urban HEART data, South Parkdale faces one of the highest health needs among all 130 neighbourhoods in Toronto. South Parkdale is the second highest in premature mortality and preventable hospitalizations (both after Moss Park) and the fourth in mental health. It is important to note that North Parkdale (Roncesvalles) also has high health needs as well: eleventh in preventable hospitalization and nineteenth in premature mortality. To respond to these needs, a number of organizations in Parkdale offer vital health supports and services – such as a number of mental health organizations, Parkdale Community Health Centre, and St. Joseph's Health Centre. While improving direct health services is important, it is beyond the scope of this project. It should be noted that there are ongoing efforts to do so. For example, PCHC and St. Joseph's Health Centre are developing a coordinated health service model.

Instead, the PCED project focuses on the relationship between health and food security, one of the main social determinants of health. As reviewed in previous sections, Parkdale residents face both increasing rents and stagnated incomes. The combined impacts of housing and income insecurity often result in poorer health outcomes. Poor health is compounded by the need for low-income people to prioritize essentials such as rents and cut flexible expenditures such as food (e.g. Kirkpatrick & Tarasuk 2011). Thus, addressing food insecurity has been one of the focal areas in Parkdale, particularly since the publication of the *Beyond Bread and Butter* report (2010) by a group of urban planning students from the University of Toronto. The report acted as a road map for Parkdale to initiate a range of community food security initiatives, including the establishment of the Parkdale Food Network. Furthermore, because the PCED project focuses on community economic development, it is important to explore the opportunities and challenges of harnessing food to develop decent work and inclusive economic opportunities.

Needs: Local inequity in the “two-tiered food system”

Issues related to food security and access to healthy food are multi-faceted. They reflect Ontario's two-tiered industrial food system, which is characterized by a growing gap between those who can access to high quality nutritious food

and those who rely on cheap, processed foods or charitable food programs (Scharf, Levkoe, & Saul 2010). Local impacts of food system issues were reflected in our needs and assets mapping workshops. On the one hand, low-income tenant and newcomer groups identified access to healthy and affordable food as unmet needs, and instead identified community meal programs as assets, which were rarely seen as assets by other groups including homeowners and tenants with more resources. On the other hand, those latter groups found the availability of various options for good food – local food groceries, the farmer's market, and restaurants – as assets. In contrast to a popular image of food insecurity such as a “food desert,” Parkdale is not a food desert, but is full of food options within walking distance. What is at stake is not the availability but the affordability of healthy food.

Food prices have been increasing at a higher rate than all consumer items (Rollin 2013). Toronto relies heavily on imported food, and it is estimated the city has only three days' worth of fresh food at any time (Toronto Public Health 2008, cited in Campsie 2008). The dependency on imported food within the industrial food system increases the vulnerability to currency fluctuations and climate impacts on other regions and countries (e.g. a drought in California). Due to the recent weakening Canadian dollar coupled with the El Nino effect and emerging consumer trends, the Food Institute at the University of Guelph (Charlebois et al. 2016, p. 2) estimates food price hikes of 2-4%, and concludes that “the average household could spend up to \$345 more on food in 2016.” In addition to price increases, there are other potential vulnerabilities. For example, many community residents rely on mainstream supermarkets such as No Frills on King Street. Given the increasing redevelopment pressure, the site – designated as a Mixed Use Area for redevelopment – may be vulnerable.

Such systemic issues of community food security affect everyone in Parkdale, but more disproportionately those low-income and vulnerable community members who are already food insecure. According to the Nutritious Food Basket for Toronto (City of Toronto 2015a), OW and ODSP benefits for one person do not cover the basic costs for accessing nutritious food. In another scenario, a couple with two children, if one person works for minimum wage, funds remaining after paying rent and food costs are estimated to be only around \$550, which needs to be spent on other essential expenses such as phone bills, transportation, and so on. This estimate suggests that few resources are left for other activities and there is little flexibility for emergency situations. Moreover, for someone who lives in inadequate housing, even if they have access to food, they may not have

access to a kitchen to prepare food and/or a refrigerator to store fresh and perishable food. Taken together, they thus tend to rely on less healthy canned foods, food banks, and community meal programs as an “income supplement.”

Community Food Centre, Daily Bread Food Bank, and Second Harvest. This in turn has increased expertise and ability to explore systemic approaches to community food security locally.

Assets: Community food security initiatives at multiple scales

In response to such systemic challenges, Parkdale has seeded a range of community-led initiatives from individual supports to neighbourhood-based collaborative initiatives, to systems-level interventions. A number of community-based agencies have committed to offering healthy meal programs to address the increasing need for nutritious food among vulnerable community members. As the neighbourhood’s primary health care organization, Parkdale Community Health Centre has increasingly emphasized the role of healthy food in their programming and services from the social determinants of health perspective. The establishment of West End Food Co-op – one of the first multi-stakeholder cooperatives in Toronto – has brought unique opportunities and strengths to Parkdale, such as the year-round Sorauren Farmers’ market, community-based food literacy, and skills development workshops.

Building on such remarkable assets, the Parkdale Food Network (PFN) was established in 2012 and has worked to enhance further coordination and collaboration of community food security responses at the neighbourhood level. For example, PFN, under the leadership of Greenest City, has initiated the affordable Good Food Market in South Parkdale. In addition, as noted earlier, the Co-op Cred program has been developed to increase access to healthy food in partnership with PARC, Greenest City, West End Food Co-op, and Parkdale Community Health Centre.

Furthermore, under the leadership of PARC and Toronto Public Health’s Food Strategy team, several Parkdale organizations joined the collaborative research project that explored opportunities and challenges in non-profit food distribution and procurement. This “Food Flow” project resulted in two important outcomes. First is a citywide aggregated food procurement solution, FoodReach (<http://foodreach.ca/>), which aims to harness Toronto’s non-profit community sector’s aggregated food purchasing capacity of \$29 million to allow better access to healthy local food among non-profit agencies. FoodReach is an intervention to the food supply chain in the local food system. Second, Parkdale has established strong working relationships with a range of community food security leaders in Toronto such as the Toronto Food Strategy team, FoodShare, The Stop

5) Community financing

Context: Anchoring financial capital in the age of globalization

The increased vulnerability of high-rise apartment buildings in Parkdale due to the rise of corporate landlords mirrors a shift in the economic base from manufacturing to service and financial sectors (Phillips, Flores, & Henderson 2015; Fileds 2014). Corporate landlords raise and leverage financial capital through pension fund-based REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts) in order to purchase high-rise apartment buildings. Since the global financial crisis, rental housing properties in metropolitan areas have become stable investment options because of scarcity (low-vacancy rates) and stable demand (Fileds 2014). This combination has created incentives and security for profit-seeking investors. A REIT furnishes an enabling mechanism to attract investment on a global scale, resulting in considerable impact on local economies.

Although the scale goes beyond one neighbourhood, this concern has prompted the PCED project to explore mechanisms and policies to increase community influence over the flow of financial resources and ensure responsible investment for community benefits. This is a difficult problem of footloose capital in the age of globalization (DeFillipis 2004). Furthermore, as the PCED planning project unfolded, multiple needs for community-oriented financial mechanisms emerged. Social financing was proposed among many. Social financing is a growing field that responds to such emerging concerns. While there are some differences in definition, social financing can be understood as “an umbrella term for associated concepts like impact investing, socially responsible investing, and micro-lending” (Nells & Spence 2013). Social financing may offer opportunities to increase and retain financial resources locally. At the same time, social financing is one of many available tools. Public investment and levy tools are equally important and necessary to anchor financial capital locally.

Needs: Alternative financial mechanisms to make finance work for community needs

Through the community planning process, three different but interrelated needs for alternative financial services were identified. First, at the individual level, the key informant interviews with community-based financial literacy workers suggested that some low-income and marginalized community members do not have basic bank accounts. There are multiple barriers and reasons: lower credit scores, lack or loss of ID, over-withdrawal experience, technical financial language, and inaccessible services. As a result of the lack of options within mainstream banking, many individuals end

up relying on high-cost fringe financial services, such as payday lenders and cheque-cashing stores. The lack of access is particularly detrimental to income security among people on social assistance. In order to exchange a social assistance cheque for cash, they have few choices but to use fringe financial services that charge higher service fees and rates. Using such services results in the reduction of total benefits that people can receive from already inadequate social assistance rates. This highlights the need for supportive financial services for low-income and marginalized members.

Secondly, at the non-profit organizational level, the key informant interviews discovered that a majority of organizations in Parkdale use mainstream commercial banks, although they would prefer to use community-oriented financial services that emphasize community reinvestment. Unlike the United States, Canada does not have the Community Reinvestment Act that requires local banks to invest in and serve community needs. Furthermore, depending on the volume of transactions, some organizations have to pay “activity fees.” This raises a question of economic leakages of community resources from Parkdale. Some interviewees note that they see paying fees as necessary but they are not satisfied with the way mainstream banks regard them as being just like other businesses, rather than non-profit organizations with unique needs.

Third, at the neighbourhood and the non-profit sector levels, the need for alternative financing and community investment options is growing in the context of decreasing and unpredictable public funding, particularly around affordable housing and social enterprise. In addition, public funding has shifted its focus from a core-funding model with flexibility to a project-based model that emphasizes service delivery and efficiency (CSPCT 2004). Fewer funding and grant opportunities are available to sustain community (economic) development projects in the long run. Parkdale too faces these sector-level challenges. A range of existing community development initiatives – social enterprises, the Co-op Cred program, and the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust – require innovative financing mechanisms. In particular, PNLT faces a unique challenge because few financing options are available for land acquisition. In contrast, in the United Kingdom, where the CLT is a relatively new phenomenon, the rapid growth of CLTs across the country has been aided by dedicated social investment mechanisms (UK National CLT Network 2013).

Other jurisdictions in Canada have developed relatively stronger community-oriented financial infrastructure and legislative frameworks – for example, Vancity Credit Union in Vancouver, Desjardins in Montreal, and the Community

Economic Development Investment Fund in Nova Scotia. In Toronto, there are emerging innovations in social finance that Parkdale can draw on. For example, the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) has harnessed “community bonds” to raise financial resources to acquire and transform large properties into hubs for social businesses and non-profit agencies; the Toronto Atmospheric Fund has built an impact investment program for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.

Assets: A foundation for financial inclusion and community-based accumulation

In Parkdale, a few organizations have developed organizational capacity and programs in financial literacy such as the West Neighbourhood House, PARC, and Parkdale Community Legal Services. For example, in the late 1990s, the Community Banking Project – a partnership project of West Neighbourhood House (formerly St. Christopher House) and Royal Bank of Canada – aimed to address financial exclusion among low-income and marginalized people, an exclusion that resulted in the reliance on high-cost fringe financial services. The project came up with an innovative program, the Cash-and-Save service at RBC, which enabled people to cash cheques (including social assistance cheques) at lower rates than those charged for payday loans (1.25% versus 3% + \$2 service charge). RBC also created two positions: a community banker and a community developer. While it brought unique benefits and partnership, it was not necessarily a community development model, but a business fee-for-recovery model (Buckland 2008). It was cancelled in 2003. Regardless of some challenges, the Community Banking project demonstrates a good practice and unique partnership for financial inclusion.

Financial empowerment and trustee programs such as PARC’s Money Matters program are another example that helps community members build foundational skills and knowledge about financial management. An equally important aspect of this program is that community members – most on OW and ODSP – work with a support worker to manage their financial resources collaboratively while also building a working relationship with their landlords. The trustee program has been effective: it serves around 40 members; the housing retention rate is 100%; four cases of potential eviction were prevented in 2014. This type of trustee program is effective when much affordable rental housing is provided privately. The challenge is that this program is underfunded and has only one staff member, who cannot accommodate the increasing and unmet needs of community members. It is necessary to increase funding to expand voluntary financial trustee programs for low-income and

marginalized populations. This should be expanded as a combination of financial inclusion and homelessness prevention.

There are also some experiences in social financing and community investment in Parkdale: the creation of the WEFC’s store space was financed by a community bond campaign, and the annual Ride4RealFood campaign raises funds for the Co-op Cred Program. Another recent opportunity is the opening of two branches of Meridian Credit Union on Roncesvalles Avenue and on King Street West near Liberty Village. Taken together, there are considerable needs and assets that we should build on to establish community-based financial mechanisms – without losing sight of the issue of lack of public investment – to retain and harness financial resources for community objectives.

There are two systemic barriers to be addressed. First, one of the significant challenges in community investment is a regulation about who can be investors in community initiatives. Both in Ontario and BC, only accredited investors – for example those with financial assets worth more than \$1 million – are allowed to invest. This regulation excludes a large number of community-based “non-accredited” investors. The exclusion constrains the reach and nature of community investment. One way to mitigate this issue in Ontario is to use a cooperative structure: under the Cooperative Act, a co-op can raise up to \$200,000 – although limited in its scale – from any investors. This is how the West End Food Co-op’s community bond campaign was structured to raise financial capital for furnishing their current location within the Parkdale Community Health Centre.

Another way to overcome the limit is to harness Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) contributions, which ordinary investors can use for investment but much of which leaves local neighbourhoods (Amyot 2014). To capture some of these leakages, the Vancouver Island Community Investment Co-operative created a structure that allows people to include their investment in their self-directed RRSPs, although not all investments are RRSP-eligible at this point. The CSI’s community bond campaign for 720 Bathurst Street was successfully structured as an RRSP eligible investment as the security was backed by real property (CSI 2012). However, a key informant noted that changes in the federal budget in 2011 after the global financial crisis and ramifications of this change felt by banks made it difficult to make a real estate-based community bond campaign RRSP eligible. Non-real estate community bonds continue to be RRSP eligible (e.g. Solar Share). A further investigation of RRSP eligibility in relation to community and project needs is necessary.

6) Local participatory democracy

Context: Distribution of decision making power

Building healthy and equitable local economies requires a fair redistribution of wealth and benefits from neighbourhood improvement. Of equal importance is an equitable redistribution of decision-making power. Community members identified local participatory democracy – meaningful participation, community decision-making, and leadership – as one of the pillars for Parkdale’s neighbourhood wellbeing.

Throughout the planning process, community members also shared their aspiration to extend the exercise of democracy beyond participating in elections and statutory public consultations; they would like to have more democratic control and influence over policy and program development, local economies, and neighbourhood development. Such an aspiration aligns well with a number of proposed directions in this project that highlight democratic management. What is needed, then, is to enhance local democratic governance structures, community capacity, and resident leadership to collectively shape and mobilize community strategies and policy options for equitable development and community wealth building.

Needs: Building enabling conditions for informed, participatory decision making

Despite such an apparent importance of local democracy, diverse community members raised a concern about losing local democratic control over how neighbourhood change has happened in Parkdale. Community members raised a range of local examples that illustrate such issues, ones from an influx of new restaurants and bars that have changed the characteristics and accessibility of the neighbourhood, to the development of a new LCBO site on Queen Street West without adequate community consultation, and to the lack of transparency and accountability in negotiating and allocating Section 37 contributions from private developers. Furthermore, they feel that statutory planning consultations and the Ontario Municipal Board are particularly limited in influencing decisions to meet community needs and long-term priorities.

In addition to limited formal governance mechanisms, community members identified two further challenges to community’s participation. First is the lack of community-based institutions that have a fair representation of the diverse community members in Parkdale. On the one hand, it is a strength that Parkdale has diverse neighbourhood groups and associations, including (but not limited to) residents associations, tenants groups such as Parkdale

Organize, Parkdale Roundtable (for frontline service workers), Parkdale Parent Advisory Network, Parkdale Food Network, St. Joseph’s Health Centre Community Engagement Council, and so on. For some community members, however, this diversity is dispersed and thus requires better coordination.

Second, the lack of a comprehensive picture of Parkdale is a barrier to participating meaningfully and making an informed decision. Community members stated that they are not fully aware of what is going on in Parkdale. They feel that there is no place – physically or on online – to go to learn and understand current conditions of Parkdale – how it is changing, where are emerging issues that require urgent attention, and where there are opportunities for collaboration. A few community members mentioned that they do not know where to go when they have ideas or need support for initiating community projects. Looking for a meeting space is another challenge. Some also suggested it is about coordination of information dissemination that is also important as they feel overwhelmed by a large amount of information. While access to information is a challenge, other community members are working in precarious, unpredictable jobs that make it hard for them to engage in community initiatives. Taken together, there is a strong need to rebuild democratic infrastructures and enabling pre-conditions for meaningful local decision-making and participation in Parkdale.

Assets: Building-blocks for learning democracy by exercising democracy

Throughout the community planning process, many community members expressed their interest in learning more about Parkdale to better participate in community building. As demonstrated in the Parkdale Wellbeing Indicators, a wide range of community members identified “learning” as an important factor to their wellbeing. For many, learning was seen as the first step for taking action together. Community members want to develop resident leadership capacity to guide the development of the neighbourhood they live. This aspiration is a considerable asset in Parkdale that needs to be nurtured.

At the organizational level, non-profit agencies have established governance and board structures in which community members and service users are a part of decision making (e.g. a caucus model for PARC and a multi-stakeholder model for WEFC). Cooperative housing providers in Parkdale also have developed such democratic decision-making at the heart of their management practice. Thus, community organizations can play a key role in

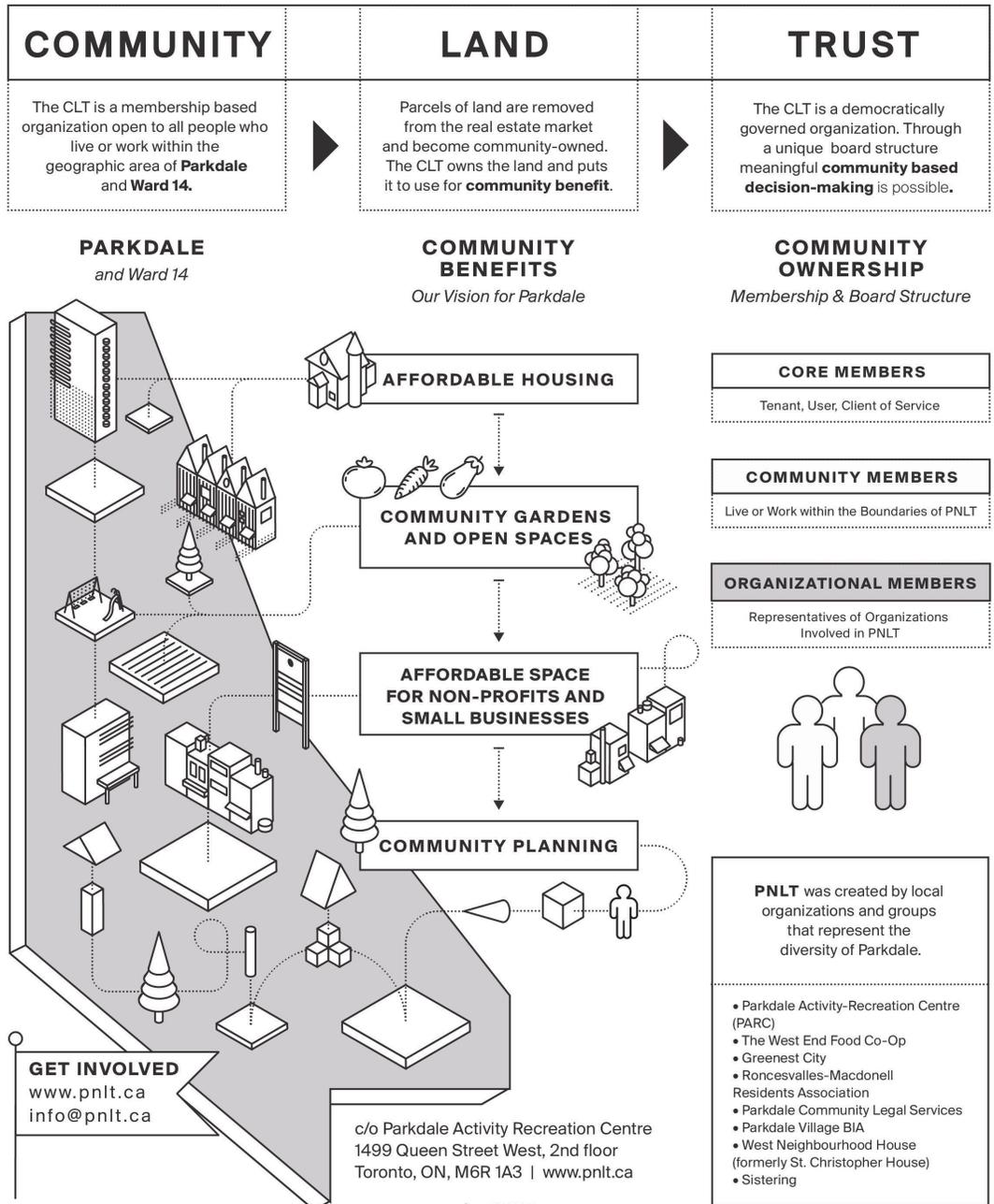
creating enabling conditions and learning opportunities. And yet, it is clear that as funding structures have emphasized the role of community organizations in service provision, rather than community development, they have found it increasingly difficult to allocate their staff time beyond service delivery. How to address this tension is a difficult question that requires intentional organizational planning and collaborative initiatives with other partners.

