

St. Christopher House, Toronto
&
Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

**Neighbourhood Change &
Building Inclusive Communities from Within**
A Study of Toronto's West-Central Neighbourhoods

A research proposal submitted to the
Community University Research Alliance (CURA) Program
of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
August 2004

In March 2004 a letter of intent submitted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's Community-University Research Alliance Program was approved for the development of a full proposal for a \$1 million five-year community-based research initiative. The full proposal was submitted in early August 2004.

The lead partners in this Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) are St. Christopher's House, Toronto and the Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council announced in December 2004 that it was funding this project.
The research began in January 2005.

Keywords

neighbourhoods; community development; gentrification; urban/community planning; affordable housing; globalization; social change; social justice; social services; public policy; participatory research

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Community Partners

Artscape — Central Toronto Community Health Centres — Centre for Addictions and Mental Health, Community Relations, Policy, Planning — Centre for Urban and Community Studies — College-Montrose Children's Place — City of Toronto, Community & Neighbourhood Services Department — Community Social Planning Council of Toronto — ESRC Centre for Neighbourhood Research, University of Bristol, UK — HouseLink Community Homes — Housing New Zealand Corporation — Joint Centre for Excellence for Research on Immigration & Settlement, Toronto — Voorhees Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement, University of Illinois at Chicago — Niagara Neighbourhood Residents' Association — Parkdale Community Legal Services Inc. — Parkdale Liberty Economic Development Corporation — Portuguese Women 55+ Support Association — Programme in Planning, University of Toronto — Roncesvalles-Macdonell Residents' Association — Sistering: A Woman's Place — Society of Portuguese Disabled Persons — St. Christopher House — Stephen Bulger Gallery — Toronto Neighbourhood Centres — United Way of Greater Toronto.

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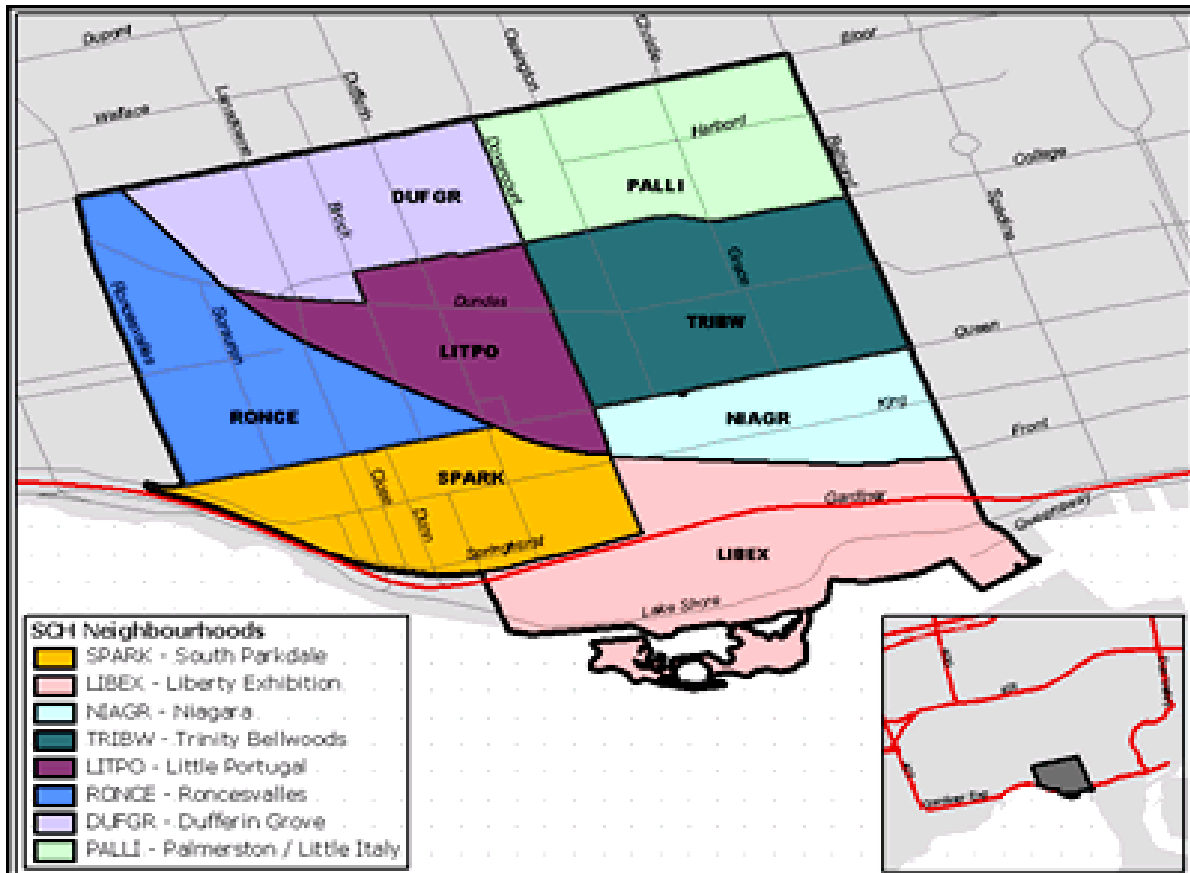
1. Summary of Proposed Research

The Centre for Urban and Community Studies at the University of Toronto and St. Christopher House, a large multi-service agency in Toronto, propose a series of applied policy-relevant research projects using as a case study seven adjacent inner-city Toronto neighbourhoods to answer the following questions:

- Can we preserve existing lower-income and socially and ethnically mixed, affordable neighbourhoods in the face of forces that are raising costs (particularly housing costs) and displacing or excluding certain people, businesses, and community services?
- How can people in urban neighbourhoods successfully shape the development of their environment to create a community that is socially cohesive and inclusive?
- What can we learn from recent and emerging community practice about effective action against negative forces and support for positive forces to ensure better outcomes?

