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Lovely Spaces in Unknown Places: Creative City Building in Toronto's Inner Suburbs

Michael Noble

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Executive Summary

Toronto's suburbs are a creative wasteland and historic mistake. Toronto's downtown is stimulating, eclectic and full of life.

The suburbs are the home of the Strong Neighbourhoods strategy – targeting "priority areas" marked by violence, poverty and a lack of community. The downtown is home to the Creative City strategy – targeting the hip, intelligent and worldly creative class, with new solutions to every problem.

Are these perceptions accurate? Are the two strategies incompatible?

In this report, I examine the applicability of a creative cities strategy to Toronto's inner suburbs, particularly its priority neighbourhoods. I studied two priority neighbourhoods – one in North York, the other in Scarborough − through personal observations and interviews with individuals working in arts, culture and creative industries. Interview subjects include:

- Sady Ducros, whose graffiti art and ideas for community youth engagement continue to enliven the community a decade after he moved downtown;
- Rev. Denise Gillard, whose combined church and music/dance school is internationally lauded, and hidden in the back unit of an industrial park;
- Albert Sliwin, whose abandoned manufacturing plants evolved into the city's second fashion district.

Observations from these and other interviews revealed that:

- patterns of creativity and building use are similar to those in downtown environments, but adapted to a different built form;
- creative groups offer significant social benefits to marginalized communities;
- the suburbs have a creative class strongly rooted in local neighbourhoods;
- the creative activities are hampered by physical dispersion and a lack of connectivity between organizations;
- creative groups face significant funding challenges.

These results demonstrate that the creative class is having a significant impact on the social, physical, economic, and cultural life of the inner suburbs and has the potential for even greater impacts in future. I therefore propose the development of a Creative City Strategy for the Inner Suburbs, to be formed through community engagement and integrated with existing creative city and strong neighbourhood agendas. This perspective would lead to a more inclusive, diverse and effective creative city vision for Toronto.

Author

Michael Noble graduated from the University of Toronto in 2008 with a Master of Science in Planning. In addition to his work in Toronto, Michael has worked with the Innovation Systems Research Network to study innovation in Hamilton, Ontario, and travelled to Indonesia to study creative initiatives in the city of Bandung. Michael is currently working as an Assistant Planner for the City of Toronto on the Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Project

Prior to pursuing a career in planning, Michael's interest in creativity and urban issues was developed through his time as chair of the Car-Free Day campaign with the environmental organization Sierra Club Ontario, and as a volunteer on local and international programs with Ve'ahavta: The Canadian Jewish Humanitarian and Relief Committee. He is also a comedy writer and performer whose work has appeared on Much Music and stages across Toronto.

Message from the Author

This paper is the result of research that I conducted in 2007 and early 2008. It represents a particular perspective at a particular period of time. You may have your own thoughts on the neighbourhoods that I have discussed, or the broader topic of creative city building in Toronto's inner suburbs more generally. If you have praise, criticism, queries, corrections or updates, I encourage you to email me at: mn@michaelnoble.com so that we can continue the conversation. I look forward to hearing from you. Sincerely, Michael Noble.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank Sarah for her love, support and proofreading and to my parents, family and friends for their ideas and inspiration over the years.

For their time and ideas, I thank my supervisor, Meric Gertler, my second reader, Larry Bourne, and course coordinator Philippa Campsie. I would also like to thank my outside advisor Tim Jones and the others at Artscape who have provided their assistance, particularly Lori Tesolin. I am also grateful to the many community members and Toronto city staff who were willing to speak with me and provided the wisdom that I have tried to collect in this paper.

In the Planning and Geography department, the ISRN group, and Cultural Economy Lab, I would like to thank my fellow students and researchers as well as the many professors with whom I have had interesting discussions and shared ideas.

Finally I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, for helping provide me with food and a roof.