At the neighbourhood level, as described, a number of specific networks of community groups and organizations exist. How can we build an equitable, neighbourhood-wide governance model based on these existing works? To respond to such a difficult question, Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust has been working to create a community membership-based, representative board and governance structure (see the next page as well as Direction 4 in Participatory Democracy for establishing the Community Planning Board). In addition, ongoing initiatives in Parkdale offer an important foundation for neighbourhood-wide leadership development and learning opportunities. Some of them include:

- Parkdale Community Legal Services and Parkdale Organize offer vital supports to tenants living in high-rise apartments for tenant organizing, communications, and advocacy
 - Building on the PARC Ambassadors program, a successful member leadership program, PARC and Greenest City are working together to develop a popular education approach to neighbourhood-wide leadership development program and activities (including Knowledge is Power, a City of Toronto Human Rights Award winning leadership development program)
 - Parkdale Project Read offers literacy programs for low-income and marginalized members
 - The Jeremiah Community is initiating a series of popular education modules with a focus on land and food
 - One of the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust's core objectives is public education on land use planning, neighbourhood change, and democratic participation
 - West Neighbourhood House conducts an annual neighbourhood-wide Community Sweep, a resident-led community engagement and outreach in several neighbourhoods including Parkdale.
-

Figure 17: The Community Land Trust model

WHAT IS A CLT? ▶ A Community Land Trust is a non-profit organization that owns land and puts it to use for community benefit.



7) Cultural development

Context: Diverse cultural production and heritages

Cross-cultural learning is an important part of building an inclusive and diverse neighbourhood. One of the recurring themes in the community planning process was the appreciation of socio-economic and cultural diversity in Parkdale. Parkdale also has a history of the influx of many artists attracted to affordable rent and diversity. At one point, it was anecdotally estimated that over 600 artists lived in the neighbourhood (Slater 2005). Parkdale has also been a settlement neighbourhood for immigrant members who have brought rich cultural heritages and practices to Parkdale. Now, the neighbourhood has a range of both professional and community-based cultural activities and programs.

Needs: Learning for mutual recognition and understanding beyond the divides

Through the community planning process, it has become clear that despite the proximity to cultural diversity in Parkdale, community members perceived that there are few opportunities for interaction and mutual learning among different socio-economic and cultural groups. This perception corresponds to the research finding that different community groups live “parallel but separate lives in Parkdale” with little engagement with each other (Mazer & Rankin 2011, p. 836). As neighbourhood change has progressed, a sense of social space among diverse community members has also changed (ibid.). The lack of public benches was raised in one focus group as an example of something that keeps people from fully participating in the local community. Some community members mentioned that they used to frequent affordable local businesses for coffee and a short break when they were shopping and walking around in the neighbourhood. This is important for seniors and people with mobility challenges. As these businesses have disappeared, however, these people have found the walkability and inclusivity of Parkdale has decreased as there are few public benches to sit on.

A range of challenges for promoting inclusive cultural development remain to be addressed. First, due to increasing rents for housing and studio spaces, long-term community-based artists have started to worry about whether they can afford to stay and work in Parkdale. Furthermore, the City of Toronto’s community consultation on art assets for Ward 14 (2014) identified the lack of affordable cultural space for youth, newcomers, and art incubation. In addition, the language barrier is identified by newcomer Tibetan members as an impediment to accessing resources and sharing their cultural heritages and activities.

Assets: Art and culture as a platform for community building

Increased social mix does not translate naturally into cross-cultural dialogues, mutual learning, and wider social networks. Intentional outreach efforts have to be made. It should be noted, however, that the lack of interaction is not a result of a lack of interest. Indeed, the community planning process encountered the strong desires from diverse community groups for understanding differences, creating more opportunities for mutual learning, and building common ground to work together to better the neighbourhood. Community cultural development offers a platform to encourage community building, learning, and collective expressions of community identities and visions. Parkdale has a range of cultural and art programs and activities. For example, Making Room Community Arts has been working in Parkdale, and many community-based groups also offer art-related programs.

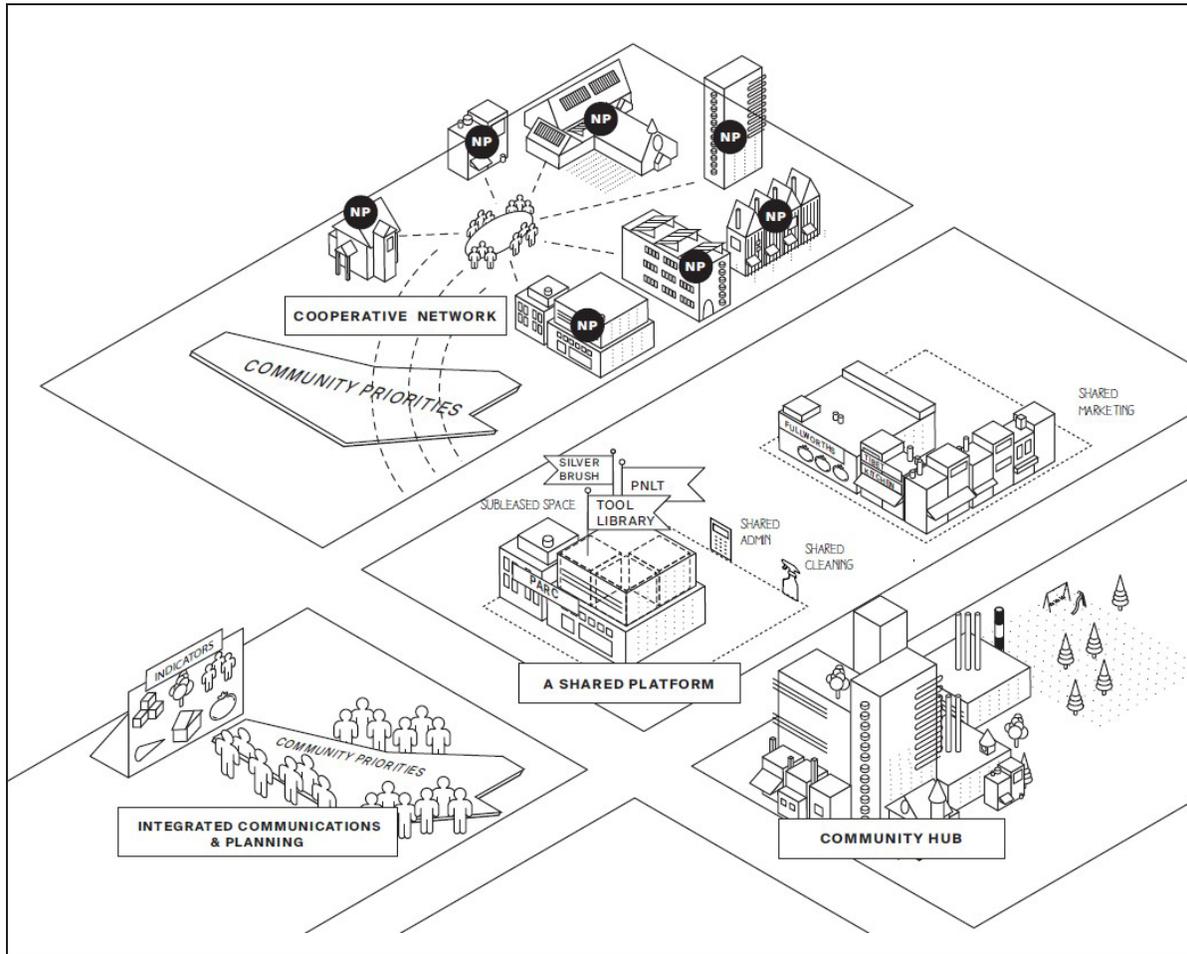
07 Directions for Decent Work, Shared Wealth, and Equitable Development



Based on the needs and assets assessment, this section outlines promising directions in each of the seven areas. A wide range of community groups, policy advocates, and researchers have recommended new policies to address: the need for predictable, long-term affordable housing funding and a national housing strategy; the removal of vacancy decontrols in the Residential Tenancies Act; the introduction of Inclusionary Zoning; social assistance program reform; increasing the minimum wage; and greater workplace safety, to name just a few. The PCED project echoes those recommendations. In this Planning report, however, we focus on unique directions for community action and policy options that have come out of the Parkdale's planning and research process.

1) Social infrastructure

Vision: Develop a sustainable and sufficient collaborative social infrastructure in Parkdale to enhance the overall wellbeing of community members and the neighbourhood



Direction 1: Leverage the Parkdale Neighbourhood Wellbeing Indicators for integrated communication and planning

Revenue and funding sources, staff increases, and the number of clients and members served – may be seen as an indicator of success. Yet alternative organizational models and indicators of success are needed to respond to changing demographic dynamics and community needs. As reviewed in the above, it is not necessarily organizational growth but organizational sustainability and collaboration that would be of critical importance to Parkdale. Harnessing the Parkdale Neighbourhood Wellbeing Indicators could offer the first step to respond to that need for alternative indicators and cross-organizational planning from the neighbourhood perspective. It would help establish new cross-organizational

communication, resource sharing, and priority setting from the neighbourhood perspective. This collaborative planning should also explore opportunities for bringing board directors from different organizations together to tap into community resources and expertise.

Direction 2: Develop a community service hub for co-location and service integration

A community hub is a shared physical space that enables a co-location and integration of multiple services and programs in one place. A community hub can enhance the access to multiple services for community members. Several organizations such as Parkdale Community Information Centre, Parkdale Intercultural Association, Parkdale Community Legal Services, and Kababayan Multicultural

Centre are currently exploring this idea as a way to address issues of tenure uncertainty, to enhance service coordination, and to reduce costs by sharing essential functions (reception, equipment, and so on). Parkdale Community Health Centre is also interested in the idea in order to accommodate growing health service needs.

This opportunity for a community hub has been highlighted by the provincial government's strong interest and expressed support, as in the recently released Community Hubs in Ontario: A Strategic Framework and Action Plan (2015). The above five organizations could consider working with the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust to identify potential sites for a community hub. For example, the intensification of public assets in Parkdale might furnish an opportunity (see Section 7, Direction 4 in Affordable housing and land use for more details). PARC's 1499 Queen Street West site functions as a community hub that co-locates 9 different organizations. PARC's experience can offer important insights into planning and management.

Direction 3: Build multiple shared platforms for different functions based on the strength of each organization

What are possible ways to promote greater coordination while ensuring the autonomy and sufficiency of individual organizations? How can we amplify the capacity and strength of each to build community strength? The shared platform approach enables "a platform organization [to] take care of the governance functions, as well as most of the human resources, finance and administrative work that can detract leaders from their mission and the communities they serve" (McIsaac 2014). In Parkdale, there are already some successful examples that we can build on. Working for Change administers and manages 5 separate social enterprises. PARC offers administrative support for two community organizations (Making Room Community Arts and Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust) while also expanding its capacity to act as a backbone organization for small-to-large scale collaborative initiatives, such as non-profit, sector-wide food procurement initiatives.

The shared platform approach would be critical to strengthen smaller community organizations and their senior staff's leadership capacity by removing administrative burdens but instead focusing their efforts on delivering their mission. In addition, what can be "shared" through a collaborative platform can go beyond administration and can be open to specific needs. For neighbourhood collaboration, there can be multiple shared platforms. Each of them may specialize in one or two functions for other organizations in the neighbourhood. For example, one agency could serve as a

shared platform for social enterprise management while another agency could be a backbone organization for property management. This type of collaboration could harness and share the strength of each organization. It is also suggested that this may help in measuring the combined impacts and outcomes of shared activities at the neighbourhood level.

Direction 4: Explore a cooperative network approach in which each organization works toward common goals as an integrated social infrastructure

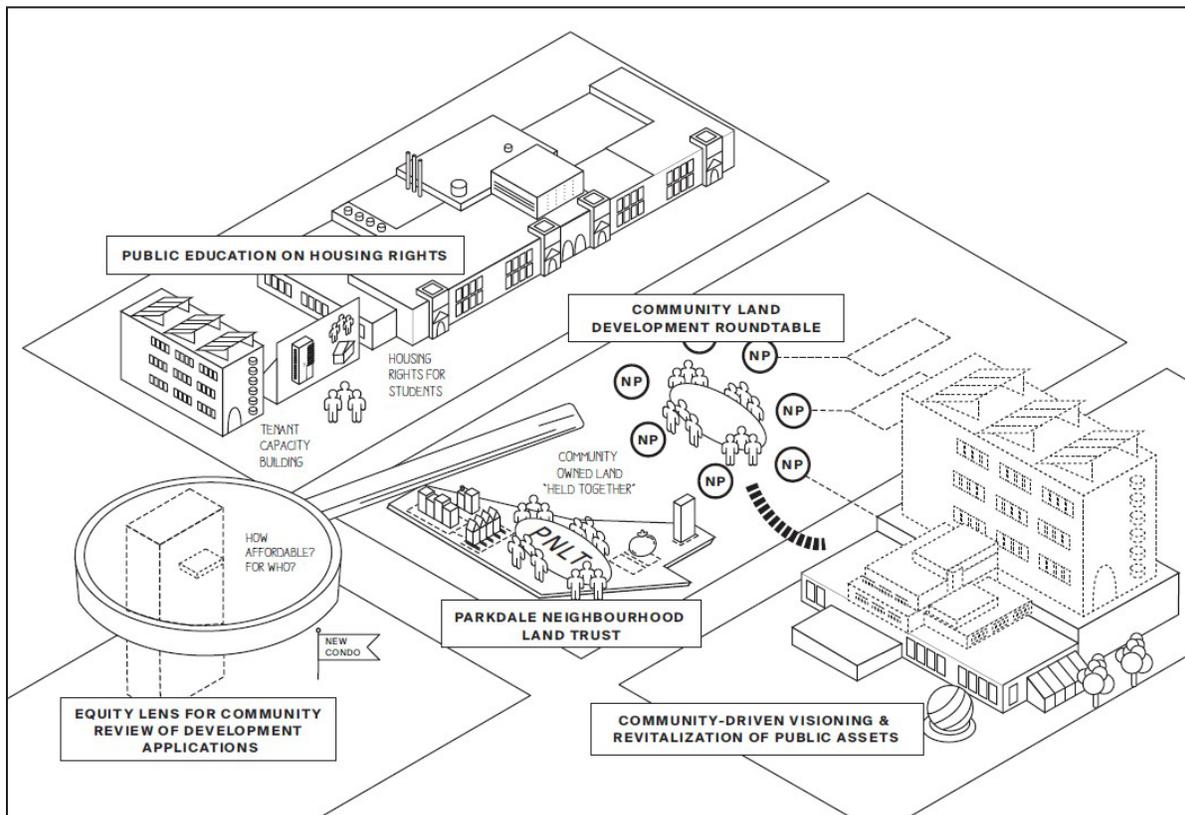
In order to avoid unintended "silo-ing" among multiple shared platforms, it would be necessary to develop an umbrella network for ongoing coordination and collaborative planning across the different functions and needs. The network approach would help each partner to take a unified approach to consider how each can play a certain role in advancing common goals at the neighbourhood level. Such a neighbourhood-wide coordinating body is important, as multiple directions presented in this report will need to be implemented as a concerted effort to build community wealth.

A cooperative network approach would further promote collective capacity building and organizing around equitable community economic development. In the community economic development field, there are some examples of intentional coordination and alignment with different organizations with the common goal of community economic development as a cooperative network, or an integrated system of different functions and strengths in a mutually reinforcing way (e.g. East Scarborough Storefront in Toronto, Mondragon in Spain, Evergreen Cooperative in Cleveland, and the Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative in New York). This area of work could be one of the core functions of a Parkdale's anchor agency through potential funding from the United Way.

2) Affordable housing and land use

Vision: Preserve and increase affordable, adequate, and supportive housing options for all residents in Parkdale through community-led land use planning that promotes development without displacement

a) Directions for the democratization of local land use planning



Directions for affordable housing foreground two broader objectives: a) the democratization of local land use planning (Directions 1-5) and b) a tandem strategy for development without displacement that simultaneously promotes various initiatives and policy for preserving and strengthening affordable housing (Directions 6-10).

Direction 1: Promote public education on housing rights and resident organizing

In light of the growing influence and control by corporate landlords in Parkdale, it is critical to support and build on organizing efforts by PCLS, Parkdale Organize and tenants, and to help expand their reach to those affected by rent increases, harassment, and lack of enforcement. Community consultation revealed that some tenants hesitate to join tenant organizing efforts out of fear of potential repercussions that may jeopardize their tenure and status; some are unaware of not only their rights but also resources and public

supports that they can use. These gaps indicate a need for strengthening community efforts in public education on housing rights and issues, as well as tenant organizing support.

Such outreach and education work also needs to be extended to rooming house tenants, social housing tenants, and future tenants such as youth who are about to enter complex housing systems. Each housing type requires the understanding of different housing rights and regulations. Clarifying these different rights is important for supporting tenant organizing. Furthermore, some newcomer youth are the only ones who can speak English in their family and so it is important to develop their knowledge of housing rights. Partnerships with local schools may be critical to reaching out to youth (as a part of the civics curriculum).

Public education on housing rights and issues was also identified by community members as a critical stepping stone to understanding individual issues in a systemic way at the

building, neighbourhood, and housing system levels. Systemic understanding of everyday issues can contribute to stronger organizing and policy advocacy (more discussion on leadership development is in the Local Participatory Democracy Direction 1). This effort could be pursued in tandem with the development of the City’s landlord licensing initiative. Meanwhile, the City should also initiate landlord education on tenant housing rights in addition to strengthened regular building inspections.