The purpose of this research is to better understand the way in which both global and local forces affect urban neighbourhoods and to develop models that promote community engagement and help low-income communities influence public policy.

Although considerable research has been done on globalization, its causes and consequences, this thinking has not been connected to the forces and outcomes experienced in neighbourhoods and urban districts. There is also a great deal of research on neighbourhood gentrification and displacement, but very little that is policy- and program-relevant and action-oriented.



There is a need to revitalize the academic debates and, at the same time, provide policy makers and community activists with relevant and usable information, analysis, and policy options. We would also like to build further capacity in the community and among university students and academics, through collaborative, practice-oriented research. Research that is participatory and “bottom-up” from the start will produce a range of findings that contribute to knowledge and to practice at all levels.

Our research involves a case study of a well-established, mainly residential area just west of downtown Toronto, consisting of the following seven “neighbourhoods”: Dufferin Grove, Little Portugal, Niagara, Palmerston, Roncesvalles, South Parkdale, and Trinity-Bellwoods. The area has a population of 107,000 (slightly larger than Guelph, Ontario) and a median household income about 13% lower than the city average (2001 census). It is an immigrant settlement area with significant ethno-cultural diversity.

St. Christopher House (SCH) is a multi-service agency working out of six sites in west-end Toronto. For 91 years it has provided services to people of all ages and cultures. It has a budget of \$7 million and is funded by the United Way as well as all levels of government and several private foundations. SCH is run by 80 full-time staff, 120 part-time staff, and about 800 volunteers, overseen by a board of volunteers. About 10,000 individuals and families are served each year.

SCH has an established track record as an effective partner in community initiatives and coalitions, with excellent connections to all stakeholders in the community, as well as local politicians and local businesses. SCH is the lead community partner.

The Centre for Urban and Community Studies (CUCS), established in 1964, promotes and disseminates multidisciplinary research and policy analysis on urban issues. Its research associates include professors and graduate students from a dozen different disciplines and professionals from a variety of organizations. The Centre's Community / University Research Partnership (CURP) unit promotes the exchange of knowledge between the university and community agencies and associations. As the lead academic partner CUCS has brought together the strongest possible multi-disciplinary team of researchers, from within the UofT, from elsewhere in Canada (Professors Rose, INRS, Montreal and Ley, UBC), and a formal linkage has been established with key researchers and their institutions in the UK, US and NZ/Australia.

2. Purpose of the Research

“Economic and social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable human settlements development. Economically buoyant, socially vibrant and environmentally sound human settlements under conditions of continuing and rapid urbanization will increasingly depend on the capacity of all levels of government to reflect the priorities of communities, to encourage and guide local development and forge partnerships between the private, public, voluntary and community sectors... Capacity-building is thus to be directed towards supporting decentralization and the participatory urban management process.”

– Habitat Agenda, 1996, emphasis added (Section IV D, Capacity Building and Institutional Development, para. 177). <http://www.unhabitat.org/unchs/english/hagenda/index.htm>

Global and local (“glocal”) forces are dramatically changing older inner-city neighbourhoods, affecting residents, businesses, employers, and community services. In Canada’s larger cities these changes are taking place within the context of displacement, income polarization, and destitution, including homelessness. These are neighbourhood- and city-destroying dynamics. But must they be so? New investment and economic change in neighbourhoods should be harnessed for the benefit of the community, the city, and the nation. Although these dynamics are not new, many aspects are new. Globalized economic, social, and cultural forces are creating pressures at the neighbourhood level, as engaged citizens and their governments seek to control the impacts and outcomes. Yet the local impacts are not well understood. Without an improved understanding of these forces, how can we “encourage and guide local development” and develop the capacity for “participatory urban management processes,” as the UN Habitat Agenda recommends?

Despite public discussion of the need for an “improved urban agenda” in Canada (Prime Minister’s Caucus Task Force on Urban Issues, 2002; Seidle, 2002), the particulars of that agenda are vague. What role should urban neighbourhoods, particularly lower-income and redeveloping neighbourhoods, play in the emerging urban agenda? What can and should be done about dynamics that produce displacement and social exclusion? What are appropriate and feasible responses to pressures on lower-income neighbourhoods? Research grounded in the lived experience of

households and organizations (formal and informal) in neighbourhoods undergoing dramatic change can provide the basis for positive action toward improved or new policies and programs.

Although Canada's prosperity has benefited most households, a significant minority are worse off than before. Many urban households are also at risk of physical displacement. These households tend to be in older inner-city neighbourhoods. Most are life-long renters at a time of widespread failure to produce new rental housing. The stock of rental housing is aging, and tenants are being displaced as a result of

demolition, gentrification (renovation and higher rents), and conversions to condominium ownership. Meanwhile, homeowners in these neighbourhoods are aging and asset-rich (the house) but cash-poor. High maintenance costs, utility bills, and property taxes (based on the high land values) eventually drive them out.

Federal and provincial budget decisions, combined with global and national socioeconomic trends, affect some neighbourhoods more than others. Some are heterogeneous and in transition, others are more homogeneous and stable. Neighbourhoods with older housing and lower property values tend to be the neighbourhoods in transition. The pressures are more pronounced in lower-income neighbourhoods, because people with fewer resources rely to a greater extent on their immediate area for their overall well-being.

Although considerable research has been done on globalization, this work has not been connected to the forces and outcomes experienced in neighbourhoods and urban districts. There is no research to guide policy actors and community residents in determining what is similar to the past (e.g., gentrification and displacement) and what is different. One of the recognized failures of the vast and often insightful literature on gentrification, displacement, and social exclusion is its lack of policy and program relevance.

This research starts at the neighbourhood level, with the lived experience of lower-income people in neighbourhoods in transition. It starts with the full range of interests of businesses, social agencies, and local associations. The focus is on the way in which macro socio-economic and

Table 1

Toronto Area Ranking of the 7 Study-area Neighbourhoods, 2001

Based on 922 Toronto CMA census tracts with income (1=richest, 922 = poorest).