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1. The Creative City

In recent years, academic literature and public policies have promoted the benefits of the "creative city" agenda, in which arts, culture and creative industries have an important part to play in city building. This agenda has often been manifested as a downtown-focused, cluster-based strategy, aimed at regional economic development. Critics of such strategies point to their inability to address economic stratification, and their potential to exacerbate disparities between different people and neighbourhoods,[1] leading to gentrification and displacement.

More recently there has been a call for a more socially inclusive, creative city strategy that addresses a broad range of goals in all city neighbourhoods, not just downtown areas. More specifically, as inner-city areas have improved through reinvestment, the spotlight has begun to turn to the post−Second World War inner suburbs.[2] Many of these neighbourhoods now struggle with a lack of community infrastructure, higher levels of poverty, crime, and the challenge of absorbing a growing population of primarily new immigrants. In Toronto, thirteen priority neighbourhoods were identified by a joint task force of the United Way and the City of Toronto and designated for reinvestment (Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force, 2005). These neighbourhoods are typically left out of the creative-cities discourse, on the assumptions that they lack employment in creative industries and feature an urban form that does not resemble the form many people associate with creative industries.

In this report, I seek to determine whether a creative cities strategy could be applied to Toronto's inner suburbs, particularly its priority neighbourhoods. I examined the creative organizations that do exist in these neighbourhoods, and investigated the community-building role that they play. Based on an analysis of these organizations, I make some recommendations on tools and policies that may be effective at implementing a socially inclusive creative cities strategy in Toronto's inner suburbs.

1 In 2000, City of Toronto staff divided the city into 140 "neighbourhoods" for reporting purposes. These are amalgamations of census tracts with borders defined by criteria including income, natural features, and infrastructure elements such as roads or railways. When I refer to "neighbourhoods" in this report, these are the geographical units under discussion.

2 Definitions of the "inner suburbs" vary. For our purposes they will be defined as ring of automobile-dependent suburbs constructed around the central city in the period from 1946 to 1980 (adapted from Lee and Leigh, 2005).

Defining the Creative City

The *Merriam Webster* dictionary describes creativity as “making or bringing into existence something new” (Merriam-Webster, 2008). This activity is often manifested in the development of new ideas, or the application of old ideas in new ways. Richard Florida describes creativity as “sifting through data, perceptions and materials to come up with combinations that are new and useful” (Florida, 2002).

Cities characterized as creative are seen to have a spirit of experimentation and innovation. Creativity is powered by the broad participation of an eclectic mix of people possessing a diversity of occupations, personalities, economic and cultural backgrounds, and types of knowledge in addressing an eclectic mix of problems (economic, social, environmental, and cultural). They do so both consciously through specific organizations and initiatives, and unintentionally through individual creative action within an interconnected environment. (Bradford, 2004)

Creativity and Economic Growth

The ability to inspire and direct creativity and innovation has long been seen as one of the strengths of the modern city and the engines of city growth. For example, in *The Economy of Cities*, Jane Jacobs identifies the development of “New Work” – new goods, services, and processes – as fundamental to the growth and success of cities, and the key difference between those that stagnate or decay and those that grow (Jacobs, 1969).

Cities that are well-suited to developing this new work are those that are more diverse and complex. While such places may have more day-to-day problems than more homogenous cities, these problems also spur processes of experimentation aimed at finding solutions. Unusual ideas are developed through trial, error, and failure. Once developed, these new ideas multiply their impact in unexpected ways, including offering new applications for existing solutions. A continuous process of technological development and advancement in such cities continually improves the quality of life for its citizens. Jacobs refers to these strengths of complex cities the “valuable inefficiencies and impracticalities of cities.” (Jacobs, 1969).

If creativity has always been part of the discussion on building strong cities, in the last decade or so, it has moved to the centre of this discussion in North America. A variety of interconnected trends have caused this shift, including advancements in information, communication, and transportation technologies, economic and political liberalization, the rise of the knowledge economy, and the decline of the manufacturing industries, as production has shifted to developing countries.