Direction 2: Embed the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust into a neighbourhood vision for land use and community development priorities

As noted in the above, one of the Parkdale’s critical assets is the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT), the first community-based land trust in Toronto. Currently PNLT is undertaking an organizational capacity building initiative and business planning. PNLT is developing a model based on “partnership.” In this model, PNLT focuses on the acquisition and long-term stewardship of land for community benefits such as affordable housing. While PNLT intends not to play a developer role, it works with partner organizations that will develop and operate affordable housing, promote community economic development, and manage urban agriculture and open space.

In this regard, PNLT’s unique contribution is to act as an intermediary, coordinating body. PNLT can convene stakeholders and partners – both from Parkdale and across the city – who can bring expertise and experience. Partners can benefit from this collaborative approach that shares the benefits, costs, and risks of real estate development and management. PNLT can also offer expertise and capacity in land acquisition and stewardship, mobilize community members through its neighbourhood-wide membership base. PNLT plays a vital role in promoting equitable development and shared wealth building through community ownership of land. Therefore, the goals and priorities of PNLT’s land acquisition and stewardship should be aligned with, embedded into, and strive to enhance overall neighbourhood visions and needs. As indicated in a range of Directions below, PNLT should work with partners for diverse needs and priorities for land use and development in Parkdale. In turn, community partners and stakeholders could explore working partnerships with PNLT.

Equally important is to embed the community land trust model into public policy and government’s affordable housing strategy to secure long-term affordable housing and community ownership of land. For example, the CLT can be

linked with public programs such as Inclusionary Zoning and rent supplement programs. Even though affordable housing units could be produced from inclusionary zoning, who manages them and how long housing units stay affordable would remain as a question. The CLT uses a ground lease agreement to oversee activities on the leased land and control housing resale prices, if sold. The CLT ensures that housing produced through public investment and programs will remain affordable for the long-term. The CLT can also facilitate the transfer of the ownership of surplus and underutilized public lands to community ownership and provide long-term monitoring and enforcement to preserve affordability and enhance community benefits.

Direction 3: Establish community land development roundtable to encourage proactive collaborative planning, information sharing and enhanced accountability among stakeholders

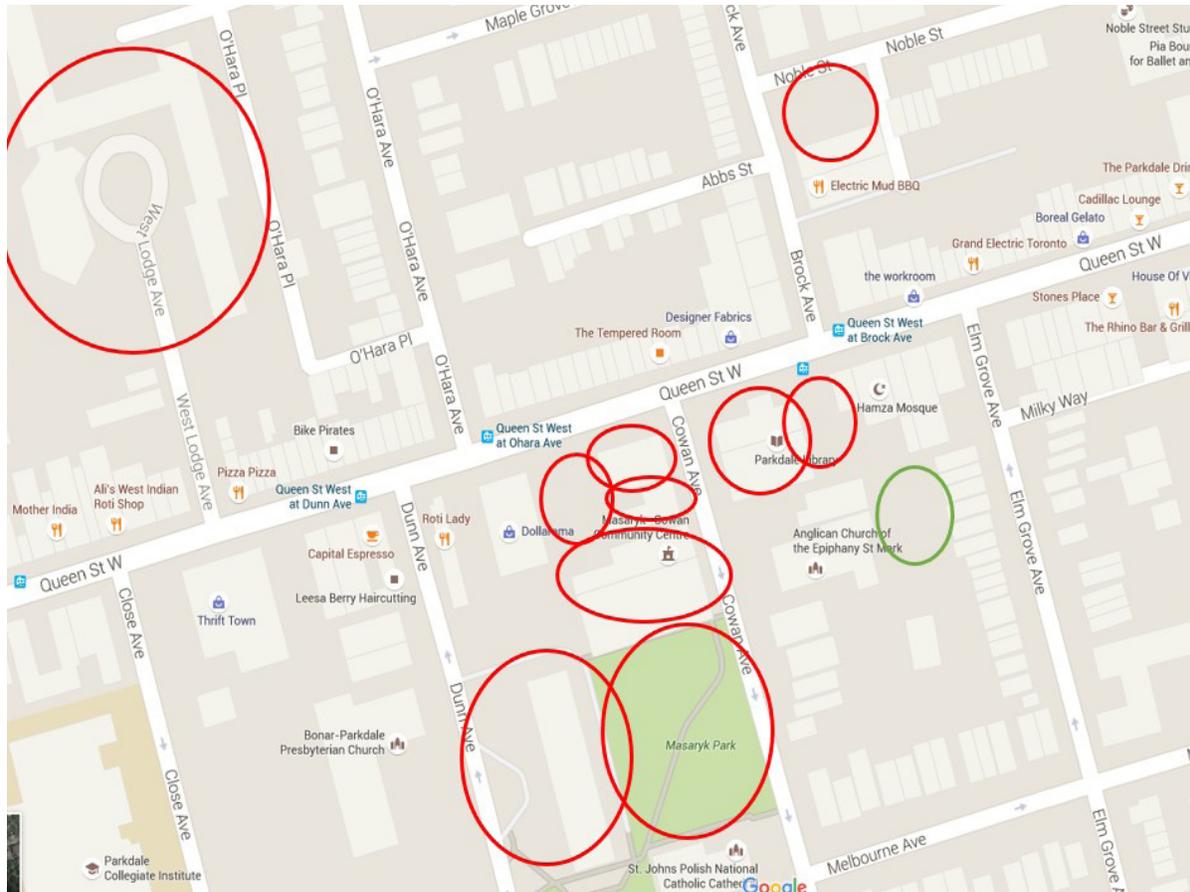
Different local stakeholders tend to have diverse – sometimes competing – plans, priorities, and needs for local land development. And yet, currently there is no mechanism to share information with each other. Information is so scattered that community groups find it difficult to pursue proactive planning. The effect of the absence of such mechanism is reflected in the recent new development of LCBO on Queen Street West for example.

To convene diverse local stakeholders is the first step for promoting a transparent dialogue on needs and strategies for land development and asset management for shared community benefits in Parkdale. The Community Land Development Roundtable thus aims to encourage proactive collaborative planning, information sharing about land use needs and priorities among diverse stakeholders – non-profit organizations, representatives from different divisions and departments at the City, and private real estate stakeholders (e.g. local realtors). This Roundtable could function as a way to keep different public institutions and stakeholders accountable to each other to serve local needs, and to actively review potential ways to intensify underutilized public assets – such as vertical infill development on single-storey, publicly owned buildings. To pilot this idea, Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust has received a small grant through the City’s Strong Neighbourhood Strategy.

Direction 4: Initiate community-driven visioning and revitalization of public assets for vertical intensification

Recently, increasing attention has been given to emphasizing the use of surplus public lands for affordable housing development (e.g. the City’s Open Door program). However,

Map 6: A concentration of publicly held assets around Queen West and Brock/Cowan Ave



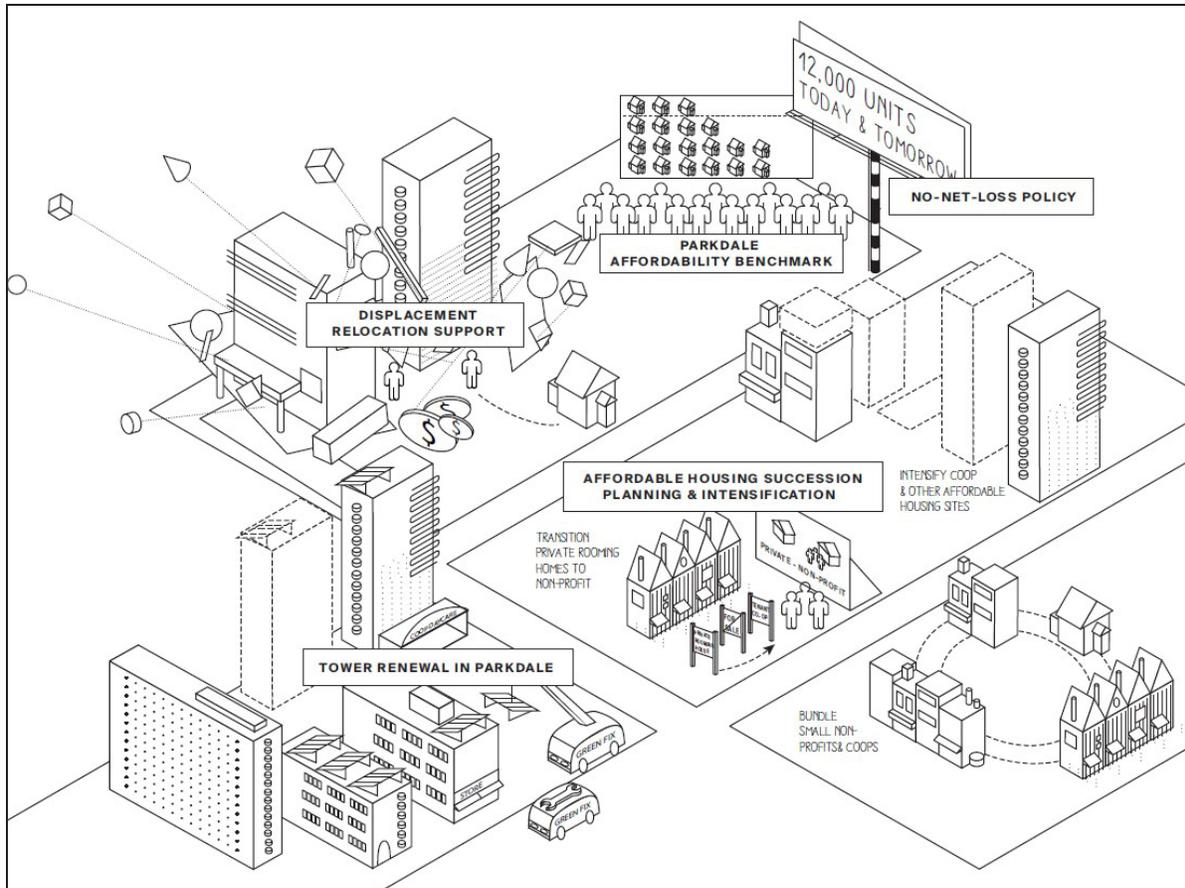
(Source: Google Map)

the utilization of public assets should not be limited to “surplus” public lands, but should include underutilized public assets for community benefits. In Parkdale, for example, as shown on Map 6, the area around Queen Street West and Brock/Cowan Avenues has a concentration of public assets. A former LCBO site at 11 Brock Ave has been purchased by the City and is slated for redevelopment that would include affordable housing and parking. It should be noted that some of those public assets – a Parkdale Library – are located on Queen Street West, designated as Avenues in Toronto’s Official Plan for intensification with 5-6 story mid-rise buildings. They are currently only 1-2 storey buildings. Thus, they present unique opportunities for vertical infill intensification (see for example Oleson 2014). For example, in North York, the 15-storey Stanley Knowles Cooperative (103 units) is on top of the public library. Some TCH buildings also present opportunities for infill development on open space. Taken together, the community-driven revitalization of public assets possesses a tremendous opportunity for advancing equitable development in Parkdale.

One difficulty in pursuing a coordinated approach in Parkdale is that different public assets are owned by different public/city divisions (such as the Library Board, Toronto Community Housing, Toronto Parking Authority, Parks and Recreation, and so on). The aforementioned Community Land Development Roundtable will serve as a local planning body for cross-divisional dialogue and conversation. The Roundtable should organize a community visioning session for the future of those public assets that can be used for a wide range of community benefits including affordable housing, community space, and the development of a community service hub and cultural production space. Community-driven visioning and planning to identify local needs for public assets is timely as the City is also undertaking a Citywide Real Estate Review.

Of course, public assets are not limited to the area around Brock and Queen. Community groups should monitor any activity and plan for redevelopment on public assets. For example, it may be

b) Directions for development without displacement



opportune to revisit a proposed idea of the Parkdale Deck, “a proposal to create 17 hectares (42 acres) of new land between the southern edge of South Parkdale and Lakeshore Boulevard West and between Dufferin Street and Dowling Avenue, by decking over the railway corridor and Gardiner Expressway” (City of Toronto 1999). Furthermore, when public assets are to be sold, the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust can also offer long-term public asset management strategies. PNLT can facilitate the transfer of the ownership of surplus and underutilized public lands, provide long-term monitoring and enforcement to preserve affordability, and ensure use of lands for public benefits such as affordable housing while reducing the administrative burden on the public sector.

Direction 5: Enforce the equity lens in all land use decision-making and development application review in Parkdale (Policy option)

The City of Toronto adopted the equity lens as “a practical tool that helps to ensure City policies and programs result in

equitable outcomes for all residents” (City of Toronto 2009). Currently the application and implementation of this lens is inconsistent across different divisions, including the City Planning Division. The inclusion of the equity lens in its assessment of the impacts of development should be mandatory for planning and development decisions, and include “an Equity Impact Assessment.” This would also include estimated costs of both direct and indirect displacement as a basis of community benefits contributions, on top of Section-37 where applicable, that should go to an affordable housing fund or anti-displacement measures.

Direction 6: Strengthen relocation support and proactive response to mitigate the negative impact of displacement (Policy option)

For the foreseeable future, unfortunately, displacement of vulnerable community members through the closure of rooming houses is expected to continue in the absence of rooming house tenant protection as well as the lack of clarity on the application of the City’s rental housing protection

bylaw to rooming houses (often evaluated on a case-by-case basis). As demonstrated above, displacement of people with poor health is also a public health concern. A more proactive, coordinated approach is needed to prevent displacement and mitigate effects of displacement and the risk of homelessness for vulnerable tenants. To achieve this goal, a public policy response in coordination with community partners is imperative. In fact, this type of response is aligned with an action direction in the recently adopted Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy: “develop more integrated housing stabilization supports for people discharged from other service systems and in crisis situations (City of Toronto 2015e, p. 15), as well as the City SSHA’s Housing Stability Service Planning Framework (City of Toronto 2013a).

There are four responses proposed from community consultation and research to mitigate pressures and effects of displacement.

- a) It is important for the City and community-based partners to collaboratively strengthen and enforce ongoing monitoring of rooming houses and other private affordable housing units in Parkdale (see Direction 8: Affordability Benchmark). Ongoing monitoring would enable early interventions to prevent eviction and displacement, or at least to provide sufficient time for relocation (see also Direction 7: succession planning and Inspiring example 1: Bay Area’s CLTs).
- b) Some participants in the community planning process noted the need for safe emergency shelters to avoid the risk of homelessness as well as people being cut-off from safety and social networks.
- c) Other participants also advocated that costs of relocation should be compensated adequately through housing vouchers and subsidies that cover rents and moving costs. Currently, the Housing Stabilization Fund – although its application to a case of eviction is assessed on a case-by-case basis – only covers up to \$1,600 (up to \$800 for rent and moving costs and up to \$800 for household items). This is inadequate given high market rental costs. A comprehensive compensation and relocation support package should be provided. Funding for this could be covered by levies from the land transfer tax where that housing is sold to a private developer or a new homeowner.
- d) In the case of displacement from redevelopment, the City should assess the full social equity impact (e.g. health and relocation impacts) and calculate fees that developers and landlords have to contribute (see Direction 5: The equity lens for land use planning).

Direction 7: Preserve and strengthen affordable housing through succession planning, bundle-up, and intensification

Relocation support is critical but still results in the net loss of affordable housing units (Phillips, Flores, & Henderson 2015). The preservation of those affordable housing units and/or their transfer to non-profit ownership is necessary. Of critical importance in the current context of real estate-driven city planning and decision-making is a proactive, community-led approach to land acquisition and redevelopment for community benefits. Community consultation and key informant interviews alike suggested that opportunities may lie in developing relationships with sympathetic local landlords and supporting their succession planning in order to retain affordable housing in Parkdale.

Non-profit housing agencies, unlike private developers and investors, require sufficient time to build readiness, resources and sustainable financial strategies to undertake major housing projects. If enough time for preparation, advance planning, and resource development is secured, non-profit organizations may be able to explore a range of options with sympathetic owners to retain those houses before they sell it on the open market. Some may be willing to look for workable options that allow their housing to remain as affordable housing or a benefit to the community. In addition, proactive acquisition and redevelopment of existing affordable housing should be linked with decent work generation through energy efficient retrofit (see Decent Work Direction 7 for more details).

Different housing types call for different succession planning and strategies to ensure project viability. There are two common challenges. First, even if opportunities for partnerships with local landlords for potential land acquisition emerge, do non-profit players have enough capacity to pursue those opportunities given the lack of predictable public funding? It is not easy to overcome without long-term government commitment to affordable housing, but as in Direction 2 outlined above, Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust and non-profit housing organizations should partner and develop collective strategies to share internal resources, networks, and equity for collaborative responses (also innovative funding and financing mechanisms are also necessary to bridge this gap; see more in Direction 3 in Community Financing). Second, although charitable community organizations can issue tax receipts for the donation of lands or negotiate purchases at below-market rates, private owners have to incur capital gains tax, which functions as a disincentive compared to the option to sell properties to private developers at market rate (Black 2012).

Stand-alone, low-density scattered houses

As noted earlier, the succession of rooming and boarding homes has been an issue in Parkdale. Many rooming houses and boarding homes are low-density scattered houses. As pointed out in the section above, these housing types are increasingly difficult and expensive to operate as affordable housing due to lack of economies of scale. Succession planning and acquisition of stand-alone, low-density scattered sites, therefore, requires creative strategies to enhance the effectiveness and feasibility of small affordable housing projects. One such strategy is to increase existing density by intensifying the use of land and buildings. For example, a “tiny home” was proposed from the community consultation, a small house that can be built in a large backyard, alley, or laneway. A similar idea is being explored by a community land trust in south Los Angeles through a Community Mosaic Project that aims to acquire low-density single family houses and create double density by adding another structure in the backyard of single-family properties.

Another strategy is a bundle approach. Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust is exploring an acquisition approach that would bundle small single-family and multi-family homes to develop a robust, phased-in acquisition strategy to reach a critical mass of properties and ensure financial sustainability in the long run. The bundle-up approach would also generate opportunities for cross-subsidization across different low-density affordable housing sites with varying degree of

affordability. This strategy would also allow a gradual growth with lower upfront risks. This bundle-up strategy is important to Parkdale, which has a range of scattered affordable housing – rooming houses, Toronto Community Housing single family homes, and University Health Network’s scattered housing sites. In particular, TCH stand-alone homes might be at risk given a possible restructuring of TCH. Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust could take a lead in exploring this idea in partnership with local agencies such as Habitat Services, Regeneration Community Services, PARC, PCLS, and realtors who have relationships with local landlords.

Mid-rise apartment housing

A target for succession planning intervention does not have to be limited to single-family types of housing, but should include other vulnerable properties such as mid-rise apartment buildings and commercial buildings that include housing units on commercial streets. Those mid-rise buildings on Avenues (Queen Street West and some parts of King Street West) are under pressures of potential redevelopment. Conversely these may be opportunities to increase affordable rental housing options through intensification. In addition, the intensification strategy can be applied to existing social housing. For example, Parkdale has a total of 250 cooperative housing units. After the mortgage is paid in full and the operating agreement ends, cooperative housing providers could reinvest their equity and assets for further expansion including the redevelopment of existing buildings to increase affordable units (Iler Campbell 2013).