Neighbourhood	Census Tract #s	Average household income Rank (out of 922 in Canada)	Average household income, \$ / year	Average household income Ratio to Toronto CMA	% Unemployed	Gov Transfers as % of Income	% Visible Minorities
Dufferin Grove	054	786	51,000	67	6.2	11	25
Little Portugal	042	657	59,000	76	3.8	13	17
Niagara	010	504	69,000	90	5.4	5	21
Palmerston/Little Italy s	041	614	61,000	80	9.5	13	21
nw	056	604	62,000	81	5.5	11	19
ne	058	606	62,000	81	5.6	9	20
Roncesvalles east side	048	728	54,000	71	5.6	10	23
west side	049	433	73,000	96	3.9	6	12
South Parkdale nw	04	907	35,000	46	11.0	17	49
ne	05	914	33,000	43	9.5	21	57
se	07.01	889	40,000	53	8.7	12	52
se	07.02	899	37,000	49	9.3	13	61
Trinity-Bellwoods east	040	705	56,000	73	7.7	14	24
west	043	701	56,000	74	8.7	16	21
Toronto CMA			76,000	100	5.9	8	39

Source: Census, 2001

political environments affect people's lives and the neighbourhoods they live in. Practitioners – from those who shape policy, to service providers, to political activists – require a better understanding of these forces in order to define appropriate courses of action, such as specific policies and programs or political action by community leaders.

3. The Study Area

Our proposed research involves a study of an older, culturally diverse, mainly residential area just west of downtown Toronto. The study area has seven neighbourhoods: Dufferin Grove, Little Portugal, Niagara, Palmerston, Roncesvalles, South Parkdale, and Trinity-Bellwoods. If this area were a municipality, it would be the 38th largest city in Canada, slightly larger than Guelph, Barrie, Saanich, Gatineau, or St. John's.

The area has the following characteristics: a population of 107,000; a low-income population of 28,500 people (27%, which is 4% more than the city average); a disproportionate share of single-parent families and episodically homeless people; a population density about twice the city average; and a median household income about 13% lower than the city average (2001 Census). Table 1 provides further information on the study area.

This is a major immigrant settlement area, with a high percentage of visible minorities. The largest groups are Portuguese, Chinese, Italian, Polish, Greek, East Indian, Vietnamese, Ukrainian and Filipino. The area has a significant population of people with psychiatric problems living in lower-cost rooming and boarding houses. There is also a significant homeless population living in parks and alleys. The displacement of low-income households from this area with its well-developed community services to more distant neighbourhoods that have fewer services is a major social policy and service planning issue.

The area is under redevelopment and gentrification pressures because it is about 15 minutes from downtown in a traffic-clogged city; its mature neighbourhoods have retained much of their social and economic vitality; it has excellent access to transit; it is close to the waterfront; and it has attractive streetscapes and housing stock. Several formerly industrial zones in and near the area, including the former Massey lands and in the Parkdale Liberty area, are being redeveloped, and now provide new ownership housing that is not affordable for most local residents. A \$400-million public-private partnership proposes to consolidate facilities at the Queen Street site of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in the centre of the area.

4. Research Questions

Understandably, much scholarship has focused on what happens to poor people... Relatively less attention has been given to poor neighborhoods per se... Only one study, published 25 years ago, has investigated how different types of poor neighborhoods change their poverty rates over time and whether any distinct socioeconomic or demographic predictors of such dynamics emerge." – Urban Affairs Review, Nov. 2003, p.221.

“I think that the gentrification process is actually changing so quickly that considerable empirical research will be necessary alongside theory” (Smith, 1996, p.1202).

Does gentrification and investment in older neighbourhoods necessarily mean the displacement of existing social networks, community institutions, family businesses and, eventually, most lower-income households? Can people, groups, organizations work together to achieve different outcomes? How?

QUESTION #1

Question 1 involves a multi-level analysis of factors that lead to displacement and exclusion.

Can we preserve existing lower-income and socially mixed, affordable neighbourhoods in the face of forces that are raising costs (particularly housing costs) and producing displacement and exclusion (of certain people, businesses, and community services)?

- What forces are at work in the neighbourhood? What are the trends? How do these forces differ compared to those of recent decades? How do they mutually interact to create unanticipated consequences?
- What forces and factors are fuelling social exclusion, civic disengagement and alienation, and weakening social cohesion at the neighbourhood and local/municipal level? What is the link between gentrification and these negative outcomes?
- We also want to distinguish between intrinsic (inside the household) and extrinsic (outside the household) outcomes.
- What forces affect the quality of people’s lives, such as work/life balance, labour attachment, etc.?
- What forces affect the quality of life in the neighbourhood, such as market forces, government policy (housing, income security, immigration, urban development) and demographic change?

QUESTION #2

Question 2 focuses on developing and testing different models for effectively influencing change.

How can people in urban neighbourhoods successfully shape the development of their environment to create a community that is socially cohesive and inclusive?

- Are there different civic engagement models for renters, homeowners, homeless people, small business owners, and larger businesses and employers present in the neighbourhoods?
- What is the best model for interacting with all three levels of government to influence policy decisions?

QUESTION #3

Question 3 focuses on effective community engagement practice.

What can we learn from recent and emerging community practice about effective action against negative forces and support for positive forces to ensure better outcomes?

- How can we build a body of community practice evidence to help community development, given the forces at work? How effective have recent attempts to effect change been, and what can we learn from them in developing new models?
- What changes have recently come about and why (where are the case studies of successes)? To what extent do these changes affect the larger forces? Are people becoming more engaged? How effective over time are these responses? What initiatives have failed to achieve intended or positive outcomes and why (where are the case studies of failures)?