In this competitive urban environment, creativity is seen as a valuable resource. It can allow cities to develop a niche in the global economy based on distinctive physical and cultural characteristics (Duxbury, 2004). Furthermore, creativity can be applied to producing better and more unique products and services as well as contributing to city-building processes that develop, attract, nurture, and retain talented individuals (Gertler, 2004). The economic importance of creativity has prompted some writers to characterize modern, western societies as having entered the “Creative Age” (Florida, 2002).

Creative Individuals

The Creative Class

The most well known researcher of cities in the creative age is Richard Florida. In *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Florida refers to creativity as "the defining feature of economic life." Florida focuses attention on a specific group of workers in the American economy, whom he refers to as the "Creative Class." This class is defined by their type of occupation and is divided into two rings; the super-creative core and the creative problem-solvers around them.

Those in the "super-creative core" are responsible for coming up with the "new work" that Jacobs described – new ideas, products, services and technologies – which Florida calls "new forms." This core includes architects, engineers, and artists. The second tier is made up of "creative professionals" such as doctors, lawyers, and managers who do not create "new forms" but do engage in independent, creative problem-solving.

The Artistic Dividend

The creative cities discourse includes a focus on the instrumental role of arts and culture as a contributor to the economic success of the creative city.

Artists are seen to contribute to regional economies in a variety of ways. First, they create and export unique products. Second, they are typically entrepreneurial, seeking to work in different industries, and enhancing the level of creativity in those industries, bringing improvements in areas such as product design, production, and marketing. Finally, through their work, artists improve the image and attractiveness of a region and therefore attract other creative workers. Taken together, the benefits that accrue to a region with particularly high concentrations of artists have been described as the "artist dividend" (Markusen and King, 2003).

Creative Industries

While studies by Florida and Markusen look at creative workers and their occupations, economic development researchers and strategists have also sought to understand the creative economy by focusing on particular industries. The goal of this focus is to inform regional economic strategies and direct policy interventions (Gertler, et al., 2005). In 1998, the U.K.'s Creative Industries Task Force (CITF) defined such industries as "activities which originate in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" (as quoted in AuthentiCity, 2008). This description is only one of many, however, and there is significant debate over how best to define and classify such industries, which industries to include, and even whether the term "creative industries" is appropriate.[3] The key factor influencing these definitions is the local context and time period in which they are developed.

3 In 2005, London- and Toronto-based research teams produced the report, "Strategies for Creative Spaces Phase 1," which includes an extensive discussion of the value and definition of creative industries and the debates about its definition (Gertler, et al., 2005).

Discussions of creative industries are often linked to development of industry clusters. Definitions of creative clusters also vary, but typically refer to a "linked grouping of creative industries, firms or cultural activities which has a spatial concentration and significant growth potential" (Gertler, et al., 2005). The City of Toronto's Creative City Planning Framework defines the city's leading creative clusters as:

- film and television;
- new media;
- design (e.g. graphic, industrial, interior, fashion);
- music and sound recording;
- performing arts;
- media and publishing.

Some see this list as incomplete. Blay-Palmer and Donald (2006), for example, have argued persuasively for the importance of Toronto's "new food economy" from a cluster and innovation systems perspective. The new food economy is defined as: locally owned "specialty, local, organic, and ethnic companies that process food for either local consumption or for export."

Beyond Economic Growth

Some theorists, including many of those previously mentioned, see the Creative City as more than just an economic tool. Economic, cultural, social, and physical forms of growth are seen to be intrinsically linked. Gertler, for example, discusses the link between "creativity, competitiveness and cohesion" in Canadian cities. Economic competitiveness is driven by creativity, which in turn depends on the "quality of place" in a community, including its social cohesion; "strong vibrant neighbourhoods, relative freedom from social deprivation, and access to employment and social services such as shelter, education, nutrition and health care are fundamental components of quality of place" (Gertler, 2004). Florida addresses similar issues in the American context, while putting a strong emphasis on the pull of the "experiential lifestyle" – access to "intense, authentic experiences" found in high-achieving work environments, participatory sports in a clean environment, and vibrant and diverse neighbourhood streets (Florida, 2002).