Inspiring example 1: Preventing displacement and claiming community ownership by community land trusts in the Bay Area

In 2014, San Francisco CLT worked with a private landlord and acquired fourteen units of shared housing in Mission District and is helping tenants turn it into a resident-run cooperative housing. Their acquisition effort has been boosted by the City of San Francisco’s Small Site Acquisition program, a low-cost loan program for land acquisition of small-scale properties for non-profit and cooperative housing. Funding for this program comes from both Housing Trust Fund revenues and affordable housing fees paid by housing developers in San Francisco (City of San Francisco 2014). Using this program, San Francisco Community Land Trust with the Mission Economic Development Agency has recently purchased 5 multi-unit buildings to prevent eviction and displacement (Dudnick 2016). Based on a similar approach, Oakland Community Land Trust is also developing an acquisition strategy and partnership model, called the Resident Operated Nonprofit (RON). In this model, residents work with the community land trust to remove their building from the market and work to ensure that it will remain affordable in perpetuity. Tenants are consulted to determine rent roles, loan taken out based on current rent, gap filled by low interest loans from special City Fund to save small rental buildings.

High-rise apartment housing

The affordability of high-rise apartment buildings is highly vulnerable in Parkdale, and they are under pressures of further acquisition by corporate landlords. The need for protecting high-rise affordable housing options is high, although the acquisition and/or the transfer to non-profit ownership is particularly challenging given an expected higher cost for purchase and a barrier posed by capital gain tax (Black 2012). And yet, an opportunity lies in its scale that can achieve necessary economies of scale for social, affordable, and supportive housing projects. To tap into this potential, some non-profit housing developers and providers in Toronto are increasingly interested in high-rise housing (re)development. For example, Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust and St. Clare's Multifaith Housing Society are collaboratively exploring this option. Two approaches could be explored. One is to identify family-owned high-rise apartments and work with their landlords who may not have a succession plan. The other is to explore infill development opportunities on underutilized open space within high-rise apartment buildings. There are several buildings that present such opportunities in Parkdale including TCH. Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust should work with non-profit housing developers, existing tenant groups, and the City's Tower Renewal Office to advance this direction.

Direction 8: Create Parkdale affordability benchmark to keep track of changes in the number of affordable housing, set goals for preservation, and detect early signs of displacement pressures

In the affordable housing debate, much attention is usually given to new construction of affordable housing. Equally important is the preservation of existing affordable housing units. Parkdale has seen the ongoing loss of existing affordable housing units through renovation, reconversion, demolition, rent increases, and expiring subsidies. It is, however, difficult to gauge the degree to which Parkdale is losing affordable housing in relation to the overall neighbourhood affordability. In the context of limited supply of social and private rental housing, the impact of the loss of existing units is considerable. Continued loss of existing affordable housing units contributes to ongoing displacement pressures – tenants' loss of social networks and access to social support and homelessness prevention programs, resulting in an increasing socio-spatial inequality. The first step to mitigate the impact of net loss is to develop a benchmark, a database with which we can keep track of changes in available affordable housing units and displacement. This database should be part of the Parkdale

Neighbourhood Wellbeing Indicators. This will also help Parkdale set goals and strategies for preservation while also helping to better understanding of the impact of any new public/private investment in affordable housing. The Parkdale affordability benchmark should:

- Develop a made-in-Parkdale affordability standard (e.g. based on 60-80% of Area Median Income rather than 80% of average market rents) against which to assess changes in affordable housing
- Identify sources of subsidies and funding as well as any expiration dates of subsidies where applicable to detect early warning of affordable housing at risk
- Include not just affordable units but also market-rate units in order to allow for understanding overall trends in the housing system in relation to an affordability benchmark.
- Document early signs and effects of displacement through qualitative interviews

Including qualitative data such as stories and reports from tenants facing rent increases and displacement pressures would complement statistical data of affordability. Statistical data only shows results of loss of affordability and displacement, while early warning signs experienced by residents important for early interventions to prevent displacement (Marcuse 1984). The scope of the affordability benchmark should be developed by community-based agencies and residents, while the City's Strong Neighbourhood Strategy team should lead data collection, ongoing updates, and monitoring, as one of its mandates is inter-divisional and inter-governmental coordination. Furthermore, an effort to develop such data should be accompanied by the development of a local housing registry. The registry should include such data as the number of units, rent level of units, household size and subsidy type (if applicable). This work could go hand in hand with the proposed landlord licencing requirement. Some US cities such as Portland, Oregon used this type of benchmark information to develop a No Net Loss Policy to preserve existing affordable housing units.

Direction 9: Advocate a No-Net-Loss Policy for Parkdale to protect and maintain a current level of affordable housing (Policy option)

A No-Net-Loss Policy offers a systemic, coordinated approach to protect and maintain affordable housing units at the current level without net loss. Toronto's Official Plan has a policy to protect rental housing from demolition and

conversion to non-residential use. The No-Net-Loss policy would build on and extend the current rental housing protection and replacement bylaw in the Official Plan. This policy option would address critical gaps, such as rental housing with fewer than 6 units and rooming houses. The current policy does not address the loss of affordable rental housing because of rent increases (e.g. the loss of rent controlled units due to vacancy decontrol). In addition, currently the applicability of the rental housing protection bylaw to rooming houses and bachelorettes is assessed on a case-by-case basis because some rooming houses do not conform to a definition of a dwelling unit that is subject to the bylaw. This inconsistency makes it difficult to retain and replace those affordable housing units when rooming houses are closed, resulting in displacement of vulnerable tenants.

Furthermore, a variety of affordable housing projects and units are funded and subsidized by multiple programs and different levels of government – such as RGI units in private apartments funded by the City, cooperative housing funded by the federal government, and supportive housing funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the City through Habitat Services. Currently there is no systemic way to mitigate the impact of the loss of affordable rental units on overall neighbourhood affordability. It is important to coordinate diverse approaches to retaining those housing types, and to develop a concerted response to replace them to maintain the socio-economic and cultural diversity in case of the loss of affordable housing units. With the affordability benchmark, the No-Net-Loss Policy should set a preservation target for the neighbourhood.

The effectiveness of No-Net-Loss policy can be enhanced by the following policy measures.

- a) Stipulate the first right of refusal for affordable housing projects that receive public subsidies: non-profit social housing providers enter into agreement with the City of Toronto to receive RGI subsidies, one that stipulates the prioritization of the sale of properties to non-profits and charities. This is not the case for private landlords who receive RGI subsidies from the City. After the termination of the agreement, private landlords need to house existing tenants at the same RGI level. And yet there is no guarantee that tenants would not face eviction pressures. Furthermore, this housing can be sold at the full market rate. This policy should be put in place so as to recycle long-term public investment in private housing as well as retain the number of RGI units in Parkdale.
- b) Create a low-cost loan program for land acquisition and management of small-scale properties for non-profit and

cooperative housing. Currently there is no such thing available. This would remove one barrier to facilitate the transfer of private ownership of land to non-profit and cooperative ownership (including the community land trust). The City of San Francisco created the Small Site Acquisition program in 2014 to protect low-income tenants from displacement. The introduction of a similar program to retain rooming houses could enhance the City of Toronto's current program for Repair & Renovation Funding for Rooming Houses & Similar Accommodations with Single Room Occupancy.

- c) Introduce tax and revenue generating tools to fund anti-displacement measures and resources for ongoing inspection and enforcement such as levies on property tax and land transfer tax on high-rise apartments and licensed rooming houses. See Direction 4 in Community Financing section for more details.
- d) Change in capital gain tax: Currently, property owners incur taxes on capital gain when they sell and/or donate their properties. This tax rule acts as a disincentive for owners to sell and donate lands to non-profit organizations for affordable housing development, even if non-profit organizations with charitable status can issue tax receipts. This barrier does not exist in the United States. The Federal government waves capital gains tax when lands are sold and/or donated to charitable non-profit organizations including CLTs for affordable housing.

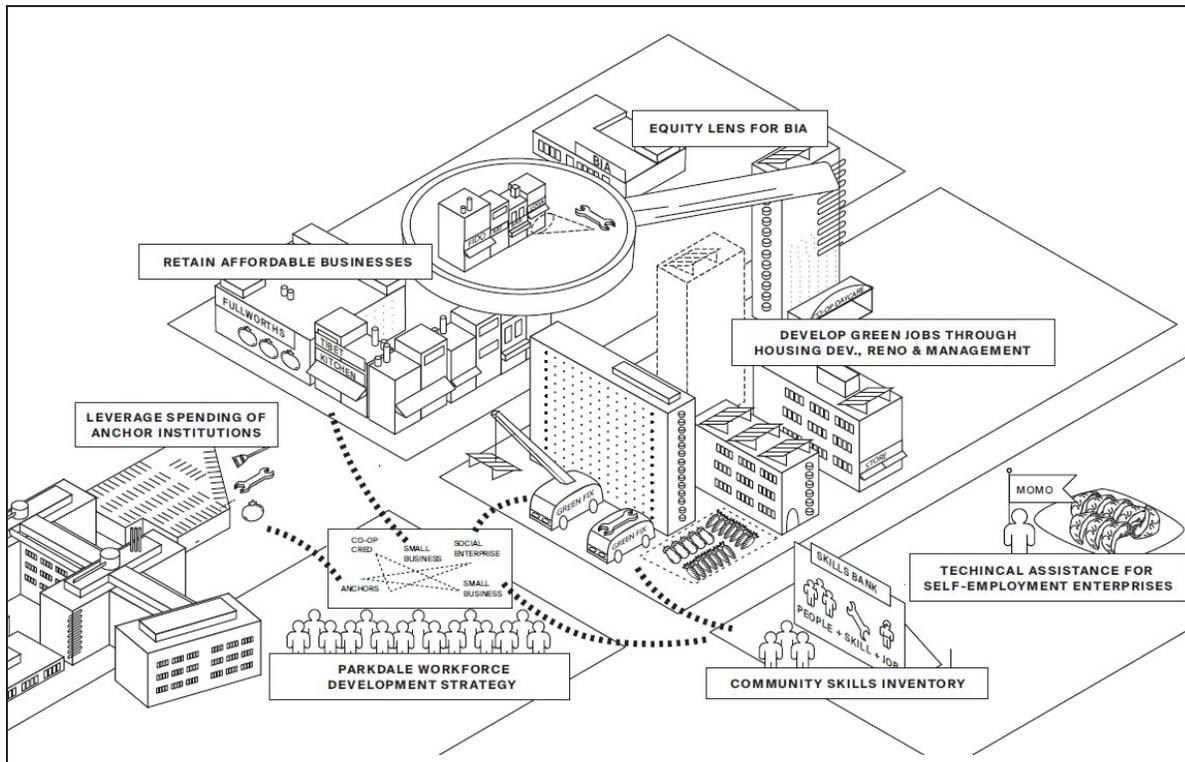
Direction 10: Extend the Tower Renewal mandate to protect existing affordable high-rise apartment buildings (Policy option)

Although not commonly referred to as such, Parkdale is a Tower neighbourhood. Mid-century mid-rise and high-rise apartments are under pressure of rent increases and aggressive acquisition from corporate landlords. If we take into consideration that those apartment buildings were built under the Federal Limited Dividend program, public subsidies for building private rental apartments for low-and moderate income people (Young 1987), it is in public interest to protect the legacy of public investment and tower apartments as affordable rental housing as intended. Furthermore, given the limited supply of new purpose-built rental apartments as well as lack of rent control on rental units built after 1991, protecting post-war purpose-built apartments becomes far more important. One of the reasons landlords claim above guideline rent increases is that they are needed to undertake necessary repairs and building upgrades – although these were often cosmetic façade

improvements without addressing core housing needs. Costs of such improvements are downloaded to tenants in the form of rent increases. The Tower Renewal program offers favourable financing options and a High-rise Retrofit Improvement Support program; the City should make an intervention with those tools to encourage landlords to undertake necessary repairs and energy efficiency and conservation improvements in exchange for the restriction on above guideline rent increase (currently implemented) as well as the agreement to maintain affordable rent levels even after current tenants vacate units (a rent increase cap agreement).

3) Decent work and inclusive local economic opportunities

Vision: Increase community influence and ownership over economic resources to create decent work, establish pathways to inclusive economic opportunities, and keep money flowing back into the community



Direction 1: Develop a community skills inventory as a neighbourhood-based portal to match community members' skills and work aspirations with local work needs, training and mentorship opportunities

Community members stressed the value of the skills and unique experience that people already possess to make vital contributions to local economies. Yet, some community members indicated that local employment centres introduced few local work opportunities. Meanwhile, non-profit community organizations and local businesses are interested in exploring possible contributions to creating local decent work opportunities. Some of them have already generated such local work opportunities, although the focus group held with agency staff identified the difficulty they face with finding appropriate candidates for those opportunities. To bridge these gaps, developing a community skills inventory was recommended through the community planning process. This inventory can serve as a neighbourhood-based portal to match community members' skills and work aspirations with local work needs and training opportunities. The

community-based portal would help build connections with local employers and neighbourhood-based data on workforce. For community organizations, this inventory could also enable them to identify emerging and existing learning needs to develop training and apprenticeship opportunities.

In addition, the portal should include the needs and availability of mentorship opportunities. Mentorship does not guarantee employment, but people in recovery and skilled immigrants are looking for such opportunities to explore career opportunities, develop social and professional networks, and build personal development paths. Through the community planning process, some of residents with professional experience and connections expressed their interest in offering mentorship opportunities, because they are also looking for volunteer opportunities to contribute to community development. Local employment agencies (e.g. Toronto Employment & Social Services) should work with community agencies and the Parkdale Village BIA to pursue partnerships with local businesses and non-profit agencies.

Direction 2: Integrate the equity lens into the priorities and practices of the Parkdale Village BIA

Community members emphasized the importance of local-serving businesses that meet their day-to-day needs. They were concerned about the declining number of those businesses replaced by higher-end restaurants and bars. Thus, they recommended that the Parkdale BIA increase their efforts to support those local serving businesses. This is one example where the Parkdale BIA can strengthen its role and commitment in equitable economic development. As a city-funded agency – based on municipal levies on commercial property taxes – the Parkdale BIA should integrate the city’s equity lens to emphasize equitable outcomes of business development and BIA’s programs and investment. The following are several examples of equity-based interventions that the BIA could implement to ensure diversity, affordability, inclusion, and equity on the commercial strip:

- Increase social media campaign and communications efforts that target long-time, local-serving, or immigrant-owned businesses that may not have social media skills of their own. This is built on the Parkdale BIA’s remarkable strengths in online communications, community event planning, and place-making. While community members expressed their willingness to support them, they noted that they do not have enough information about local businesses – their unique histories, community roles, and challenges and aspirations, some of which are invisible by just passing by those businesses.
- Reactivate the BIA’s community engagement committee. The committee should include a diverse representation of community residents and stakeholders from the neighbourhood. This committee can strengthen connections with a wide range of community residents, community agencies, and local businesses. Another important function would be to promote community-based responses to safety concerns by collaborating with community agencies, rather than relying on police intervention. This intervention is of critical importance as the business owners we surveyed identified the issue of crime and security as a top concern for their businesses.
- Allocate a certain percentage of the BIA budget for social procurement (e.g. the prioritization of hiring local social enterprises). As one key informant identified, the budget could grow as commercial property values increase due to gentrification. How the BIA is funded is an important way to capture and retain value appreciation locally. Reinvesting a certain percentage of the BIA budget in

community benefits is an effective, fair way of redistributing benefits of neighbourhood improvement.

- Initiate a local decent work campaign. The increase of restaurants and bars raises a concern not only about the commercial mix but also about health and safety for workers. PCLS has received an increasing number of complaints about working conditions in restaurants and food services (not just in Parkdale). A local decent work campaign encourages and supports the businesses that comply with Accessibility requirement and Employment Standards and Occupational Health and Safety regulations (just like TPH’s DineSafe food safety inspection).
- Attract and advocate new small businesses that offer the types, services, and hiring that are identified as “local-serving” and “community benefits” (see Direction 4)

Direction 3: Protect affordable commercial spaces to achieve a commercial mix built on socio-economic and cultural diversity

The recent Parkdale restaurant study resulted in the bylaw that places the 25% cap on the percentage of restaurants and bars (City of Toronto 2013d). While this bylaw is an innovative measure to control commercial mix, it can only address mix by function not by socio-economic and cultural diversity. It leaves important questions unanswered: what should make up the rest of 75%? How does the 25% cap ensure whether local restaurant options remain accessible and affordable to diverse community members in Parkdale? These questions should be addressed through community-wide engagement and visioning for the future of Parkdale’s commercial strip. Such an opportunity may lie in the ongoing City’s Queen West Street Study. This study furnishes a venue for exploring policy options and planning tools. Some of the local-serving requirements may be put in place as possible outcomes of the study.

Research on commercial changes in Toronto (e.g. Rankin, Kamizaki, McLean 2015) suggests that affordable commercial spaces in gentrifying neighbourhoods will not be protected without organized community response and planning intervention. There are several proposed interventions that encourage the use of commercial space for community needs and protect affordable commercial spaces for decent work and inclusive economies:

- Access to affordable, local-serving commercial space is linked with the physical size of retail spaces. For start-up businesses (depending on business type), smaller footprints are favourable to reduce rents and lower
-

upfront risks. Ensuring smaller footprints is also used as a way to discourage the move-in of corporate chain businesses but encourage local small businesses. It is also important to protect existing commercial spaces with smaller footprints from block consolidation and redevelopment. This zoning strategy is critical as Queen Street West is designated as Avenues for intensification.

- In Palm Beach, Florida, “neighbourhood-serving” zoning was introduced to retain local businesses that meet community needs of residents, rather than attract tourists, through regulating the size and use type of retail; applicants for permit need to demonstrate how their businesses meet local needs (Pratt Institute 2008)
- The application of the community land trust to commercial purposes. Traditionally, the CLT focuses on affordable housing, while more CLTs are expanding their capacity to acquire and steward commercial properties to pursue a comprehensive community development approach. Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust is also exploring this idea.
- A tax rebate program for commercial landlords who lease retail spaces to local-serving businesses with an agreement only to increase rents in a gradual manner. Also a commercial tax reduction for a portion of footprint leased/rented to charitable and non-profit organizations (including social enterprises with charitable status or trustee by a charity)
- Activating underutilized spaces is another strategy. Some examples include (but are not limited to) a basement of 1313 Queen Street West, local churches, and long-term vacant/abandoned storefronts. In partnership with the City of Toronto’s Tower Renewal program, it is possible to explore underutilized ground floor spaces and open spaces (through a business-in-box type of interventions) for business incubation. These affordable spaces can help realize the potential and aspirations of some community groups – such as for Tibetan seniors to do a small scale sewing and shoe/carpet making as a cooperative work space; cooperative/social enterprise child care for immigrant parents (one of the housing coops is interested in this idea by leveraging their equity).