The above questions have emerged from a consultation process with our community partners. They are plain English versions of questions that are high on the research agenda of many social scientists. We note, for example, that in November 2003, the two leading journals in this area published special theme issues: *Housing Studies*, on “Life in Poverty Neighbourhoods” and *Urban Studies*, on “Misunderstood Saviour or Vengeful Wrecker? The Many Meanings and Problems of Gentrification.”

5. Literature Review

Gentrification is one name given to a range of complex dynamics that change neighbourhoods (Smith and Williams, 1986; Badcock, 1993; Rose, 1996; Smith and Keating, 1996; Ley, 2000; Hackworth 2001; Slater, Curran and Lees, 2004). There is plenty of empirical evidence about the displacement of lower-income households, but much less on the experience of the people being displaced (Van Weesep, 1994; Lees, 2000; Atkinson, 2002; Slater, Curran and Lees, 2004). In Toronto, many agencies have identified growing poverty, injustice, and the need for new social and physical infrastructure investment, but these studies do not improve our ability to address change at the neighbourhood level (TD Bank Financial Group, 2002a; 2002b; Toronto Board of Trade, 2002; Toronto City Summit Alliance, 2003; United Way of Greater Toronto, 2002; 2004; City of Toronto, 2003; 2004).

The gentrification literature questions the relevance of many of the conceptual debates of the past two decades and recognizes that there is little that is directly relevant to policy making. This research project seeks (1) to build on the existing literature by improving our conceptual framing and theoretical understanding of neighbourhood change processes and (2) to identify urban policies and programs that support displacement in order to recommend policy directions that could rectify these exclusionary processes. For this reason, we have “grounded” our project in an individual but large case study area in a dynamic city.

Why study neighbourhoods? The literature makes clear that neighbourhoods still matter (Henning and Lieberg, 1996; Ellen and Turner, 1997; Forrest, 2000; Forest and Kearns, 2001; Beau-

vais and Jenson, 2003). They are a source of social identity and meaning. The process of globalization has given new significance to the local. In a global post-industrial age with its changing forms of associational activity, neighbourhoods are still important physical sites (Schoenberg 1979; Putnam 1995). They provide the context for the routine aspects of our daily lives; they are important sites for investment (and may serve as important “commodities”), they are a basis for our social-psychological-emotional notion of community, and they serve as a consumption niche for marketers and developers (Forrest, 2000; Forest and Kearns, 2001). In short, neighbourhoods are vitally important social arenas that play important but increasingly specialized roles (Forrest, 2000:14). Neighbourhoods also matter more to policy makers nowadays (Forrest, 2000; Peterman, 2000; Kearns and Parkinson, 2001; Pitkin, 2001; Purdue, 2001). What was once “the inner-city problem” of physical decline and middle class flight is now a problem of the lack of social cohesion and overall well-being in a growing number of neighbourhoods with concentrated poverty and disadvantage.

Why study gentrification? As Slater (2003:7) notes, there “is widespread scholarly agreement that gentrification is a multi-faceted phenomenon which can only be explained from a holistic point of departure” (see also Clark, 1994; Rose, 1996; Butler, 1997; Lees, 2000; Bridge, 2001a, 2001b; Butler and Robson, 2001; Wyly and Hammel, 2002; Slater, 2002). Our case study area is large enough and diverse enough to produce a holistic analysis that can inform policy. With the participation of local agencies and community leaders, the researchers can focus on the economic, social, demographic, cultural, and policy trends and the dynamics that together produce “gentrification.” As Butler and Robson (2001:2160) conclude, gentrification “cannot in any sense be considered to be a unitary phenomenon, but needs to be examined in each case according to its own logic and outcomes.” Our project will contribute to a “comprehensive geography of gentrification” (Ley, 1996; Lees, 2000; Slater, 2002; Slater, 2003). Researchers have begun to note that “different middle-class groups would be attracted to different areas and this would be determined by a range of factors, in addition to what they might be able to afford in particular housing markets” (Butler and Robson, 2001:2146-8).

The literature has highlighted the tendency of urban policy to direct the process of gentrification (Moss, 1997; Ley, 2000; Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Badcock, 2001; Vicario and Monje, 2003). Ten years ago Jan van Weesep (1994) argued that we need to focus on the effects – not the causes – of gentrification, and that one way to do this is “to put the gentrification debate into policy perspective” (74). Our research will contribute to the gentrification debate by asking why and how gentrification has become embedded in contemporary urban policy (Lees, 2003). Moreover, our research seeks to fill the gap on the consequences of gentrification for people living in the neighbourhoods experiencing it – or in adjacent neighbourhoods (Slater, Curran and Lees 2004). Our contribution to the research will encompass the class dimensions of neighbourhood change, as well as issues of displacement and replacement (Cybriwsky, 1978; Bridge, 1995).

Do theories of neighbourhood change matter? One controversy in the theoretical debates around neighbourhood change is the question: to what extent do theories of neighbourhood change affect neighbourhoods? Theories of neighbourhood change date back to the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1920s (Park, 1916; Burgess, 1925; Wirth, 1938) using analogies to natural systems. An ecological (life cycle) theory about urban development emerged in the U.S. that described neighbourhood change as a cycle ending with inevitable decline. The ecological theory dominated

most of the last century and the debate continues to this day. For example, a special issue of *Housing Policy Debate* (vol. 11:1, 2000) was devoted to the question of the influence of theory on neighbourhood change.