Cities that invest in building this quality of space are seen to be feeding a virtuous cycle in which creative people are inspired, compelling forms of art are produced, economic growth is spurred, and more money can be invested in city development. Different people prioritize and focus on different points in this virtuous cycle. For some, economic growth is the ultimate benefit. For others, the intrinsic value of the art that is produced in a vibrant, creative city is central, while economic growth and social diversity are enabling tools.

A third perspective focuses on the community development side of the equation, with arts, culture, and industry acting as tools for building stronger communities. This perspective is sometimes referred to as "community cultural development" (Creative City Network of Canada, 2008). Activities often involve community arts, in which professional artists work with community members to create artistic work in community spaces (Resonance Creative Consulting, 2006). Such approaches are also linked to the idea of Asset-Based Community Development (Kretzmann

and McKnight, 1993). Rather than focusing on the deficiencies in a community, planning in this way builds on its strengths, including the creativity of all citizens.

Gaps and Criticisms

Despite the potential for this virtuous cycle, significant gaps have been identified in the creative city agenda, particularly the question of who benefits from the creative city and who is left out.

Economic geographers note that local characteristics have a significant impact on economic prosperity (Gertler, 2001). In such an environment, certain regions, cities and neighbourhoods are "star performers," with features that make them better suited to becoming hubs of creativity and economic growth. Similarly, certain occupations – those of the creative class – bring higher levels of economic success, while other occupations are left behind. Florida, for example, has noted that the most creative cities are also those with the greatest level of inequality between creative and manufacturing wages (Florida, 2005).

Even within the creative class occupations, there are significant disparities between a small group of star performers – superstar architects, musicians or researchers – and a large group of others who may be unable to make a living by working full time on their creative pursuits. Taken together, these factors contribute to serious divisions that Bradford describes as a "paradox of globalization":

> The talented minority command huge premiums, while many others navigate an unstable urban labour market with its own cluster of low-end service jobs...Expensive housing and exclusive retail thrive. The affordable and practical disappear...creative districts, innovation corridors and million-dollar neighbourhoods become increasingly sealed off from the rest of the city (Bradford, 2007).

This tendency towards stratification may be an intrinsic characteristic of the creative age. According to critics such as Jamie Peck, Florida and other creative class advocates ignore or accept this stratification, and therefore advocate policies which reinforce or increase it (Peck, 2005). One notable example is the fact that investments in "star" neighbourhoods increase the cost of land there relative to the rest of the city, leading to gentrification and displacement (Peck, 2005; Barnes et al., 2006).

In the Toronto context, stratification has manifested itself over the last several decades in a geographical divide between the rising inner city and the declining inner suburbs (Hulchanski, 2007). The identification of this divide – both in Toronto and across modern cities more generally – has led to broad agreement on the need to explicitly respond to the social and economic stratification embedded in the creative economy – a "socially inclusive creative city" strategy (Bradford, 2007). The next section describes the characteristics of decline in Toronto's inner suburbs and establishes a framework for the development of a socially inclusive creative city strategy to address this decline.

2. The Inner Suburbs

The Decline of the Inner Suburbs

The problems of the downtown cores of modern cities have been well documented and are viewed by some as the primary preoccupation of modern planning (Hall, 2001). In the mid-20th century, the response to urban crowding, industrial pollution, and a booming population in North America was to create new suburban neighbourhoods. In these areas, industry was carefully separated from residences, large homes with generous lots were accessible to the middle class, and the automobile was seen as a quick, efficient, and affordable way to get around. The rings of automobile-dependent suburbs constructed around cities like Toronto between 1946 and 1980 are typically now referred to as the "inner suburbs" (Lee and Leigh, 2005). This is in contrast to the "outer suburbs" or "exurbs" further away from the original city core, which have been constructed primarily since 1980. In the Toronto context, the former cities of North York, Scarborough, and north Etobicoke are particularly characteristic of the inner suburban form, though some other parts of the city would qualify as well.