Inspiring example 2: Equitable commercial development in New Orleans

The Crescent City Community Land Trust (CCCLT) is a community land trust in New Orleans. Their unique strength and focus is the application of the CLT model to commercial development. Their effort came out of the need for a more equitable form of neighbourhood revitalization after the Hurricane Katrina. As a CLT is a land stewardship organization for community benefits, the key question for the CCCLT was to address what types of projects could constitute commercial stewardship that would achieve and ensure community benefit. To this end, they conducted an extensive community visioning and market research. Their market analysis identified the following four community benefits:

- 1) Type A: Catalyzing critical community services, including fresh food stores or non-profit health clinics.
- 2) Type B: Bringing back commercial corridors: the community benefit goal of this type is to eliminate blight and provide high-quality commercial and mixed-use development.
- 3) Type C: Deep development for low-wealth business: partnering with a business development organization that has an existing client base of low-wealth businesses, in order to provide tailored retail space appropriate to the client base in cost, design, and maintenance required.
- 4) Type D: Retaining existing business through shared-equity solutions: strengthening existing community-member owned small businesses through a shared equity commercial property ownership model.

These four types of community benefits are informed by five goals:

- 1) Job creation and community workforce agreements.
- 2) Workforce development in property management.
- 3) Place-based strategies that incorporate affordable housing and commercial development.
- 4) Acting as an advocate for quality, affordable development.
- 5) Creating a sustainable, diverse, and equitable future.

(Selected excerpts from the study, Miller Urban Consulting 2013, pp. 2-3):

Direction 4: Define community benefits and local-serving in commercial development to prioritize equitable interventions and business support

In relation to the proposed planning interventions noted above, community visioning needs to address a vexing question: how do we define “local-serving businesses”, “affordability” and “community benefits” in the context of commercial development and stewardship. When it comes to affordable housing, an income is often used as a major indicator to assess need. In case of commercial space, the income of businesses is an important but weak indicator to assess local needs and community benefits, because different business types have different revenue margins (e.g. food services are often described as low-margin). In addition, locational factors influence the success of businesses, although depending on types.

Furthermore, defining the affordability of businesses is a particularly challenging task. Prices of products and services cannot be set by community needs alone, but should be based on business sustainability. Prices may be subject to external costs such as increased rents and ingredients. Thus, ensuring business affordability would require other measures such as rent stabilization. The Crescent City Community Land Trust in New Orleans developed an innovative approach to defining community benefits through commercial development and stewardship. Their approach should be instructive to Parkdale. The effort to define and advocate community benefits should be pursued in relation to the overall Community Benefit Framework development (Direction 3 in Participatory Democracy).

Direction 5: Create a technical assistance program and information for enterprise development, business management, and self-employment

While including risks and challenges for ensuring long-term decent work, support for enterprise development and self-employment remains an important area for consideration. For example, a small business may be a good option for immigrants who want to utilize their skills and knowledge or for people who have finished training and apprenticeships. From the community consultation, several opportunities and aspirations were also identified for starting new (social) enterprises and/or expanding existing enterprises, such as a shoemaking and carpet making cooperative by Tibetan seniors, a cooperative childcare for low-income parents, food-growing and processing enterprises (see more details on Directions 3 and 4 in Food Security section)

Currently, some informal peer-to-peer support for business development and management exists. For example, in order to develop a food social enterprise, Working for Change has received business and technical advice from a local business in Parkdale. However, there is no coordinated approach to support small business development and self-employment in Parkdale. This gap was raised in the community planning process by newcomer members. Because of the lack of experience and knowledge of the context of Canadian business, they have faced difficulties navigating complex regulations, how to value their labour, and how to set appropriate prices for their products.

In addition, as the community-based research project led by West Neighbourhood House identifies, more and more workers are drawn into informal economies such as self-employment and informal businesses (SCH 2009). These informal economic activities are often characterized by the flexibility but the precariousness (e.g. the lack of protection, potential exploitation, and inconsistent insecurity). One of the key recommendations from the WNH’s study is to pursue a “harm reduction approach” to reduce risks and harms of informal economic activities in a progressive and respectful manner. This approach include measures and actions from increasing access to information and offering financial literacy and services to public policy changes and worker protection.

There is a pressing need for offering technical and financial advice for enterprise development and self-employment. For example, local BIAs and Toronto Employment & Social Services, with support from the City’s BIA office, could collaborate with local partners and sympathetic business owners to offer start-up enterprise support and technical assistance to local residents who want to start new enterprises or stabilize existing ones. This direction is aligned with a recently proposed program to promote economic revitalization in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (City of Toronto 2015d). For example, one of the strategies in the equitable development phase is immigrant entrepreneurial leadership training workshop. The business support function can be expanded through using a shared administration platform for small businesses to aggregate administration, HR, marketing, and financial management.

Direction 6: Link housing development and management with decent work

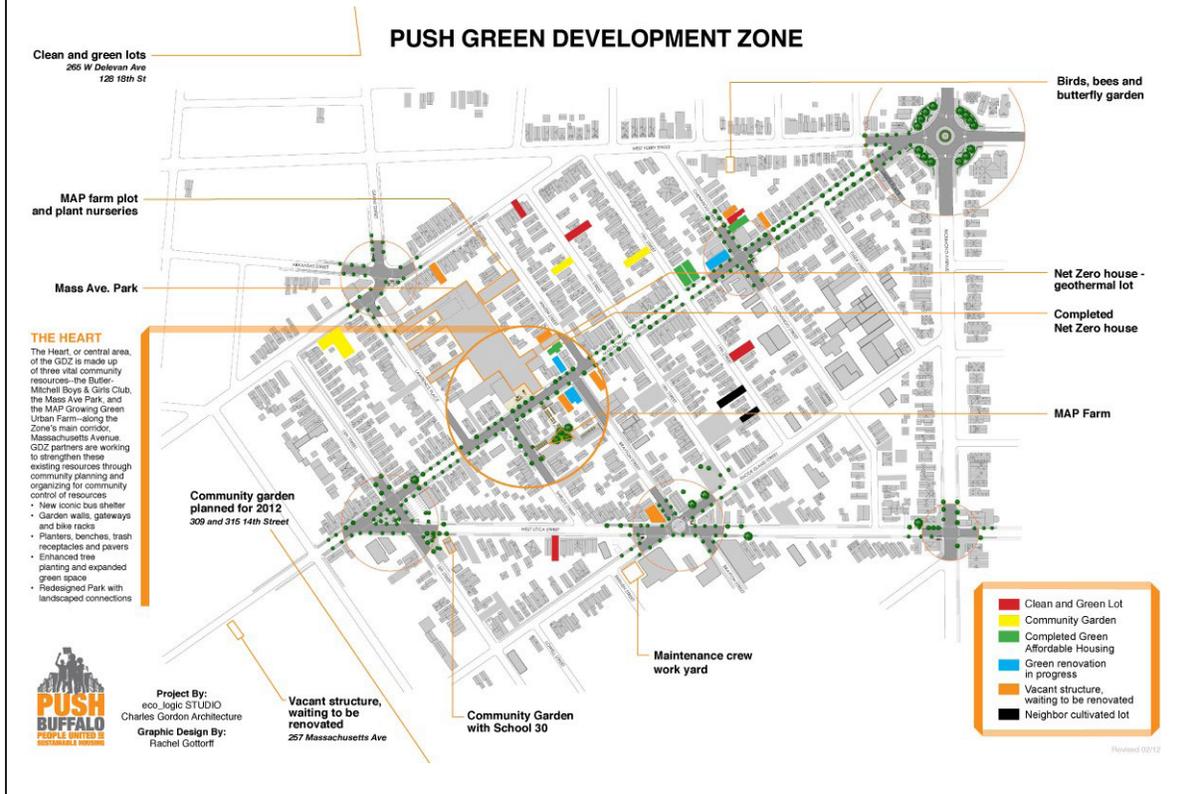
Although this planning phase could not examine this option thoroughly, it is important to explore the link between the need for housing development, renovation and management with decent work generation. Although a few community

Inspiring example 3: Green Development Zone by PUSH Buffalo

People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH Buffalo) is a community-based organization in Buffalo's West Side. About 40 percent of residents in the area live below the poverty line. The neighbourhood has high levels of housing vacancy, abandonment and demolition, while still preserving some level of density. PUSH works in the area where the majority of tenants currently reside in substandard housing. One component of substandard housing is poor insulation which leads to low-income tenants spending a disproportionate amount of their income on heating bills.

To address issues of poverty and inadequate housing conditions, PUSH Buffalo has embarked on the integration of housing retrofit with job creation through energy efficiency improvement. PUSH established the award-winning Green Development Zone, an area designation that combines green affordable housing construction, community-based renewable energy projects, housing weatherization projects, and green jobs training.

Figure 18: PUSH Green Development Zone (Image: PUSH Buffalo website)



Based on PUSH Buffalo & BNSC 2012

organizations have harnessed this opportunity to create decent work opportunities (e.g. Regeneration Community Services and PARC's Edmond Place), many non-profit housing/property managers use private services for property management and maintenance. This is true for private housing providers such as rooming and boarding homes. As shown in Figure 10 on p. 38, real estate leasing is the second largest business sector in Ward 14. By aggregating these demands, it may be possible to create a new social enterprise, or expand the capacity of the Silver Brush social enterprise and Green Thumb Enterprise for a property management and cleaning enterprise in Parkdale.

Existing buildings – whether they are rooming houses, social housing, or post-war high-rise apartments – often require some renovation and retrofit. A critical opportunity may lie in creating “green” work opportunities by promoting energy efficiency and conservation improvements. In Toronto, there are several loan programs for energy efficient renovation (e.g. the Tower Renewal's High-rise Retrofit Improvement Support Program and Toronto Atmospheric Fund's Energy-efficient Retrofits program). As part of the Ontario's Climate Change Action Plan, recently the Provincial government announced the investment up to \$900M in energy retrofits for social housing and private apartment buildings. Green economy is a sector that will be critical in the near future to address climate change challenges. Linking housing with decent work has been effective in a remarkable neighbourhood revitalization effort initiated by PUSH Buffalo.

Direction 7: Explore partnerships with local anchor institutions to leverage their procurement and hiring capacity for decent work and community benefits

Large anchor institutions – St. Joseph's Health Centre, University Health Network's long-term care centre, CAMH, privately-owned local serving institutions, and large non-profit agencies – could be linked with community-based workforce development efforts through shifting two areas of institutional practices: hiring and procurement.

Hiring practices of anchor institutions are not easy to change but possess considerable potential for local decent work development. Anchor institutions can build a supportive, secured pathway for community members, and establish potential career opportunities from social enterprises and other community-based training programs (ICIC 2011). Once such opportunities are identified, training needs can be designed and tailored in partnership with local agencies and colleges/universities where needed.

Procurement is the other area of practice that opens up possibilities for creating inclusive local economic opportunities. Anchor institutions purchase a range of services and products – food services, building maintenance, cafeteria, cleaning, and laundry, to name a few. A procurement analysis can identify opportunities and possibilities for shifting those procurement practices to local, community-benefiting sourcing. Responding to procurement needs does not have to be only the creation of new enterprises but can be linked with existing local businesses (that hire local residents and/or are immigrant-owned) and social enterprises. Since purchasing needs of large institutions are also large, it is a prudent approach to unbundle it and allocate a small percentage of procurement demands to community-based enterprises (Capital Institute 2011). This way allows a gradual, sustainable development of community enterprises without significant upfront investment. Enterprises can be expanded as they grow their capacities.

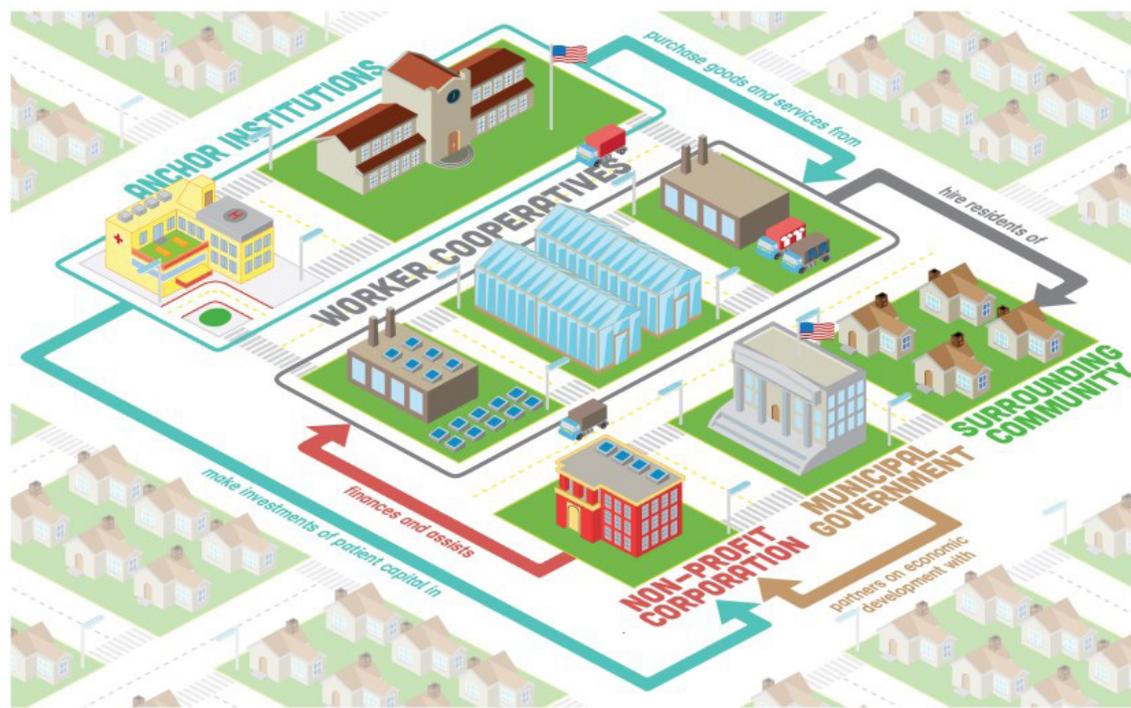
What is common in both areas is: rather than concentrating on workforce training for employment opportunities that are largely unavailable to entry position workers, the anchor strategy first creates the jobs, and then recruits and trains local resident to take them (MIT and BCDI 2015). While anchor institution engagement opens up a number of possibilities for generating decent employment opportunities, there are several challenges to overcome, such as training and education of health care workers to work with peer workers, credentialism, unionized positions, and lack of policy leverage (in the United States, the Affordable Care Act necessitates tax-exempt hospitals to contribute a certain percentage of their budgets for community benefits (Cunningham & Hair 2012).

Inspiring example 4: The Cleveland 's anchor procurement and hiring model

A group of Cleveland-based institutions (including the Cleveland Foundation, the Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals, Case Western Reserve University, and the city government) initiated the creation of the Evergreen Cooperative. As illustrated in Figure 19, Evergreen Cooperative was designed to harness the procurement (purchasing) power of local anchor health institutions and incubated worker-owned cooperatives, such as the Evergreen Cooperative Laundry, a greenest health care bed linen laundry to meet the expanding demand for laundry services in the health sector. Evergreen has also started a year-round food production greenhouse to sell grown foods to hospitals and local businesses.

Figure 19: The Cleveland 's anchor procurement and hiring model

The Cleveland Model



Something important is happening in Cleveland: a new model of large-scale worker- and community-benefiting enterprises is beginning to build serious momentum in one of the cities most dramatically impacted by the nation's decaying economy. Find out more about how low-income neighborhoods, anchor institutions, community foundations, and local governments can work together to build a new economy: community-wealth.org/cleveland

Designed by Benzamin Yi



Direction 8: Develop Parkdale workforce strategy that emphasizes supportive transition and learning

The community planning process and key informant interviews alike underscore the importance of supportive “transitional” opportunities that could lead to stable employment pathways and realization of personal aspirations. As demonstrated so far, Parkdale has a range of local economic initiatives and assets that address multiple aspects of local workforce development. Community members, however, pointed out that these local assets are not necessarily connected nor built on intentional collaboration. In fact, these are often – if not always – delivered on an organizational basis. Thus it is important to take a concerted action to coordinate such multiple initiatives and deepen active interdependence as a neighbourhood-based workforce development system. Developing a Parkdale workforce development strategy should be built on a model that combines social and health services, employment programs, adult education, food security, and alternative businesses into an integrated approach at the neighbourhood level.

The Parkdale workforce development strategy also needs to focus on linking workforce development efforts with potential employers and organizations that offer placements, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities so that training can be tailored to future opportunities and allow for smooth transition. This intentional pathway building is crucial, because labour market restructuring has resulted in disappearing career ladders and workforce development investment (Zyys 2014). Of equal importance is to explore ways to address specific needs and challenges faced by different communities – such as people with mental health experience, youth, parents, and newcomers. Different community members have diverse needs. For some members, a transition to full employment might be a long-term goal; a transition to stability in their life is equally important.

Neighbourhood-wide integration would be at the core of the Parkdale’s workforce development strategy. Integration of multiple programs, initiatives, and services provided by different organizations, ones that are often funded by different funders, is highly complex. It is recommended that community partners and stakeholders could follow a phased-in approach to develop the strategy.

Step 1:

Conduct a detailed environment scan of local work opportunities: Multiple entry points for workforce development and re-engagement should be available to meet diverse needs at different stages of people’s

readiness to work. While this report includes the initial assessment of these opportunities (see pp. 43-45), it is important to perform a detailed environmental scan of employment-related programs and local work opportunities – for example Co-op Cred program placements, member employment programs, social enterprises, local businesses, cooperative businesses, and anchor institutions. The scan should include detailed information such as the number of employment and placement opportunities, average cycles of turnover, types of placements and work, the levels of readiness and qualifications required, training opportunities, and so on. If organizations and businesses do not have any current opportunities but if there are new and emerging opportunities, those should be documented as well. This exhaustive environmental scan would be a basis of integrative, collaborative planning among partners. It would also complement necessary work for collecting data for Parkdale Neighbourhood Wellbeing Indicators, as well as a community-based portal of local work (Direction 1).

Step 2:

Assess intentional linkages, areas of collaboration and potential pathways between opportunities: Built on the environmental scan, partners should convene to analyze the results, and start to develop intentional connections among different initiatives and opportunities to develop supportive pathways. For example, what kind of member employment programs and social enterprises could be viable next steps for Co-op Cred program participants? An opportunity afforded by the Co-op Cred program lies in its flexibility to design and tailor placement and training to meet future work needs and responsibilities. This connection may serve as pre-employment training that would help build readiness. In fact, as a pilot, West End Food Co-op is developing a transition plan from Co-op Cred program placements to more robust work opportunities through its Bake oven project, a proposed subsidiary social enterprise. Local work opportunities may be limited, depending on the cycle of turnover and organizational capacity. It may also be necessary to explore connections with broader networks such as Social Enterprise Toronto and the Cooperative sector, ones that tend to offer more supportive work environments. In addition to pathway opportunities, partners should identify existing training opportunities, resources, and potential collaboration to meet those needs. For example, different organizations have different resources and ongoing training capacity, which can be pooled and shared with other organizations.