Many argue that demographic, social, and economic forces have a more significant impact than the theories of urban experts on the public policy, building, and finance communities that affect neighbourhoods (e.g., Downs, 1981; 2000; Caulfield 1994; Moss 1997; Galster, 2000; Temkin, 2000). However, Metzger (2000) argues that, in the U.S. at least, theories of neighbourhood change – in particular, neighbourhood life-cycle theories and triage planning – facilitated the decline of many inner-city, low-income, African-American neighbourhoods. He links influential individuals with interlocking relationships in government, industry, and academic institutions to coordinated actions, public and private, that advance the interests of an elite at the expense of low-income inner-city neighbourhoods. As Lang (2000:4) notes, this “analysis is often quite compelling” since the “network of people who influence an area of the economy or public policy can be quite small because important people tend to have institutional affiliations that overlap or in some way connect.” However, he also notes that “connections among the powerful are not synonymous with a commonality of interests” and elites “are seldom monolithic or single-minded in their purpose” (Lang, 2000:5). In addition, much of this debate is about the 1950s to the early 1970s, when there was less engagement of residents in neighbourhood issues.

The early theoretical debates about neighbourhood change did not fully, if at all, emphasize the possibility of residents initiating effective collective action to address local conditions. In response to this omission, some researchers argue for the important role of endogenous forces in processes of neighbourhood change (Suttles 1972; Stoecker 1994; Peterman 2000; Pitkin 2001; Smith and Weber 2003; DeFilippis 2004). This observation leads to a key aspect of any conceptual framework for understand neighbourhood change: that internal as well as external forces are at work that are often interconnected (Bunting & Filion 1988; Pitkin 2001; Galster 2001). Neighbourhood residents are not fully in control of their collective fates. As Temkin (2000:59) notes: “Large-scale structural changes in the form of continued suburbanization of employment opportunities, the shift to a service-oriented economy, and increased globalization create effects beyond the scope of any well-meaning neighbourhood-based advocacy organization”(see also, Forrest, Henderson and Williams 1982; Ley 1993). The ability of neighbourhood residents to engage in effective action is constrained by political, social, and institutional realities, local and global. But residents can alter the impact of trends – if they understand the nature of the external forces affecting them, if they choose to take action, and if policy makers allow them to become involved in this process (Docherty, Goodlad and Paddison, 2001; Meegan and Mitchell, 2001).

A starting premise of this research is that theories and research *can* affect outcomes at the neighbourhood level. It is critical to recognize the impact of theoretical positions on decision-makers that may result in inefficient outcomes at the neighbourhood level (Rohe and Gates, 1985; Smith 1996). It is also important to understand the many factors that interact to produce change at the neighbourhood level and to recognize the ability of neighbourhoods to react to these changes. At the same time, neighbourhoods can influence potential changes (see Gans 1962; Hamnnet and Williams 1980; Nyden and Wiewel 1991; Robinson 1995; Peterman 2000). Thus, to facilitate research into appropriate policies that enable neighbourhoods to address the challenges of gentrification, research, policy development, and neighbourhood action must be linked (Marcuse 1985;

Basolo and Strong 2002). Researchers must inform theory by acknowledging the complexities and interconnections of the factors that produce neighbourhood change. Policy makers need to respond to these factors by recognizing the diverse, often negative impact of their decisions. And neighbourhood residents must be knowledgeable about forces that create change and have the capacity to engage. Researchers need to integrate “a more holistic view of how neighbourhoods change....and be open to new methods and ways of understanding to meet the changing conditions that impact neighbourhoods today” (Pitkin 2001:23).

6. Research Activities

The research questions outlined above can be answered only by designing an integrated set of mixed-method research projects, large and small, managed by research working groups. These will build upon one another and will be phased in and out at different points. Where existing data sets are available and relevant, extensive secondary analysis will be carried out. Much of the research effort will involve original data collection: interviews, focus groups, and surveys of important features of the neighbourhoods. The data collection and analysis provide the basis for understanding the dynamics affecting the neighbourhood. This process informs and provides guidance to community action by diverse stakeholders. At the same time, community involvement in the research provides direction and relevancy for the research (Buckeridge, Hulchanski *et al.* 2002).

Four key research theme areas. We propose one overarching research project examining local trends (e.g., demographic composition, type and size of households, and socio-economic status of the residents) and relevant policies and programs that affect these trends. This project will begin immediately and a monitoring and updating process will continue to the end of the project (the 2006 Census data will be available by then). The analysis of existing databases will be supplemented with original data collection as needed. The three areas that will be thoroughly researched are: housing, community infrastructure (social and physical), and life transitions and aging. All four projects focus on the ethno-cultural diversity within the study area.

Two tasks for all research initiatives. All four research projects and their sub-projects must complete two tasks. The first is to contribute to our understanding of neighbourhood change by documenting, analyzing, monitoring, and forecasting trends. The second is to influence neighbourhood change by informing, educating, and mobilizing stakeholders. University-based researchers and community-based researchers and partner agencies will work together within a participatory research model. The two tasks are not necessarily sequential. Each has feedback loops that allow for questions and improvements. All research initiatives will also provide the diverse group of stakeholders with examples from other jurisdictions of successful strategies to influence neighbourhood change. These options may stimulate the development of new strategies as well.

Research as a community development, participatory process. Specific decisions about what to research within the four key areas will be carried out through a participatory process. The Steering Committee, starting with the community partners at an inception workshop, will refine the research tasks outlined below (which were derived through a consultative process carried out over the past three months). The Research Advisory Committee (which reports to the Steering Committee) will review and approve the research teams for each of the specific research tasks. The

teams will then undertake a participatory research process to refine the nature and scope of the task; each will have its own management committee drawn from the community and the academics involved. The overall Steering Committee for the CURA will keep others in the community informed about the progress and findings of the research teams and allow for regular feedback from community stakeholders (active outreach, not just passing on information) to ensure important issues are being addressed. This iterative process will help ensure the policy relevance of the research and lay the basis for sustained follow-up by community stakeholders. CUCS maintains a list of resources on participatory action research processes:

www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/curp/participatory.html

Research Theme 1

Neighbourhood Issues and Trends Working Group

To understand how and why neighbourhoods evolve, we need to examine local trends (e.g., demographic composition, the type and size of households, and the socio-economic status of the residents) and the policies that affect these trends. First, we will document long-term neighbourhood change (using, for example, censuses from 1971 to 2001, as well as reports on land use planning, health, immigration, and community services) to understand why these neighbourhoods have the characteristics they do and how they have evolved, and to identify the stress points of neighbourhood change. We will examine, as appropriate, the dynamic relationship between neighbourhoods and the larger city and region. This data will be assembled into templates of neighbourhood character at each census date, and subjected to statistical analyses (e.g., multi-variate discriminant and correlation analyses) to determine which variables best identify the critical dimensions of neighbourhood change. The time series data in phase two will be subjected to analysis to decompose changes in neighbourhood attributes into their structural (i.e., city-wide) and local (i.e., neighbourhood) components. The results of phases one and two will be turned into a set of community-driven indicators of change through community meetings, focus groups, and interviewing. What do residents feel are the most important elements that should be monitored? What issues concern them most? Which common features can be generalized, to the neighbourhoods themselves and to the city beyond? This work will be put in the context of regional and national trends (Bourne, 2003; Simmons and Bourne, 2003; Simmons and Bourne, 2004).

Research Theme 2

Housing Issues and Trends Working Group

Building on the data collected by the neighbourhood trends working group, a housing working group will collect and analyze data on housing stock change in the neighbourhood since 1971. What changes are taking place in the composition of the housing stock in terms of tenure (renting/owning); real estate prices and affordability; type of structure; amount of and need for housing rehabilitation; amount of new construction; trends in rent levels; amount of and addition to the social housing stock; types of social housing; residential densities; conversion and deconversion of buildings; safety of local housing stock, etc. In addition, "houselessness" in the study area will be examined. Who is houseless and why; who is at risk of becoming unhoused and why; and what, if any, are the *local* causes of homelessness? How are homeless people perceived, treated,

or assisted locally? The researchers will work to identify strategies to compete with or intervene in market forces; develop ways to support a range of housing options for diverse households; increase local understanding of homelessness; develop a broad-based community forum to address local causes and effects of homelessness as well as more systemic causes. These issues will be set in the context of current public debate over Canada's housing policy (Hulchanski, 2001, 2002, 2003; City of Toronto, 2003).

Research Theme 3

Social and Physical Community Infrastructure Working Group

One essential component of urban infrastructure is often neglected in the policy debate over a new urban agenda for Canada's cities: the social and community infrastructure of cities, such as public health, recreation, children's services, libraries, and the large network of City-funded non-profit agencies that provide community services. The research will collect and analyze data on trends in the provision, quality, and relevance of social and community infrastructure, with a focus on the needs of lower-income households. This infrastructure includes: community child care and family resource programs that offer learning opportunities for children and support for working parents; language training and settlement programs to help newcomers; recreation for youth; local health units providing instruction and guidance for new mothers; and community programs to reduce social isolation and provide health, education, and social supports to individuals and families. CUCS and co-applicant Rob Howarth have been working on this issue in recent years with St. Christopher House (see Clutterbuck, 2002; Clutterbuck and Howarth, 2002). Some of the specific issues we will examine are: How are existing community services responding to the changes in the neighbourhoods (e.g., discontinued or new programming; funding changes; relocation of services; changed mandates of service organizations). Where and how does the community gather? Who is using existing facilities and who is not? We will also work with funders and governments to increase their awareness of the neighbourhood changes and to address new or changing priorities and with facility operators to ensure they are aware of and responding to local changes appropriately.

Research Theme 4

Life Transitions and Aging Working Group

Neighbourhoods matter more to some socio-economic status groups and in some ethno-cultural settings than others (Henig 1984; Zukin, 1987; Ellen and Turner, 1997; Peterman, 2000; Forrest and Kearns, 2001). Neighbourhoods provide informal resources and are the sites of social interaction and domestic routines (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). They are places to relax and they provide familiar landmarks and a sense of place (a territorial identity). Neighbourhoods do these things in different ways for different socio-economic and ethno-cultural groups. In particular, we will look at families with children and seniors. Children: What is the relationship between changing downtown neighbourhoods and families with children (e.g., school enrolment trends and closures; social and recreational infrastructure for preschoolers, school-aged children and their parents. Seniors: What is the relationship between changing downtown neighbourhoods and seniors (e.g., living arrangements with extended families, alone, or in congregate living arrangements; housing

options and related costs; extent of displacement due to frailty/lack of local caregiving/costs. The researchers will investigate strategies to address the quantity and quality of supports for families with children; identify forums for bringing community members and institutions (e.g. school boards) together for planning and problem-solving; and develop strategies to address the quantity and quality of supports for seniors and their caregivers.

7. Research Process

Action research is a process for developing practical knowledge for worthwhile purposes leading to health and happiness for people and communities. It is about knowledge and practices that contribute to human well being and happiness (Reason & Bradbury 2001: 1).

The research proposed for this CURA is based on a community development approach. Community development is the study of change in the social, economic, organizational, or physical structures of a community that seeks to improve both the welfare of community members and the community's ability to control its future. It entails a variety of citizen-led efforts, carried out within or on behalf of a community, to define problems, develop solutions, and attract the resources necessary to implement activities that address the identified problems.

A community development approach to research involves a participatory action research process. We have engaged in the early stage of this process prior to and since the approval of our Letter of Interest. This process has defined the four research themes for this CURA and the initial details presented above. If funded, the process of further defining the research tasks will continue. We have made available to our partners and research assistants a list of online resources on participatory action research: <http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/curp/participatory.html#>

The research proposed for this CURA will help revitalize and make policy relevant contributions to the body of academic research on neighbourhood change processes, providing policy makers and community activists with relevant and usable information, analysis, and policy and program options. The research, and the research process, will help build further capacity in the community and among university students and professors, through collaborative, practice-oriented applied research. This is research that is participatory and "bottom-up" from the start. It will produce a range of findings that contribute to knowledge and to practice at all levels.