In the popular imagination, Toronto's essential nature is contained within the downtown core. However, the pre-amalgamation City of Toronto makes up only a small percentage of the larger city. In 2001, the city as a whole had almost 2.5 million residents. Of these, fewer than 700,000 lived in the former City of Toronto, while most of the remaining 1.8 million resided in inner suburban communities (Relph, 2002). The city's official plan calls for the majority of new residents to be settled in these suburban areas – adding perhaps hundreds of thousands of people in the next two decades (City of Toronto City Planning, 2006). The majority of these inner suburban neighbourhoods were built in the mid-20th century with a dramatically different urban form; dominated by the automobile, strip malls, industrial buildings, and public housing, with few community amenities or historical buildings.

Perhaps because of this urban form, some of Toronto's inner suburban neighbourhoods have seen a relative decline in income for several decades, as middle-class families have moved either downtown or to suburban cities like Markham or Brampton. These changes have been identified as part of a broader trend of income polarization in Toronto. A recent study by the University of Toronto's Centre for Urban and Community Studies (CUCS) characterizes Toronto as three separate cities, with neighbourhoods categorized based on changes in individual in-

come between 1970 and 2000 (Figure 1). City #1 has seen incomes rise by 20 percent, City #2 has remained essentially static, and City #3 has seen incomes drop by 20 percent. The majority of neighbourhoods in City #3 are in the inner suburbs. As of 2000, broad sections of Etobicoke, North York, and Scarborough had average individual incomes 20 to 40 percent below the city average (Figure 2). This trend is believed to have continued until today (Hulchanski et al., 2008).

There is a wide diversity within the inner suburbs, however, which contain neighbourhoods that fall into each of the three categories. For example, neighbourhoods close to the Yonge subway line in North York are typically City #1 areas. Even within City #3, there is significant variation, and further study has sub-classified these neighbourhoods into four categories (Figure 3);

- Group A: Larger households, higher-than-average economic status, newer owner-occupied single-family homes, many foreign-born non-whites, especially Chinese.
- Group B: More seniors, average economic status, older owner-occupied housing, largely white population.
- Group C: Mixed socio-economic status, higher levels of education, more rental apartments, many foreign-born recent immigrants, South Asians and other non-white visible minorities.
- Group D: More single-parent families, lower economic status and education levels, rental apartments and social housing, more children, largely blacks and other visible minorities.

The City of Toronto's primary method of addressing inner suburban decline has been through the Strong Neighbourhoods program (Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force, 2005). Working with the United Way, the City identified thirteen Priority Neighbourhoods within the inner suburbs as communities at risk (Figure 4). These areas have a lack of community infrastructure and face challenges across a wide range of areas, from education to building upkeep (Low, 2006). A variety of initiatives are currently under way to respond to issues in these neighbourhoods.

Problems of inner suburban decline are not limited to Toronto – they have been observed across North America. This was shown in an exhaustive survey of 554 suburbs by researchers at the University of Virginia, who refer to the period since 1980 as the "post-suburban era" (Lucy and Phillips, 2000).

The Inner Suburbs and the Creative City

The dominant creative cities literature – including both theoretical research and municipal policy – is focused on the downtown environment, and has little to say about the inner suburbs. This is due to three key preferences.