Step 3:

Explore sector-specific workforce development initiatives: Depending on the needs and aspirations of community members as well as work opportunities, it may be important to explore sector-specific workforce development initiatives within a broader workforce development strategy. In addition to the housing sector work (Direction 6 above), there are two other sectors for consideration:

- Food sector: Parkdale has many member employment, social enterprise, and training opportunities around food services (e.g. agencies’ kitchens for meal programs, food catering social enterprises, and urban agriculture). Building on this set of assets, as well as on the increase in restaurant businesses, it may be possible to explore a local food sector-based workforce development approach. A food sector focus is hard due to the low-margin nature of business and fast-pace work environments, but the Hospitality Workers Training Centre and 519 Community Centre have jointly explored the challenges and opportunities to develop such a sector-based workforce development model. The Co-op Cred program in partnership with Toronto Public Health’s Food Strategy completed a successful Community Food Works program. The program offers a neighbourhood-based approach to enable participants to obtain a food handler certificate by designing food safety, nutrition and employment training sessions in familiar community settings. If there are ongoing needs for food handler certificate training, community-based staff can be trained to offer food handler certificate training. This training opportunity is also useful for immigrant entrepreneurs who may face language barriers, technical difficulties, and cultural differences in acquiring a food handler certificate. Even if an owner of the business can get the certificate, it does not mean that other workers such as family member workers would not have a difficulty obtaining one.
- Health sector: Parkdale has a cluster of health-related non-profit organizations, immigrants with work experience in personal care support and nursing, and three health-related anchor institutions. It is possible to explore a health sector-based workforce development approach. As discussed above, a number of health related community organizations are interested in peer employment. Working for Change runs an employment training program for working in shelters and social service agencies on an annual basis. The increasing recognition and importance of peer employment in the health sector furnishes an opportunity to deepen this possibility.

Step 4:

Develop ongoing supportive mechanisms for workers in transition: Equally important is a coordinated approach to addressing a common challenge faced by transitional workers: how to build ongoing supportive mechanisms once they engage in placements and employment. People’s readiness to work does not equate with their capacity to retain work without support. Based on the experience of the Co-op Cred program and other supportive employment programs, unique support is required for people in transition. This challenge of job retention and the need for ongoing support was commonly raised by key informant interviews. Addressing challenges in physical and mental health is of considerable concern. A key informant also noted that cultural differences and practices in Canadian workplace are barriers to immigrant members in job retention.

Taken together, a supportive mechanism for transitional workers requires a combination of social work, health promotion, counselling, mutual cultural sensitivity training, and diversity management. This is a considerable service and program gap in Parkdale. This need is not only true for transitional workers but also for potential partners for work placement and employment who may not be used to providing unique support and accommodation. This is a difficult but critical area for service and program coordination while also requiring the redesign of existing employment support and training programs. For example, shared social worker and health promoter positions could be created for those transitional workers and employers.

Step 5:

Create a Parkdale Integrated Local Labour Market Planning table (policy option): Coordination among various city divisions and provincial ministries is also necessary. As the City of Toronto’s workforce development strategy, Working as One (2012, p. 10) acknowledges that “employers and jobseekers rightly note that services are often fragmented, confusing, duplicated and exceedingly difficult to navigate.” For example, training and job search support for Ontario Works recipients are provided by the City, while such services for ODSP recipients are provided by the province’s Ministry of Community and Social Services. Social enterprises offer transitional work opportunities for OW and ODSP recipients, although social enterprise is under the purview of the Office for Social Enterprise within the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment ¹². Furthermore, even within the same division, when social assistant workers change, different messages and interpretations are given to people

on social assistance. This internal miscommunication and inconsistency has been identified as one of the barriers for people to exploring and initiating self-employment opportunities (Stapleton 2016).

In accordance with a priority action in the Working as One report, it is recommended to form an Integrated Local Labour Market Planning (ILLMP) table in Parkdale that convenes key city staff and provincial staff representatives from Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and several city divisions for coordinated workforce planning at the neighbourhood level. ILLMP in Parkdale should include other ministries such as the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. ILLMP would be important to support the development of the Parkdale Workforce Development Strategy and facilitate access to dispersed resources, services and information across different city divisions and Ministries.

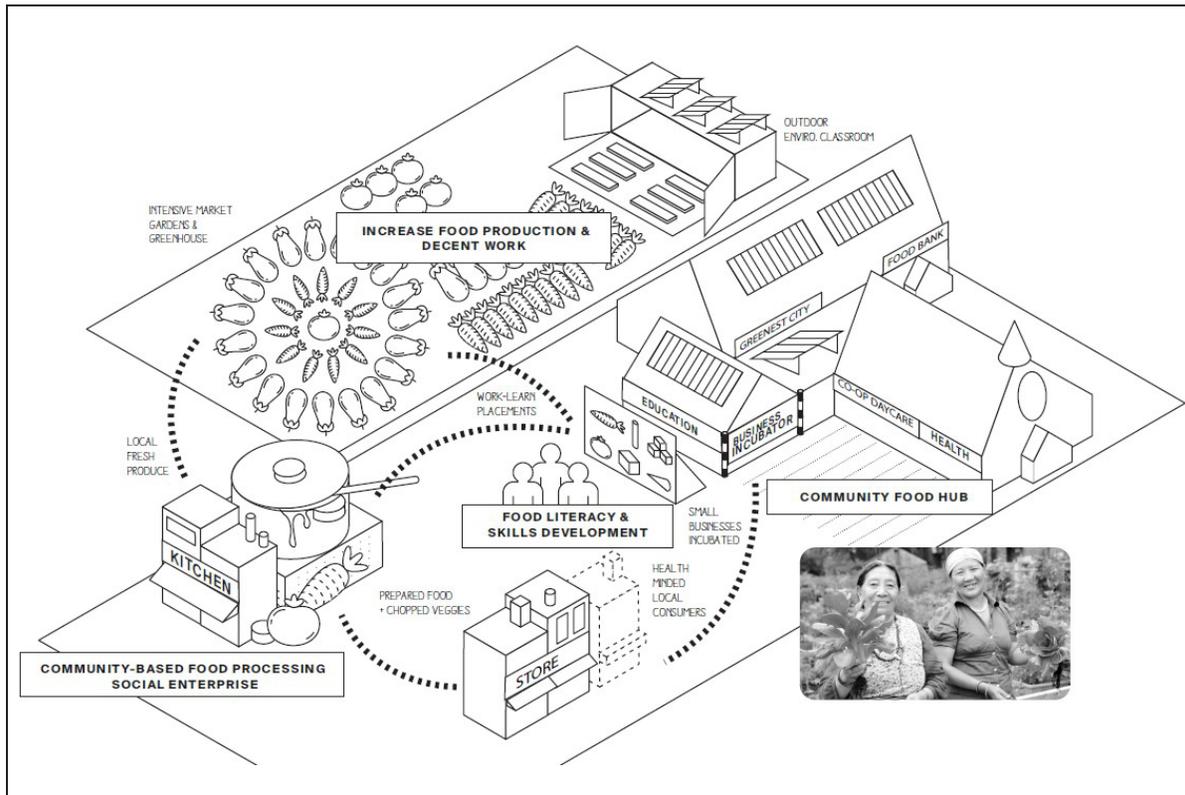
Challenges and obstacles:

When creating a Parkdale workforce development and reengagement strategy, several challenges need to be addressed. First and foremost, it is important to consider how regulations and barriers in the current OW and ODSP structures influence transitional paths that the Parkdale workforce development strategy aims to create. The Co-op Cred program offers one way to mitigate such challenges, although the program has its limits in capacity and resource to accommodate a large number of participants. Furthermore, a direction for workforce strategy is built on the assumption that part-time work opportunities can be decent work, provided other community supports and services (e.g. affordable housing and healthy food access) complement them to ensure a decent total compensation level. Such non-standard work arrangements can help low-income and marginalized members to build work experience and soft skills but may lack worker protection and benefits. For example, the implications of benefit gaps created when people leaving ODSP and lose medical benefits are a considerable concern.

¹² A challenge is that the Office for Social Enterprise's vision for social enterprises does not emphasize the role of social enterprises that offer supportive employment for people in recovery but stresses social entrepreneurship and innovation.

4) Food Security

Vision: Enhance affordable and equitable access to healthy food by building an integrated local food economy



Direction 1: Promote food literacy and skills development for healthy food provision

Community members highlighted another important challenge that complicates the access to healthy food: food literacy and skills education. Food literacy encompasses addressing diverse needs from basic knowledge about reading labels to healthy cooking and food growing. For some people, because of long-term experience in living in inadequate housing without a kitchen, their skills and knowledge about healthy food preparation have been lost. For others who have to rely on food banks, how to create healthy meals with limited food budgets is critical. For newcomers, shopping at a supermarket is a new experience. Lastly, food literacy education should also include learning about issues in the current food system to advocate changes in the systemic causes of food insecurity and lack of access to local affordable healthy food.

Food literacy education and skills development need to be shared with community agency staff who engage in food related programs and services (Miller 2013; Kamizaki 2014). Many of them are trained to be social workers, counsellors,

and settlement coordinators, not necessarily healthy food coordinators. Currently skills development training for kitchen staff is largely provided on an individual organizational basis. There is also a constant need for kitchen staff training, because of high turnover rates. Shared training for community staff would provide training, skills development workshops, and job shadowing opportunities for community food program staff. This training can be linked with workforce development directions such as collaborating with social enterprises and the Community Food Works program.

The Parkdale Food Network is well-positioned to coordinate currently dispersed food education activities in the neighbourhood. Also, food literacy work should build on and expand the existing work of Parkdale Community Health Centre, which offers a range of learning opportunities. For example, PCHC has a partnership with Cota’s Bailey House (supportive housing) in Parkdale, in which a PCHC dietician works with housing staff and tenants on food literacy education and healthy eating. This partnership model can be expanded into other boarding and supportive housing sites that have meal

programs. If supportive housing providers include peer employment in housing management, then peer leaders could play a role in food education and tenant engagement.

Direction 2: Develop a community food hub for food security, health promotion, and community economic development

While diverse community organizations offer food related programs and services in Parkdale, many of them do not have adequate “physical food infrastructures” – certified commercial kitchens, storage spaces, large freezers, equipment, and programming spaces. Each organization tries to maximize the use of its existing infrastructure in a resourceful fashion. Nevertheless, the inadequacy of physical infrastructure limits the effectiveness and reach of their programs. A community food hub was proposed during the community planning process as a solution to address shared concerns about space and infrastructure while increasing synergies from the co-location of diverse food security programs and organizations at a “one-stop shop.” In practice, community food hubs take different forms, depending on community needs and physical designs.

An immense possibility for building a community food hub in Parkdale lies in an emerging community partnership among Greenest City, Parkdale Community Health Centre, and the Anglican church of the Epiphany and St Mark, Parkdale (at 201 Cowan Ave). A preliminary conversation has started to explore the possibility of adaptive reuse of the church space for a community food hub. Based on inputs from the community planning process and ongoing dialogues with stakeholders, the Parkdale Community Food Hub should emphasize the intersection of food security, health promotion, and community economic development. The community consultation raised a number of ideas that could be co-located:

- A food bank as a gateway for a range of programs and activities;
- Food literacy workshops and skills development education;
- Health promotion programs that highlight healthy food for diverse communities including parents and children (in partnership with Parkdale Community Health Centre);
- Commercial kitchen spaces for food programming, demonstration, and community kitchen;
- Complementary programming, such as cooperative daycare services (food could be cooked and served for daycares, children could be involved in food programming);
- A shared storage space and a locally centralized drop-off and pick-up point for food donation (e.g. from Soraren Farmers’ Market);
- An incubation space for self-employment around food (such as catering); creating a comfortable space for bringing informal businesses into a more formalized space;
- A community-based food processing facility (see more details in Direction 3 below)

A few challenges need to be addressed. First, developing a physical space requires upfront capital investment. Second, given a range of possible ideas for a food hub, it is necessary to conduct future community consultations to identify needs and demands, a feasibility study, and resource development. Third, the rate of utilization of commercial/industrial kitchen spaces is critical. Multiple uses by different partners can maximize the use of space, but a careful collaborative planning is required to identify procedures for administration, coordination, communication and scheduling. In particular, it is suggested that including a food catering enterprise has to be considered carefully. For example, a food caterer may receive an unexpected large order that would be difficult to accommodate on short notice.

Inspiring example 5: The Stop Community food Centre, Toronto

The concept of a community food hub is gaining currency in Toronto and beyond as a catalyst for building a healthy neighbourhood. Metcalf Foundation’s Food Solutions paper (Scharf, Levkoe, & Saul 2010) makes a case for every neighbourhood having a community food hub, based on the Stop’s Community Food Centre (CFC) model. At The Stop, community members can access a range of programs at one site – from a food bank and drop-in meal program as a gateway to community engagement programs such as community kitchens, community gardens and food education, to social change and advocacy programs. This integration enables a comprehensive approach to the multi-faceted challenges of food security.

Direction 3: Start a community-based food processing social enterprise that can offer primary processing and healthy value-added products

Small to mid-scale food processing is disappearing from local communities in Ontario, resulting in a gap in the local food system (Carter-Whitney & Miller 2010). Building a community-based food processing facility would contribute not only to addressing this gap in the local food system, but also creating decent work opportunities in Parkdale. As a part of the proposed community food hub in Parkdale, community-based food processing would add three unique values. First, community food processing can address a challenge in preserving fresh perishable food (including donated food from the farmers' market, the food terminal, and other businesses). The preservation of fresh produce is an issue for both residents living with limited kitchen facilities and community agencies that have limited storage spaces but rely on unpredictable food donation. Processing's canning techniques can extend the life of vegetables and fruits and make them available throughout the year. The canning technique can be also used to maximize the abundance and affordability of seasonal local produce.

Secondly, community food processing can enhance the marketability of food grown by local urban agriculture programs by offering a primary processing service. A proposed site for a food hub is located next to the Greenest City's Milky Way urban agriculture garden. This juxtaposition would boost the effectiveness of each initiative (see below for more details). Thirdly, food processing can turn vegetables and fruits into healthy value-added products with minimum additives (e.g. apple sauce, jams, and healthy fresh juices). It can meet specific healthy food needs from local businesses, non-profit agencies, and community residents (e.g. baby foods, soup stocks, and tomato sauces). Some of these basic products are also common items that hospitals purchase. The community food processing service could offer a strategic starting point for shifting anchor procurement by purchasing these healthy items from a community-based food processing facility while also enhancing nutritious values of hospital food.

The food processing social enterprise could meet aspirations and skills of newcomer members who expressed their interest in harnessing their cooking skills. Furthermore, Parkdale has unique community assets to be leveraged. The West End Food Co-op has developed small-scale processing and canning capacities. Parkdale food hub should tap into the WEFC's expertise to expand its processing capacity and to incubate a food processing social enterprise. The Food Flow project also completed an initial feasibility study and a

business plan of a food processing facility although they focused on needs and demands from non-profit community agencies alone. These existing studies offer a solid foundation to develop a strong business plan for a community-based food processing facility.

Direction 4: Increase food production for improved access to healthy food and decent work opportunities

Working with the Toronto Urban Growers and the Toronto Food Policy Council, Greenest City is building its capacity and leadership to serve as an urban agriculture hub for West-end Toronto. Building on three community gardens that it runs in Parkdale, Greenest City is exploring ways to further increase local food production capacity through year-long greenhouses, rooftop gardens, and/or raised-bed gardens. Increasing community urban agriculture and production capacity has three important outcomes: food security, local decent work generation, and supplementary income for low-income and immigrant members (either cash, co-op credit, or grown food).

Two of the community gardens managed by GC are on public land, which is prohibited from being used as market gardens to sell foods. The Toronto Food Policy Council is currently proposing a policy change to allow for market gardens on public land. The third garden, the Milky Way garden, is on private land located behind the public library. Collaborating with Tibetan newcomers, GC plans to expand the production capacity to start a social enterprise market garden and urban agriculture innovation hub. According to the initial assessment, the expansion could generate for 7-12 work opportunities (including Co-op Cred placements).

While access to land for urban agriculture is a challenge for expansion, Greenest City is exploring various opportunities in Parkdale and surrounding areas. One opportunity in Parkdale is land owned by the Toronto Regional Conservation Authority (TRCA). TRCA has adopted the Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy and offers multi-year leases of land for farming projects. The Black Creek Community Farm in Toronto is one of such examples. Greenest City and TRCA have begun a preliminary discussion to explore possibilities for urban agriculture on the TRCA owned land in Parkdale. Another possibility lies in the redevelopment of and/or renovation of publicly owned buildings to accommodate rooftop gardens. FoodShare has partnered with the Toronto District School Board to develop a rooftop market garden at the Eastdale Collegiate Institute.

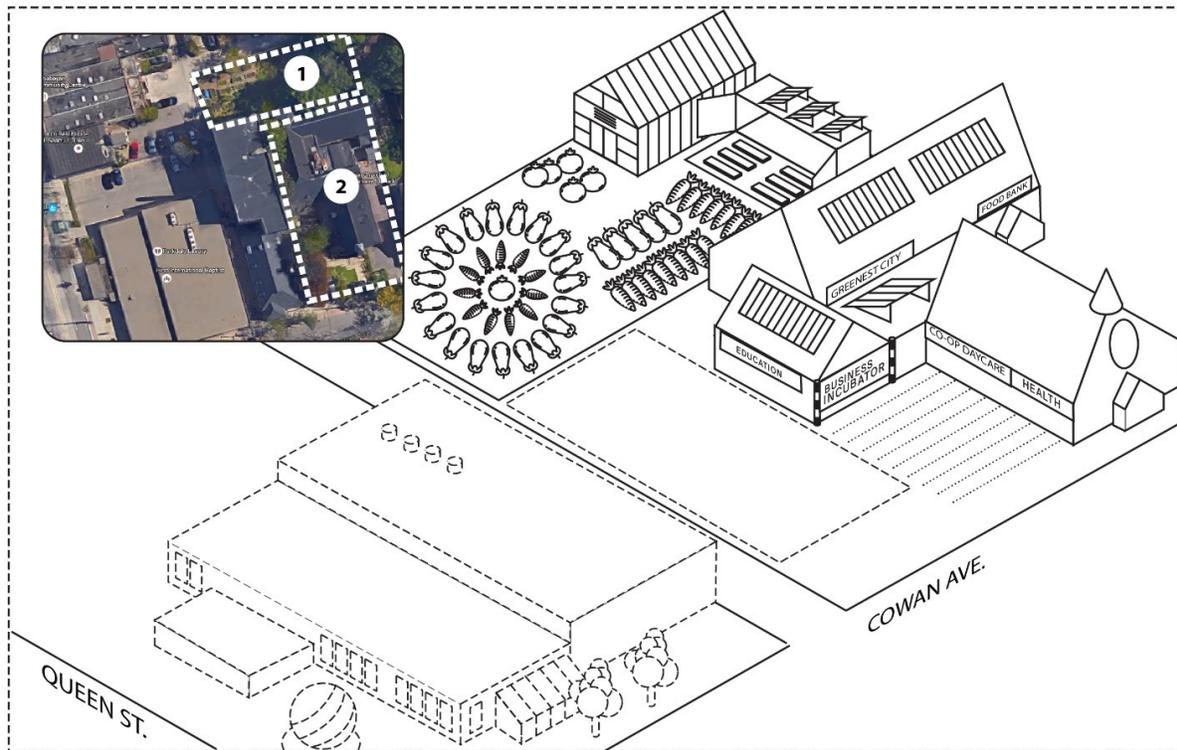
Despite challenges to expansion, the potential of urban agriculture for building an integrated local food economy in

conjunction with a community food hub is immense. First and foremost, it should be noted that the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust is working to acquire the Milky Way garden as the very first acquisition to transfer the ownership of land to a community ownership through the Community Land Trust mechanism. In addition, a social enterprise market garden could capitalize on the local trend of increasing restaurants and food services to build a community food purchasing agreement. Greenest City's initial market analysis indicated a strong interest from local businesses in purchasing produce from them. Here, the importance of food processing comes in. Food processing facility can be housed in the proposed community food hub. Food processing can offer a primary food processing, such as washing, peeling, chopping, and packing vegetables. Primary processed vegetables are useful for businesses that

do not have time and space for such preparation. A similar project has been piloted by a partnership between a food distributor 100km Foods and a social enterprise Hawthorne Hospitality Group in Toronto (Greenbelt Foundation 2014). Year-round greenhouse production could stabilize the sustainable supply of food for restaurants. This approach for business partnerships is more desirable than focusing on food donations, as the latter may result in unintended consequences such as more food waste and increased staff time needed to sort the food donation.