8. Communication: Dissemination and Mobilization of Results

Few studies can accommodate every region's patterns and policy context, let alone every culture's assumptions. Local studies can generate specific advice for policy makers, practitioners, and scholars and address cross-cutting questions about place, patterns of exclusion, social capital, and social opportunity that now concern many policy makers, NGOs, community agencies, and scholars.

A Communications Subcommittee will be established. It will report to the Steering Committee and comprise key community and academic members of the Steering Committee and the CURA team in general. Its job is (1) to ensure that the research working groups are engaging in effective communication throughout the research process (a monitoring and advising function), and (2) to ensure that the communications plan developed at the start of the process is implemented and reviewed and revised as necessary (a planning function). Both of the lead partners have already earned a solid reputation for their ability to communicate research and to inform policy debates in innovative and effective ways.

9. Description of the Team: The Two Lead Partners

The principal partners are St. Christopher House (SCH), a long-established multi-service agency with services and sites serving all the case study neighbourhoods, and the Centre for Urban and Community Studies (CUCS), a multidisciplinary research centre. SCH and CUCS began working together two years ago, when CUCS established its Community / University Research Partnerships Unit. Students from the urban planning program and the social work program have been involved in a community analysis project for SCH, using 2001 Census data. Their reports and maps are on our CURA website: www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/cura/

St. Christopher House www.stchrishouse.org

St. Christopher House (SCH) is a respected multi-service agency working out of six sites across the study area (and only in the study area). Since 1912, St. Christopher House has provided services to people of all ages and cultures. Despite its name, SCH is a secular, not a religious, organization. It has a budget of \$7 million and is funded by the United Way as well as all levels of government and several foundations. There are 80 full-time staff and 120 part-time staff, many of whom live in the area, as well as about 800 volunteers. About 10,000 individuals and families are served each year. St. Christopher House is governed by a volunteer board, many of whom live in the community and are well-versed in community issues. SCH has established a track record as an effective partner in community initiatives and coalitions, with connections to diverse stakeholders in the community, including local politicians and businesspeople, as well as senior officials in governments and leaders in the business and financial sector.

Since its inception as a settlement house, SCH has integrated community development, public policy advocacy, and direct service delivery. An example is a workshop on elder abuse with Portuguese-speaking seniors, which evolved into a leadership training program so that these seniors could act as advocates and supports within their community for others experiencing elder abuse. This work then evolved into a roving troupe of Portuguese and Vietnamese seniors who deliver mimed public education messages about elder abuse and other social issues to diverse audiences all over the GTA. This Health Action Theatre by Seniors (HATS) model incorporates problem-solving and role-playing with audience members, overcoming language differences and building interest in the issue. SCH has identified action theatre as an appropriate model for disseminating the CURA research and getting community feedback.

SCH's Community Response and Advocacy Unit coordinates its community development and policy advocacy work. Its "Community Undertaking Social Policy" (CUSP) project brings a policy expert into St. Christopher House for several months to work with diverse community members and frontline staff as well as with an advisory board of leaders from the financial services sector. The focus of the first two policy experts has been on income-related policies. The dialogue between the experts and people with "lived experience" has resulted in the experts gaining better awareness of the diversity of marginalized people and of the ineffectiveness of many policies targeted at low-income people. At the same time, community members and frontline staff have learned about tradeoffs in policy development. This is another relevant model of community involvement that SCH will bring to this CURA project.

SCH's policy and advocacy work often extends far beyond its catchment area. For example, the CUSP project found that more than 200,000 Canadian low-income seniors were eligible for the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement, but were not being notified of their eligibility. St. Christopher House persuaded the federal government to do more effective outreach to these seniors with the result, to date, that at least 70,000 more low-income Canadian seniors now receive this income supplement.

For this CURA, SCH brings strong connections to the study area's diverse stakeholders as well as experience in involving the community in policy development. SCH also contributes to the credibility of the project, not only with the local community, but also with many senior government and business leaders.

The Centre for Urban and Community Studies www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca

CUCS, established in 1964, promotes and disseminates multidisciplinary research and policy analysis on urban issues. It is a research unit of the School of Graduate Studies. Its research associates come from a dozen different disciplines and professions.

www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/associates.html

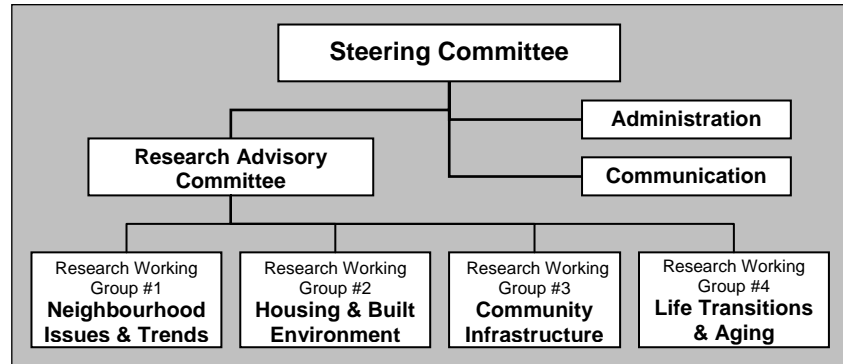
The Centre's *Community / University Research Partnership* unit (CURP) promotes the exchange of knowledge between the university and community agencies and associations. "Community" refers to civil society organizations such as non-profit groups, social agencies, community organizations, or coalitions. CURP represents the U of T's contribution to applied scholarship on the practical problems and policy issues associated with urban living, particularly poverty, housing, homelessness, social welfare, and social justice issues at the local level. CURP's overall goals are: (1) to help define socially important and policy-relevant research agendas; (2) to link researchers and identified research needs; (3) to seek research funding sources that include, but also go beyond, traditional academic sources; and (4) to develop new ways to communicate and disseminate research findings. www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/curp.html

The Centre is also establishing a graduate-level *Collaborative Program in Community Development* that will accept its first students in fall 2004. It has been developed by a group of professors who specialize in community development issues and participatory action research from across the University: Social Work, Community Health, Adult Education and Community Development, Urban Planning and Geography. It is anticipated that the professors and graduate students in the Collaborative Program in Community Development will be associated with this CURA.

www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/communitydevelopment.html

10. Governance

We have reviewed the governance structures of several other CURAs, including the SSHRC /CMHC CURA in Winnipeg and recent CURAs in London and Toronto. The governance of our CURA will be simple. A Steering Committee will be the governing body for the project.