First, there is a preference for the built form of older downtowns. The design of the inner suburbs is seen to be problematic, and ill-suited to creative organizations. Since the construction of these suburbs began in the postwar period, they have been maligned for their physical form. Books such as Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* present arguments for good urban design in direct opposition to the form that was then being built − "This book is an attack on current city planning" is the book's opening line (Jacobs, 1961). From the perspective of Jacobs and the many other writers who favour the pedestrian-oriented city, the inner suburbs are not just an example of poor urban form, they are the very definition of it.

Creative city advocates similarly point to the value of characteristics such a short blocks, small shops and parks, high population density, and pedestrian access as ways to facilitate the ease and frequency of interactions that support creativity (Gertler, 2004).

Second, there is a desire to develop and reinforce particular neighbourhoods and buildings as, respectively, creative clusters and hubs. Such areas are seen to spur the cross-pollinization between creative individuals that assists them in developing, disseminating and marketing new ideas. This concentration may assist this community in developing broader political and social influence.

Perhaps due to the attractiveness of the built form, such groupings in Toronto tend to occur downtown. Artscape is a Toronto not-for-profit organization that develops affordable artist spaces and has mapped the location of creative individuals and industries. Their findings show a strong agglomeration of artists in certain Toronto neighbourhoods, including Annex/Yorkville and Queen West/Parkdale (Henry, 2007). An examination of artists by neighbourhood based on 2001 census data came to a similar downtown focus, while inner suburban areas typically are at or below the national average of employed artists (Hill Strategies Research Inc., 2005). Several initiatives – including Artscape's Creative Convergence Project (Henry, 2007) have promoted the need to develop and strengthen hubs and clusters as the source of excellent, culturally significant works of art, culture, and science.

A third common characteristic of creative cities literature and policy is the focus on regional economic competitiveness. This is true of strategies such as the City of Toronto's Culture Plan for the Creative City and more recent Creative City Planning Framework within the city's Agenda for Prosperity. While the documents do include support for community arts and strategies for targetting social and economic inclusion, these are typically seen as a separate "pillar" of activity and not directly tied to the core creative city agenda. The documents focus largely on developing the competitive economic strengths of the city/region, including positioning Toronto as an "international cultural capital" attractive to world-class creative industries and internationally mobile creative individuals (City of Toronto, 2003). Such strategies naturally focus on developing the existing strengths of the "iconic" downtown by "identify[ing] clusters of creative sectors and activity, evaluate[ing] cultural assets, promote[ing] a place-based approach to creative sector development and establish[ing] creative hubs and districts" (Toronto Mayor's Economic Competitiveness Advisory Committee, 2008).

Towards a Creative Cities Strategy for the Inner Suburbs

Current creative cities strategies have a downtown focus, both explicitly and implicitly. If fulfilled, they may help attain regional economic development goals. Furthermore, the strengthening of creative clusters and hubs within a traditional urban downtown may result in the production of excellent, culturally significant works of art, culture and science. Even if these strategies are successful however, it is important to be aware of what is missing from them. The inner suburbs are not targeted with specific neighbourhood initiatives, nor are they incorporated into citywide strategies.

This is a gap that leaves the majority of Toronto neighbourhoods outside the core of the creative city − physically and metaphorically. These neighbourhoods are home to the majority of To-

ronto's current and projected population, as well as the site of most of its pressing challenges, including poverty, immigrant settlement, and safety. It is important to bring them into this discussion.

Developing strategies to address the opportunities and challenges of the inner suburbs can be a progressive step towards the socially inclusive creative city strategy that Bradford and other writers have called for. Understanding the need for such strategies and the potential characteristics of them requires a greater knowledge of how creativity manifests itself in an inner suburban environment. This includes learning what creative individuals and industries gain from these neighbourhoods and what they contribute to them.