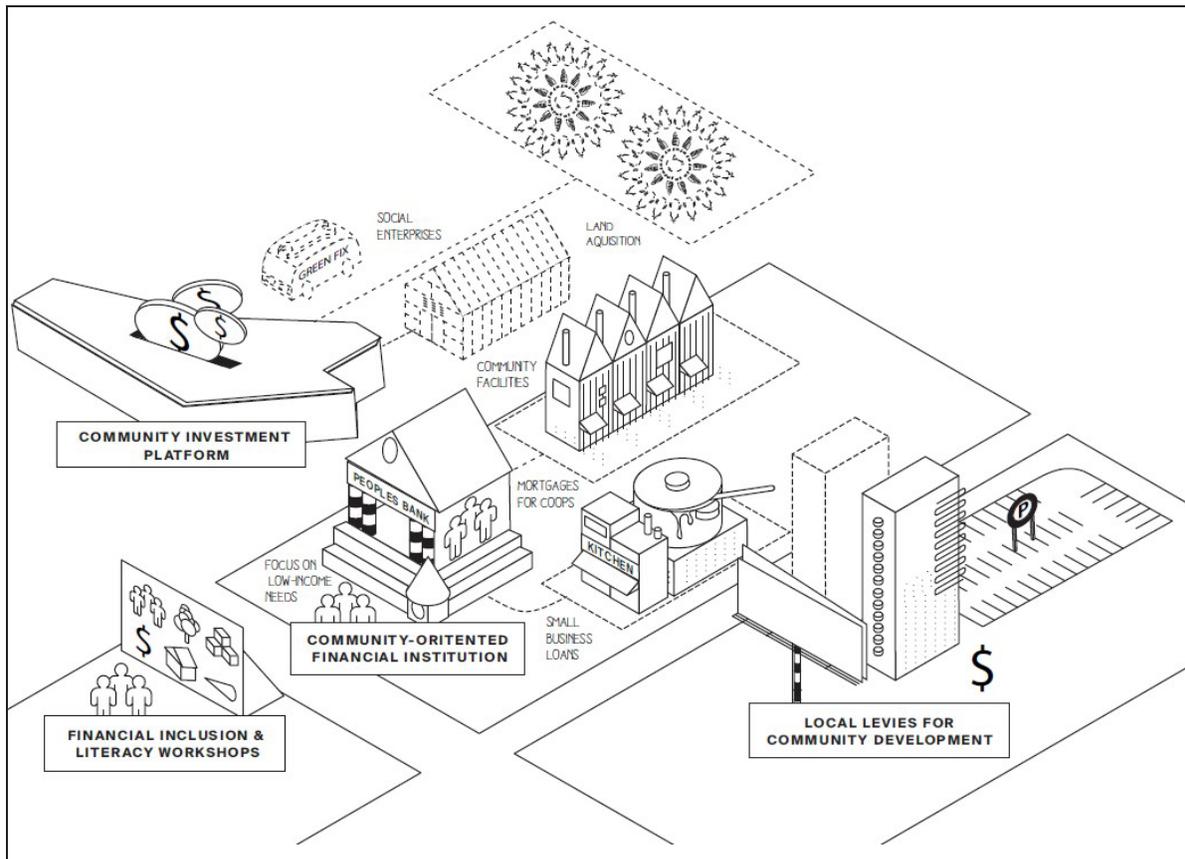
The combination of a multi-purpose community food hub, the increased local food production on a community-owned land, and opportunities for business procurement partnerships opens up the possibility of building an integrated local food economy that deepens the interdependence of multiple local economic assets and capacities.

Figure 20: A proposed food hub site with community-owned urban agriculture and food processing (Image: Google Map)



5) Community Financing

Vision: Improve financial literacy and encourage alternative investment platforms for community initiatives to retain, increase, and harness financial resources for community benefits in Parkdale



Direction 1: Promote financial inclusion and literacy workshops

The community planning process identified the need for promoting more financial literacy and inclusion through capacity building and workshops. The lack of knowledge of financial products and services (and their risks) is a key challenge for low-income and marginalized populations who are often caught up with high-cost and fringe financial services. It is effective to couple educational components with actual financial support services, as evidenced by two examples described: the Community Banking Project by West Neighbourhood House and the voluntary financial trusteeship program by PARC.

Building on these examples, it is important to explore the combination of financial literacy workshops in relation to supportive financial services. This requires working with financial institutions (both existing credit unions and

mainstream banks) to strengthen this intersection as a form of community reinvestment and contribution. It is also important to extend this work to offer public education on finance. The community planning workshop found that many community members may not know the function, difference and value of having community-based financial mechanisms like credit unions in comparison to mainstream banks. It is pointed out that these type of learning opportunities would be useful to help build a stronger basis and support for community-based investment.

Direction 2: Develop and expand access to community-oriented financial institutions to address financial exclusion and retain financial resources locally

Community-oriented financial institutions are necessary to increasing community-based accumulation and reinvestment of financial resources in Parkdale. Although Parkdale has three member-specific credit unions, an open-membership

cooperative financial institution could meet diverse needs in Parkdale. Given an opportunity presented by the opening of the branches of Meridian Credit Union¹³, it is prudent to explore a possible partnership with existing credit unions, rather than starting a new one from scratch, to explore possibilities of collaborating on initiatives and services that meet Parkdale's needs such as financial inclusion workshops and supportive financial services for low-income community members. One unique need to take into consideration in relation to community-based financial mechanisms for Parkdale is a shared interest of various non-profit organizations in choosing community-based financial institutions that prioritize community reinvestment such as credit unions. The interviewees stressed that it is important to have convenient access to a branch (some agencies switched their main bank accounts from credits unions because of the lack of convenience).

Direction 3: Build a community investment platform to recycle local financial capital into affordable housing, social enterprises and other community-led projects

It is crucial to develop an intentional link between the need for community-oriented financial mechanisms with the need for alternative social financing options. Social financing is different from conventional investment and financing options in that it has a triple bottom line mission – financial, social, and environmental return on investment, which aligns well with credit unions' missions and initiatives including community grant programs (Biron-Bordeleau 2013). As many mainstream banks are increasing their interest and initiatives around non-profit investment and social financing, it might be useful to explore the potential of building a partnership.

There are variations in how a community investment platform could be structured – an independent entity, a program of a credit union, an independent investment cooperative/charity in partnership with a credit union, or a government-led program (e.g. Nova Scotia's CED Fund). Also, community investment options such as CSI's community bonds are structured for a project-specific social financing option (i.e. acquiring a particular property). Choosing an appropriate structure should be assessed carefully through a robust feasibility study and business planning. Given diverse and multiple needs for neighbourhood initiatives, it is suitable for Parkdale to explore a model that goes beyond project-specific models. Parkdale can learn from a recent investigation and model building by the Vancouver Island Community Investment Co-operative (VICIC). Under the lead of Community Planning Council of Vancouver Island, their Community

Investment Funds explored a “way of reducing the cost of raising capital from the community by combining efforts in one investment vehicle that can be used for multiple projects” (Amyot 2014 p. 9).

Through the community planning process, community members expressed their initial interest in and enthusiasm for community-based financing models. At the same time, they identified two potential challenges: 1) an accountability of the use and impacts of their investments; and 2) a transparent decision making process to prioritize and select which community projects receive investment. Both concerns may be addressed by ensuring democratic decision-making, which is a hallmark of member-based cooperative credit unions. Community members also suggested combining individuals' community investment with mentorship and training opportunities. For example, Alterna Savings' Community Micro-Finance Program includes both micro-loans and coaching and mentorship for successful organizational and business development.

While community investment and social financing options open up new opportunities for non-profits and social enterprises to access financial resources, it has to be developed with careful consideration to the unique needs and funding cycles of non-profit organizations. First, it has to ensure community-based nature of such financing mechanisms for community benefits around decent work, equitable development and shared wealth. Second, how to generate revenues that can guarantee steady repayment with interest may pose challenges to non-profits and social enterprises. Addressing community challenges requires long-term investment. For social enterprises working with people on recovery, their revenues might need to be reinvested in staffing and support work for workers. Another concern is how to mitigate possible situations in which regular donations that go to individual organizations now shift to social financing options, reducing individual organizations' financial resources in favour of broader neighbourhood-wide projects.

¹³ St. Casimir's Polish Parishes Credit Union Limited, Fort York Community Credit Union Limited (for St. Joseph's employees), and Parama Lithuanian Credit Union

Direction 4: Explore potential areas for local levies and community reinvestment

Exploring alternative financing options is necessary, but should be complementary to important, long-term public investment in social infrastructure and community development. As evidenced by Parkdale's history, responsive public investments resulted in the current strong community infrastructure, access to a range of community amenities and programs, and the diversity of affordable housing options. Exploring social financing should not justify the withdrawal of government responsibilities for public investment. Furthermore, social financing can be augmented by government financing tools. For example, one of the CSI's success factors is its ability to attract social and financial capital through the community bond campaign. Another critical factor is the City of Toronto's Capital Loan Guarantee program, which enabled the CSI to access below-market rate mortgages from Alterna Savings Credit Union at 4.5%, which was estimated to result in a saving of \$200,000 per year in interest costs (CSI, n.d.). Thus, the program could be available for land acquisition.

In addition, the question of public investment should be contextualized in a broader debate on Toronto's "revenue" problem (Block 2015). Municipalities in Canada are often described as a creature of provincial governments, in which municipalities do not have a strong authority in policy making and taxation. Their main sources of revenue are property taxes and user fees. The City of Toronto Act has given a unique status to the City of Toronto to enact special taxes such as the Vehicle Registration Tax and the Land Transfer Tax. As Block (2015) points out, however, there are still untapped resources for revenues. Underutilized revenue tools should be used to enhance community services and programs. From the neighbourhood perspective, it is also important to explore possible ways of capturing values extracted from local lands and their uses which leave Parkdale:

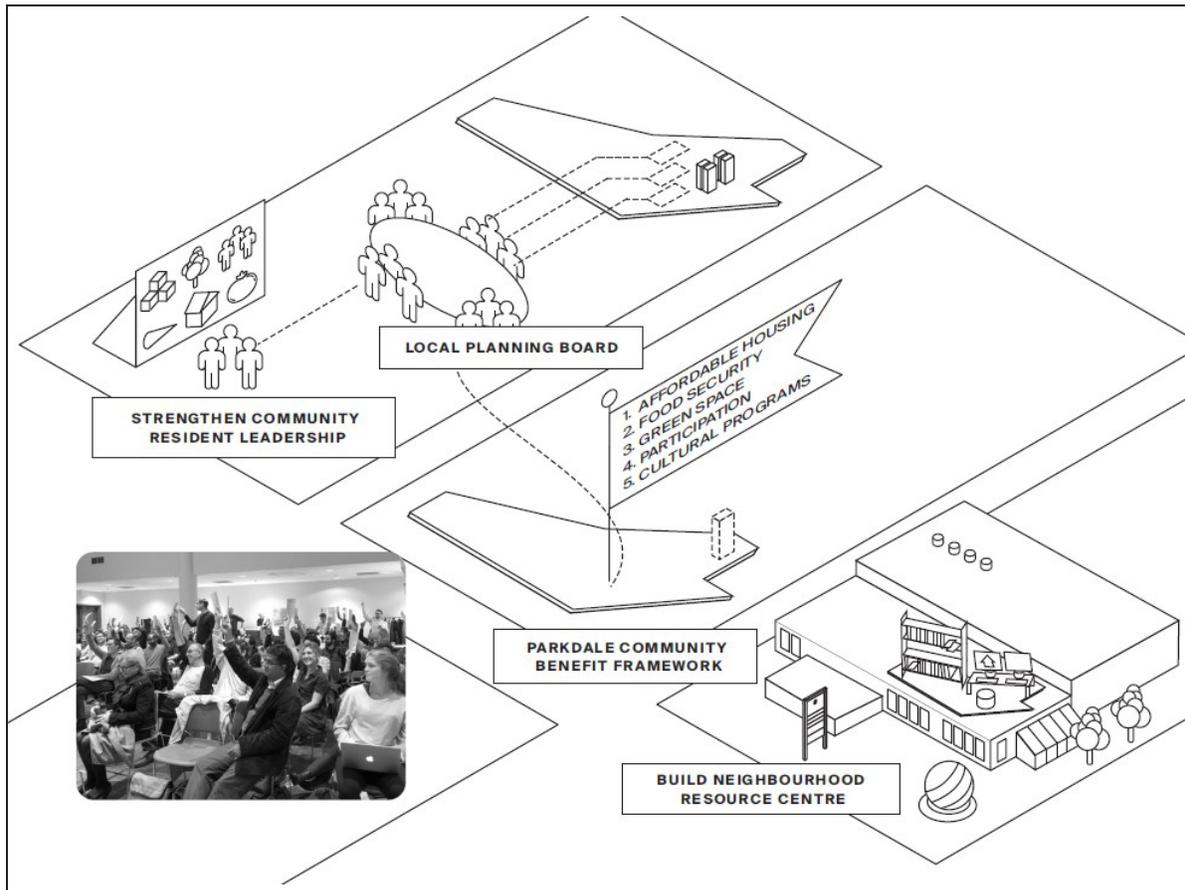
- Certain % of revenues from Green P parking: the Toronto Parking Authority raise revenues from user fees based on the use of land.
- Fees from billboards and advertisements on the Gardiner Expressway: currently the billboard levies are raised for art programs
- Levies on land transfer tax – linked with the affordable housing question, Parkdale has seen many transactions (data from the city) – new development, the closure of rooming houses and the sale of single family houses. These will continue given the concentration of rooming

houses and increasing housing demands. Also, some mid-rise and high-rises are at risk. Levies should be raised to support an affordable housing fund and anti-displacement measures

- The city should advocate for the contributions of certain percentage of capital gain tax revenues from the Federal government that can be put into an affordable housing fund.
 - A community block grant through Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy
-

6) Participatory local democracy

Vision: Develop knowledge, leadership, and the community’s decision-making power to ensure participatory local decision making



Direction 1: Strengthen community resident leadership and popular education to foster an experiential learning approach for action

Transparent processes for participation and consultation is one thing, strong community capacity for resident leadership, community organizing and local decision-making power is another. Community members stressed the importance of this difference, and identified the need for more community capacity building and leadership development opportunities as an important first step. Ongoing commitments, rather than one-off training sessions, are important to help community members build capacities and knowledge over time. Creating ongoing opportunities is necessary to help link what community members can learn from workshops with what they actually experience in the neighbourhood. Thus, a popular education approach is important to foster an experiential learning approach – learning democracy through the exercise of democracy.

Popular education approach also promotes collective understanding of present challenges and critical analysis for collective community action (Catalyst Centre 2002).

This direction should be coordinated and aligned with some of the directions discussed above, such as housing rights education, food literacy and financial inclusion workshops. Given an array of proposed activities and existing efforts, several organizations – such as Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, the Jeremiah Community, PARC, and Parkdale Legal Services – can take a lead to coordinate and organize these activities with a view to neighbourhood-wide leadership development. For example, the Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative (BCDI) in New York has developed a series of popular education modules to help local residents reimagine and practice alternative economic development from the perspective of shared wealth generation. The Centre for Urban Pedagogy in New York offers a range of community education and youth leadership modules by

harnessing the power of design and art to demystify complex policy and planning issues and break them into simple visual explanations. In Parkdale, a possible partnership with art-based organizations such as Making Room would boost the above work by leveraging the power of art and design.

Existing youth leadership programs at West Neighbourhood House and Parkdale Intercultural Association could be enhanced by connecting youth with Parkdale’s experienced community organizers and leaders as mentors who can share knowledge, experience and expertise in community engagement and organizing. This work could be organized as a local youth council, a body that advocates youth perspectives on neighbourhood matters.

Community consultation also identified some resources and opportunities to strengthen this work:

- Maytree Foundation has developed training programs and resources to promote diversity in board governance and management
- Taylor-Massey College offers training for community-based governance, where community-based organizations take a lead on implementation
- An idea to work under the leadership of a local councillor office to organize civics and city planning 101 sessions
- Parkdale economic democracy training: the PCED project, with Catalyst Centre has included popular education activities into the planning process, such as “democratic facilitation by design” as well as a learning session on shared wealth building and poverty reduction
- Cross-organizational Board and governance education for community members

Direction 2: Build a neighbourhood resource centre that can house the Parkdale Wellbeing Indicators and offer the access to professional assistance and policy information

Building a neighbourhood resource centre addresses the need for a centralized location that houses neighbourhood information and relevant resources for community members. This centre could be led by the Parkdale Community Information Centre – whose mission as “a community resource for connecting people and organizations to information and services” – at the Parkdale Library. A neighbourhood resource centre could house the Parkdale Neighbourhood Wellbeing Indicators. It could also include or help locate meeting spaces for community groups and residents.

Community members also recommended the creation of a community resource coordinator who can use and update the Parkdale indicators, encourage residents to learn and use the indicators, and organize community education activities on neighbourhood and policy issues. In conjunction with Parkdale affordability benchmark monitoring, the centre could be one of the locations keeping a registry for tenants to provide information about rents and any emerging issues with their landlords. In addition, a local city planner and a community development officer from the City of Toronto could set up a satellite office for regular office hours and a drop-in program (once a week for example). This would help democratize the access to professional assistance and knowledge for community members.

Direction 3: Establish a Parkdale Community Benefits Framework to advocate unified community needs and community benefits from infrastructure investment and development

The idea of a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) can be useful as a framework for Parkdale to articulate community priorities and needs, keep public and private investment accountable to those needs, and enhance community democratic participation in transparent decision-making. CBAs are often used as a tool for communities to negotiate and achieve community benefits – affordable housing, local job opportunities, and commercial spaces for local businesses – in major public infrastructure projects or private projects that receive public subsidies. The recent passage of Bill 6: Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act also presents an important opportunity that encourages harnessing of public infrastructure investment including housing to generate inclusive economic opportunities.

Currently, Parkdale does not have any major public infrastructure investment like LRT development on Eglinton Ave and Finch Ave. And yet proactive planning is important. A number of public agencies are undergoing organizational strategic planning and prioritization of investment and asset management; future needs for infrastructure investment and development may arise from Toronto Community Housing, transit expansion (including the TTC Roncesvalles car house in Parkdale), large anchor institutions such as CAMH and other non-profit agencies and the aforementioned Parkdale Deck idea along the waterfront. Furthermore, new affordable housing investment from the Federal and Provincial governments are also expected. It is crucial to anticipate future public and non-profit investment and large infrastructure projects for the next 5-10 years and build community readiness.