There will also be a *Research Advisory Committee* (which reports to the Steering Committee) consisting of university and community co-applicant researchers (approximately equal numbers). It will be chaired by the Director of CUCS. It will have an open membership – meaning that interested individuals are welcome at all meetings. All research will be reviewed by this committee.

11. Community Partners – in addition to St. Christopher House

The proposed research has a broad scope. As a research alliance, it is important that there is a broad representation of community stakeholders. The partners and their roles include the following.

Residents' associations that are familiar with and committed to the interests of the current residents in the area. These groups have a high proportion of homeowners and long-term tenants. They tend to be led by volunteers who are highly invested (socially and/or financially) in their neighbourhoods (Roncesvalles, MacDonell in Parkdale, Niagara Neighbourhood and Stan Rzepka who is very active in the Queen Street West/Ossington area).

Volunteer organizations that bring together people of common identity who would otherwise have difficulty participating in more mainstream culture. They have been established to provide mutual support. They provide the other research alliance partners with insights into their situations as immigrants with special needs as well as modelling civic engagement for others (Portuguese Women 55+ and the Society of Disabled Portuguese Persons).

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), a large institution that has a long history of influence on the area (socially, economically, physically) and is currently in the process of a significant redevelopment. The relatively high proportion of people in the study area with current and past associations with the CAMH tend to be the more marginalized and poorer residents in the area, living in boarding houses or supportive housing projects. CAMH increasingly has become an advocate for these community members in addition to representing its own considerable interest in local developments.

Alternative health service-providers in the area that connect to marginalized community members, including significant numbers of homeless and underhoused people as well as immigrants who lack legal status in Canada. They provide the research alliance with a broader view of health, including the social determinants of health (Central Toronto Community Health Centre and Parkdale Community Health Centre).

Other local community services that provide an array of supports to diverse community members and bring to the research alliance many connections and opportunities for community involvement. For example, Houselink, Parkdale Community Legal Services and PARC provide critical perspectives on housing and homelessness. College Montrose Children's Place Early Years Centre and Sistering provide access to local people who are undergoing life transitions. The latter two agencies also provide essential perspectives on the lives of immigrants who are struggling here. All the community agencies may be sources of key informants for researchers.

City-wide planning bodies that provide important linkages to other parts of Toronto for the purpose of possible research comparisons as well as for disseminating the ongoing results of the project to neighbourhoods in a much larger geographic area (Toronto Neighbourhood Centres and the Community Social Planning Council).

Artscape, an arts organization that is studying the breadth of impacts of arts and culture on local neighbourhoods. Artscape is a housing developer/provider for artists and a leader in the arts sector. They are undertaking important research to document the effect of the arts sector on neighbourhoods, particularly if and how the presence of artists contributes to revitalization and gentrification. This work will be very complementary to our research agenda.

Parkdale Liberty Economic Development, a local community economic development organization that brings together local business operators with residents and agencies to identify and develop strategies to improve the local economy. We need to understand the relationship between gentrification, housing and the local economy so that any recommendations or strategies for influencing change have taken economic impacts into account.

Local business operators on the retail strips who are experienced with the local community and can articulate the changes they have experienced as well as providing feedback on the economic effects of neighbourhood change (Lesli Gaynor from Mitzi's and Mitzi's Sister, Steven Bulger Gallery).

All of these partners are participating in the CURA without funding/reimbursement from SSHRC. The partners are all important players in the area under study and they have expressed their interest and need to be part of the process of understanding and influencing neighbourhood

change. Only by including such a variety of partners can this research alliance ensure that the project produces results that are meaningful and acceptable to this diverse community.

12. Why a Research Alliance approach?

Through our research alliance, we wish to contribute to a new understanding of community development practice in the Canadian urban context. We hope to build further capacity in the community and among university students and academics, through high-quality, collaborative, practice-oriented research. While there has been a great deal of research documenting gentrification and displacement, there has been very little that is policy- and program-relevant and action-oriented. We are not aware of any other large-scale research initiatives based on a participatory action research design and process. There is a need to update and revitalize academic debates about neighbourhood change and, at the same time, provide policy makers and community activists with usable information, analysis, policy options, and modes of community practice. Research that is participatory and “bottom-up” from the start will produce a range of findings that contribute to knowledge and to practice at all levels.

We seek a comprehensive examination of the causes and effects of gentrification and a determination of what policy and program options exist. We need to better understand the complex interactions of possible influences on the neighbourhoods and this can best be done by integrating several disciplines (planning, geography, social work, social policy, sociology, health, etc.) with a strong community-based team in a participatory research process.

Moreover, the multi-disciplinary alliance model is important to the community involvement aspect of this study as well. The different stakeholders in the neighbourhoods need to come to a common understanding of the changes under way in the area in order to respond in a coordinated way to these changes. Isolated research involving only some stakeholders would not be acceptable to the broader community, thereby reducing the chances of that research producing any meaningful action.

Furthermore, all research must: (1) contribute to our understanding of neighbourhood change by documenting, analyzing, monitoring, and forecasting trends; and (2) influence neighbourhood change by informing, educating, and mobilizing stakeholders (public policy relevance and widespread dissemination). This is best achieved by university-based researchers and community-based researchers and partner agencies working together within a participatory research model.

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