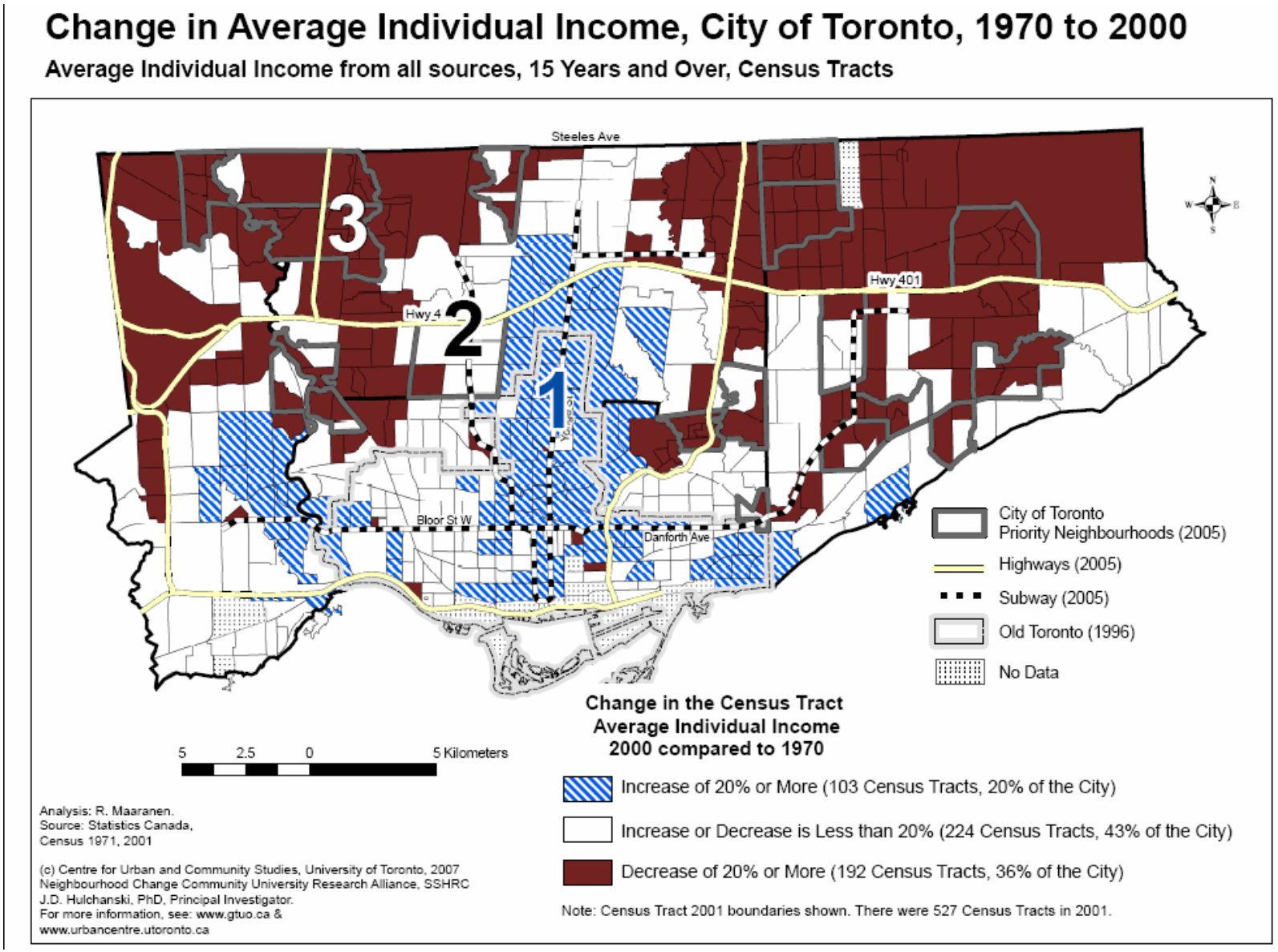

Figure 1: Three Cities in Toronto − Income Changes 1970–2000

Source: Hulchanski, 2007