In addition, it is fair to expect that development pressures will increase in Parkdale, evidenced by a recent redevelopment proposal to build 19- and 21-storey condominiums at King and Dufferin, a purchase of the Queen's Hotel by a real estate developer, and the designation of Queen Street West as Avenues for intensification. Taken together, a Parkdale Community Benefit Framework can be mobilized as a compelling negotiation and communication tool to advocate unified community voices. Community needs and priorities for equitable development in a neighbourhood improvement area can be put at the forefront, rather than negotiating community needs on a project-by-project basis.

Community benefits can be in the form of affordable housing contribution, social procurement agreement, and local decent job creation and training. Some ideas for the Parkdale community benefit framework include, but are not limited to:

- Affordability standard for Parkdale (linked with the affordability benchmark)
- Proposed ratio % of affordable housing units
- Designation of a certain percentage of new commercial spaces and/or subsidized rental space for social enterprises and local-serving businesses;
- Limits on the size of commercial space to encourage small, local-serving businesses while discouraging large footprint corporate chains
- Design standards – for example, affordable housing contributions should emphasize family size affordable apartment units
- Development application review by a community planning board
- Local hiring, social procurement and apprenticeship for construction and management jobs
- Equity impact assessment for any land use decision in Parkdale

Direction 4: Create a Community Planning Board for local participatory decision making

The lack of community control over neighbourhood change was one of the recurring themes throughout the planning process. Community members raised a concern that they are often in an “advisory” capacity, rather than a participatory and decision-making capacity, in planning and development

consultation processes. Building on the proposed work of the community land development roundtable and PNLT's representative board, a Community Planning Board (CPB) should be established in Parkdale to review development applications, local planning decisions, and other major matters.

Community Planning Boards differ from other neighbourhood associations, such as resident associations, in that they are set up to represent a wide range of community interests and stakeholders. There are a number of community boards across North America. The Community Planning Boards in New York have authority to propose plans for neighbourhood development, as well as to review land use, budgets and service needs (Vaughan 2014). The City of Toronto is developing the Toronto Planning Review Panel (TPRP), a citywide citizen advisory group for city planning matters. This initiative could be localized at a neighbourhood scale.

Although starting an independent body is one way, it is also crucial for Parkdale to build on an effort by the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust in building a diverse, equitable neighbourhood wide representative governance structure. Board of directors are elected by members, rather than appointed by a third party. A CPB could be an internal mechanism of PNLT when PNLT's capacity and reach evolve to that level¹⁴. Alternatively, the proposed Community Land Development Roundtable could evolve into the CPB in the future. In a Boston's Dudley neighbourhood, Dudley Street Neighbourhood Initiative's CLT has a diverse board of directors as a neighbourhood-wide planning and organizing agency and entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Boston that the organization can review development applications and make recommendations based on community priorities and a set of urban design standards that residents developed.

The Community Planning Board (CPB) should work closely with the local councillor and negotiate what level of authority and power could be granted. A study (2009) commissioned by the St Christopher House (now West Neighbourhood House) by the University of Toronto's Planning program discovered that a degree of community participation and decision-making in development process depends highly on a local councillor's commitment. In some cases, community residents can get involved in a review process during a pre-application phase.

¹⁴ PNLT's board consists of 15 members. If PNLT could assume the role of CPB, then the PNLT board can add additional 5 members as ex-officio for the purpose of CPB.

The partnership with politicians is vital, as the CPB can use the Parkdale Community Benefits Framework to negotiate and prioritize community needs in new development, as well as review an equity impact assessment report. Although based on the American experience, Julian Gross from the Community Benefits Law Center (2007/2008) argues to actualize the community benefits framework that “it is plainly legitimate for an elected official to make clear to a developer that he or she will consider the degree of community support for a project in deciding whether to grant discretionary project approval... [and] to inform the developer, governmental staffs, and the public of factors that the elected official will consider relevant in voting on discretionary approvals for the project.” Of course, in the context of Ontario’s planning system, the role and influence of the Ontario Municipal Board makes this vision difficult to realize.

It should be noted that equitable representation is not synonymous with equitable participation and power. Diverse community members face multiple barriers in participation – language, technical expertise, educational backgrounds, cultural difference, the complexity of public policy and its development process, to name a few. Constant commitment is necessary to integrate the above two directions on participatory democracy – popular education and a community resource centre – to address this equity challenge in participation and decision-making.

Inspiring example 6: A comprehensive , resident-led community revitalization in Boaton

Established in 1984, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) is a community-based organization that focuses on community organizing and planning. While collaborating with a range of partners, DSNI has created various strategies and tools to enhance community control over neighbourhood change and promote development without displacement:

- Developed a community-based comprehensive neighbourhood plan
- Created a subsidiary community land trust, Dudley Neighbors Inc. (DNI) that has played a critical role in realizing the neighbourhood vision – in particular the land development aspect of DSNI’s comprehensive plan to ensure long-term community control of land and affordability
- Obtained the power of Eminent Domain to acquire privately-owned vacant land
- Entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Boston that the organization can review development applications. This helps DSNI influence planning decision over land that they do not own.

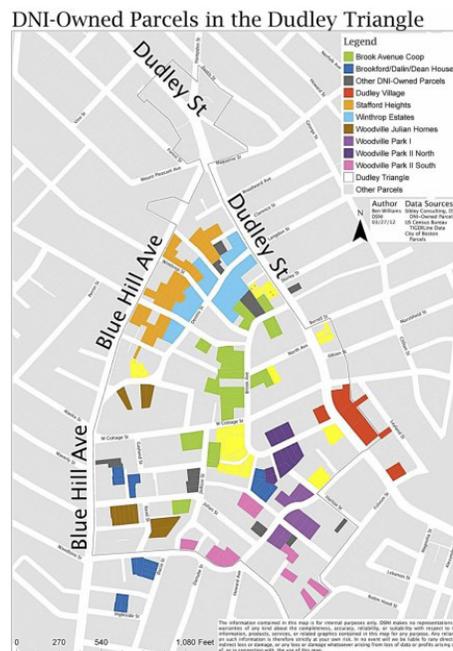
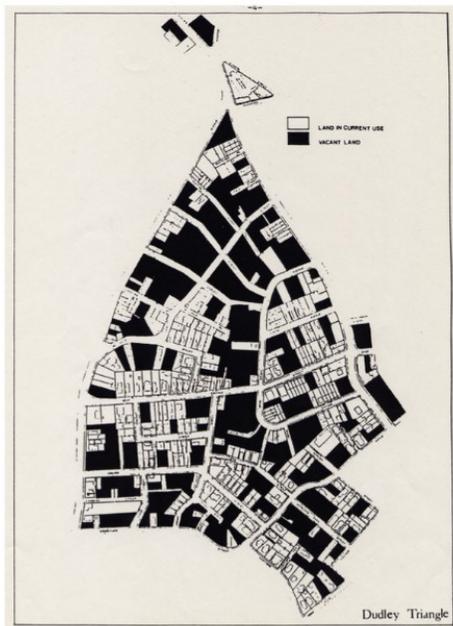
Now DNI owns over 30 acres of land in the neighbourhood that are used for a range of community benefits including affordable housing, non-profit office space, urban agriculture sites, non-profit offices space, and commercial space.

Community organizing and leadership development lies at the heart of their work with a belief that “organizing is the renewable energy that powers DSNI’s [community], human, economic and physical development” (Medoff & Sklar 1994, p. 259). DSNI has developed an ongoing neighbourhood education and leadership development program, the Resident Development Institute, as well as strong youth engagement work.

Recently DSNI has harnessed the use of the CLT for community and economic development, and particularly supporting in building an integrated local food economy and network of urban food enterprises – producers, processes, retails, and waste management – along with a range of partners (Loh 2014).

Figure 21: Lands owned by Dudley Neighbor INC (Source: DNI website)

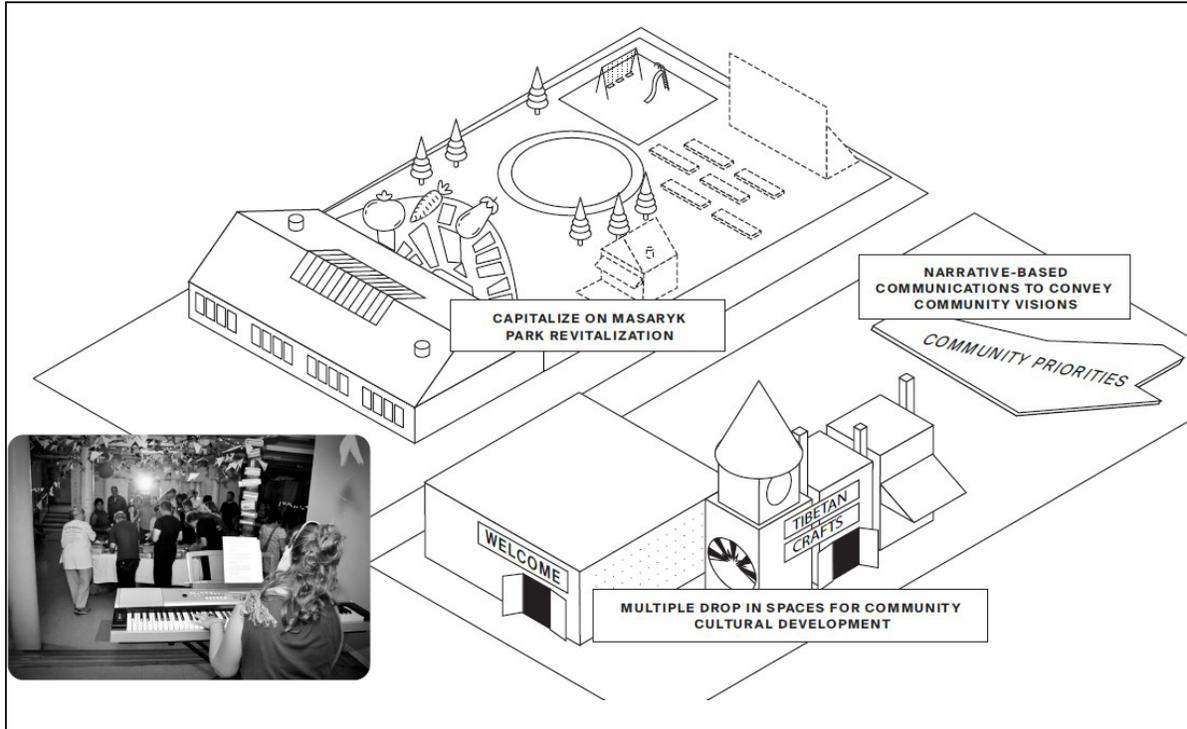
DNI Neighborhood Before & After



(Based on the webinar organized by the Right to the City Alliance and the author’s site visit

7) Cultural development

Vision: Encourage cultural and artistic activities that create inclusive ways of connecting people of different backgrounds for mutual dialogue and a shared sense of community



Direction 1: Harness the Masaryk Park revitalization opportunity to promote cultural activities in public space

In order to promote the appreciation and celebration of community diversity as well as mutual understanding of differences in Parkdale, it was suggested to create more infrastructure and points of encounters. Our community consultation also suggested that public space – such as parks and recreation centres – are difficult to use for community-based art and cultural work.

And yet, one opportunity to foreground cultural development in public space is emerging. There is a proposed plan for revitalizing the Masaryk Park in South Parkdale. In particular it would entail the design of a north-west corner of the park into a social space of gathering, celebration, and outdoor programming. The redesigned space could include cultural facilities that would enable for more community-based art and cultural activities such as communal tables, raised platform seating and stage, and a removable screen and projector. Cultural and art groups in Parkdale should work with Greenest City and Friends of Masaryk Park.

These two organizations are currently working to develop a grant proposal from City of Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy's Partnership Opportunities Legacy Fund (POL2).

Direction 2: Create accessible drop-in spaces for cultural and art production

As indicated in the needs above, there is the lack of physical places for community-based cultural development work in Parkdale. Focus groups with Tibetan newcomers also indicated that they would like to promote a range of cultural activities from traditional shoemaking to carpet making, but they identified the lack of access to an accessible drop-in space as a challenge. It is important to link this need with the strategy to retain affordable commercial and community space (Direction 3 in decent work section). For example, activating underutilized space such as a basement of 1313 Queen Street West, local churches, and long-term vacant storefronts. For example, in the Toronto's Mount Dennis neighbourhood, Action for Neighbourhood Change and a resident group has worked with Toronto Community Housing to create a production space in the TCH building for a weaving social enterprise.

Direction 3: Promote narrative-based communication through art to convey community visions and collaborative strategies

Communicating and disseminating community visions and collaborative strategies to wider community members is vital. However, conventional methods – such as text-based reports, statistical data, and oral presentations – have some limitations, as they may not capture dynamics in day-to-day lives. Community members also have different ways of knowing and expression that are appropriate to different social and cultural backgrounds. Using narratives, arts, and visuals could break some of these barriers. In addition, throughout the planning process, participants asserted that they have a wealth of powerful “stories assets” and lived lessons of resilience, struggle, and neighbourhood change. These people’s lived experiences, histories and aspirations can be mobilized through narrative-based communications for effecting community changing and mobilizing stakeholders.

Narrative-based communications or story-based strategy helps “bridge the gap between messaging and movement building and to provide tools for movement leaders to change the story around their issue” (Centre for Story Based Strategy n.d.). Narrative-based communications aims to organize shared experience and visions of community members and stakeholders into a shared narrative; thus it would help reframe the issue, strengthen marginalized voices, or communicate the potential of solutions (ibid.). As such, it is an important strategy to be built into the implementation of the Parkdale Neighbourhood Plan.

Local non-profit cultural organizations can play a significant role in coordinating creative projects. This important work is already underway by many local organizations such as Making Room Community Arts, who has been gathering people’s stories through a process of “radical inclusion.” One promising effort is the Parkdale People’s Map, an interactive map platform and story bank created by the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust.

08 Moving Forward



How can we protect diversity, affordability, inclusion and equity in changing Parkdale while also promoting decent work, shared wealth, and equitable development? How can we organize existing assets and economic alternatives as an integrated neighbourhood plan, not only to promote development without displacement, but also to proactively build a more equitable local economy? The PCED Planning project has explored these questions through examining challenges, assets, and promising directions in seven key areas for community action and policy options. The seven areas include social infrastructure; affordable housing & land use; decent work; food security; community financing; participatory democracy; and cultural development. These areas reflect both pressing challenges and emerging opportunities in today's Parkdale.

What do we talk about when we talk about today's Parkdale? What comes to our mind is a rapid pace of "neighbourhood change" often associated with gentrification and displacement. Indeed, current patterns of neighbourhood change concern diverse community members, as these changes accompany with inequitable outcomes. They put Parkdale's diversity, affordability, and inclusion at risk and deepen poverty. There is also the shared concern about limited community control and inadequate democratic planning for guiding neighbourhood development for equitable outcomes. These local challenges become direr when we consider broader structural challenges and public policy issues that shape local processes of neighbourhood

change. In particular, low-income and newcomer community members face disproportionate pressures of displacement and deepening poverty. Thus, there is the pressing need to tackle encroaching forces that negatively affect the neighbourhood and community members.

This is not, however, the end of the story about today's Parkdale. Through both past and current efforts, Parkdale has built a range of community strategies and economic alternatives that have the capacity to guide local economies according to long-term community needs. The PCED Planning project has uncovered a range of such examples and promising opportunities. They include the strong collaborative social infrastructure, the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, collaborative workforce development, a community food hub, anchor institutions, a desire for greater resident leadership, and a number of initiatives that could democratize and increase community control over social and economic assets for community benefits. These collaborative readiness and existing economic alternatives have been an enabling condition, and have pushed the limits of what's possible. Today's Parkdale is thus also full of opportunities for rebuilding local economies in a more inclusive and equitable direction.

This dual story – the encroaching forces of neighbourhood change and the aspiring visions for more equitable and inclusive Parkdale – marks a critical juncture for today's Parkdale. And it is timely to take action now. Across the city, a range of community-based organizations and groups are promoting

community initiatives that not only expose complex issues in the economic systems but also propose equitable economic alternatives. Progressive foundations share such visions and have supported these initiatives.

Equally important is recent political openings. The City of Toronto is planning to make social investment in Parkdale through its Strong Neighbourhood Strategy. The City has also adopted the Poverty Reduction Strategy, in which social procurement policy plays an important role, a policy that could unleash the potential of community-driven, equitable economic development. The Provincial government is also taking an important step to leverage infrastructure investment for community benefits through the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. The Federal government has also begun to reinvest in housing and critical public infrastructure. In short, now is the moment that we need to seize.

If we name this moment of Parkdale in this way, we can not only challenge a prevailing story of inevitable neighbourhood change and gentrification. But we can also open up a considerable possibility for equitable development, decent work, and shared wealth building in Parkdale. It is also of critical importance to pursue this without obscuring the reality of compounding poverty and social insecurity experienced by low-income and marginalized community members on a day-to-day basis. The PCED project has identified a range of “promising directions” that could turn such community visions and aspirations into planning action. These directions mirror Parkdale’s vision for community democratic control and planning of local economies, a vision for collective action among diverse community organizations and residents to guide the future of the neighbourhood in an equitable direction.

There are over 30 promising directions across seven areas. It should be noted that each direction and each area are closely interrelated and complement each other. In some cases, there are multiple leverage points in one direction to address more than one area. Such a good example is a community food hub idea within the Food Security area. Building a community food hub could increase access to healthy food and food literacy opportunities, as well as furnish decent work opportunities through the social enterprise food processing and urban agriculture initiatives. Equally important is the site for the urban agriculture initiative beside the proposed community food hub. It is this site that the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust with Greenest City is working to acquire for the very first project for community ownership of land.

Each direction is inter-related, complements each other, and builds a momentum, readiness and capacity to undertake other directions, and particularly long-term directions. For example, PNLT’s land acquisition efforts would support Direction 7 in Housing and Land Use for retaining and preserving existing affordable housing such as rooming houses and other private rental housing. In turn, as this direction would likely entail some renovation and retrofit of housing units, this direction should be linked with Direction 6 in Decent Work for creating decent work. In particular, the recent announcement of the provincial government’s investment in energy retrofits for social housing and private apartment buildings might furnish an important resource to create green decent work. Thus, these promising directions demonstrate how putting resources into one area could enhance a range of indicators for multiple areas by breaking the silos.

In this regard, this planning study report has developed a critical foundation for the next stage of the project and beyond. The report should be used as a reference document to inform decision-making, prioritization, and partnership development. The PCED project will work on detailed action planning and resource development. At the same time, each seven areas will be the basis of working groups for the next phase. Each working group will be convened to discuss further about proposed directions and develop detailed work plans. Each group will be facilitated by lead organizations and groups as follows:

- Social infrastructure: PCED Steering Committee
- Housing & land use: Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust
- Decent work: Co-op Cred program (PARC & Greenest City)
- Food security: Parkdale Food Network
- Community financing: Parkdale Community Legal Services
- Participatory local democracy: West Neighbourhood House
- Cultural development: Making Room Community Arts

The PCED project has been inspired by remarkable examples of neighbourhood-based initiatives from Toronto and other cities. As is the case of these neighbourhood-based initiatives, it is true that there are limits to what local action alone could achieve to address forces beyond one neighbourhood. Thus, it is vital for Parkdale to seek and bridge connections with larger networks and policy change initiatives to contribute to broader movement building for equitable economic development. In turn, the PCED project intends to share our lessons from the extensive one-year participatory planning for equitable development without displacement.

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