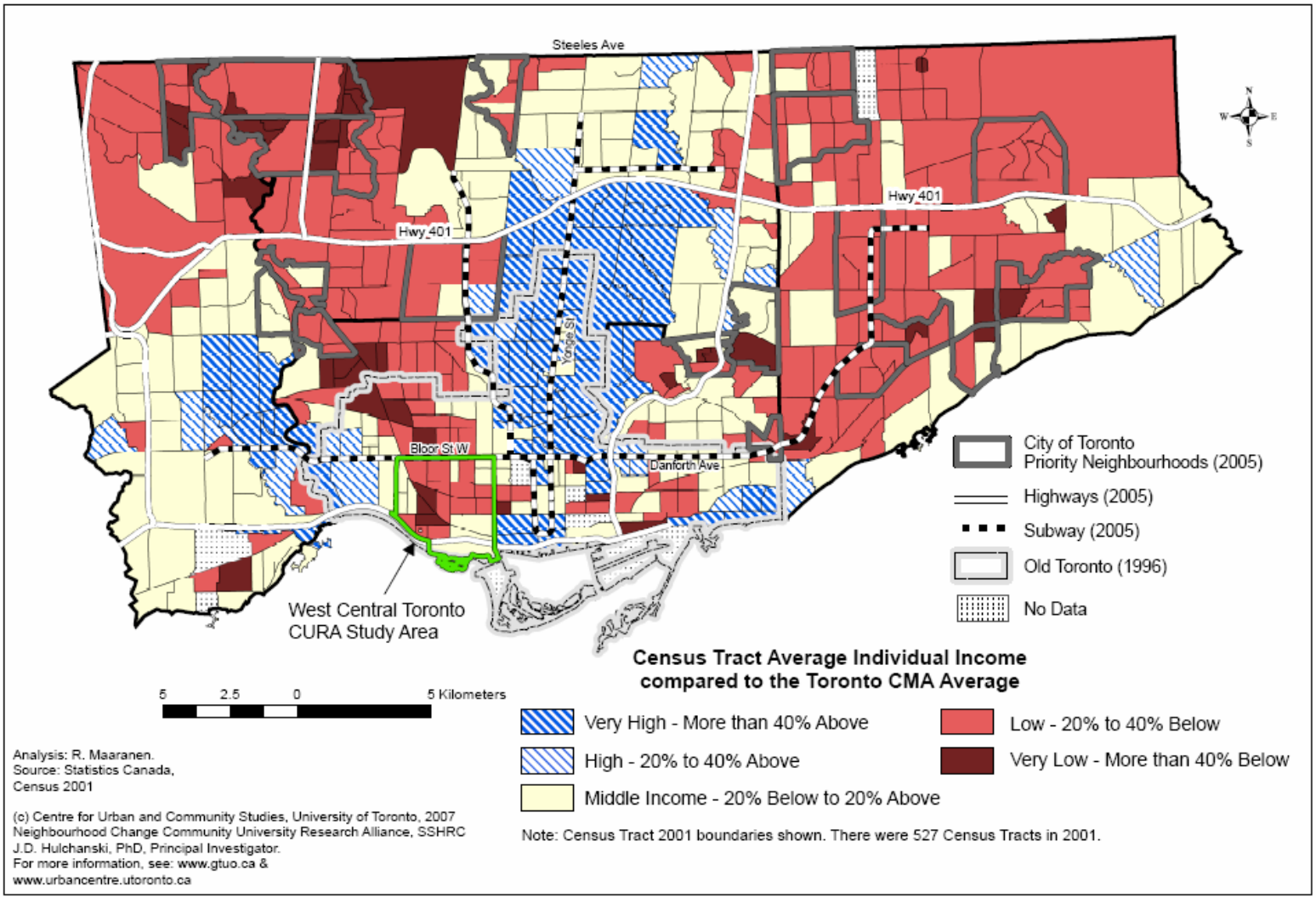

Figure 2: Average Individual Income, Toronto Neighbourhoods, 2000

Source: (Hulchanski, 2007)

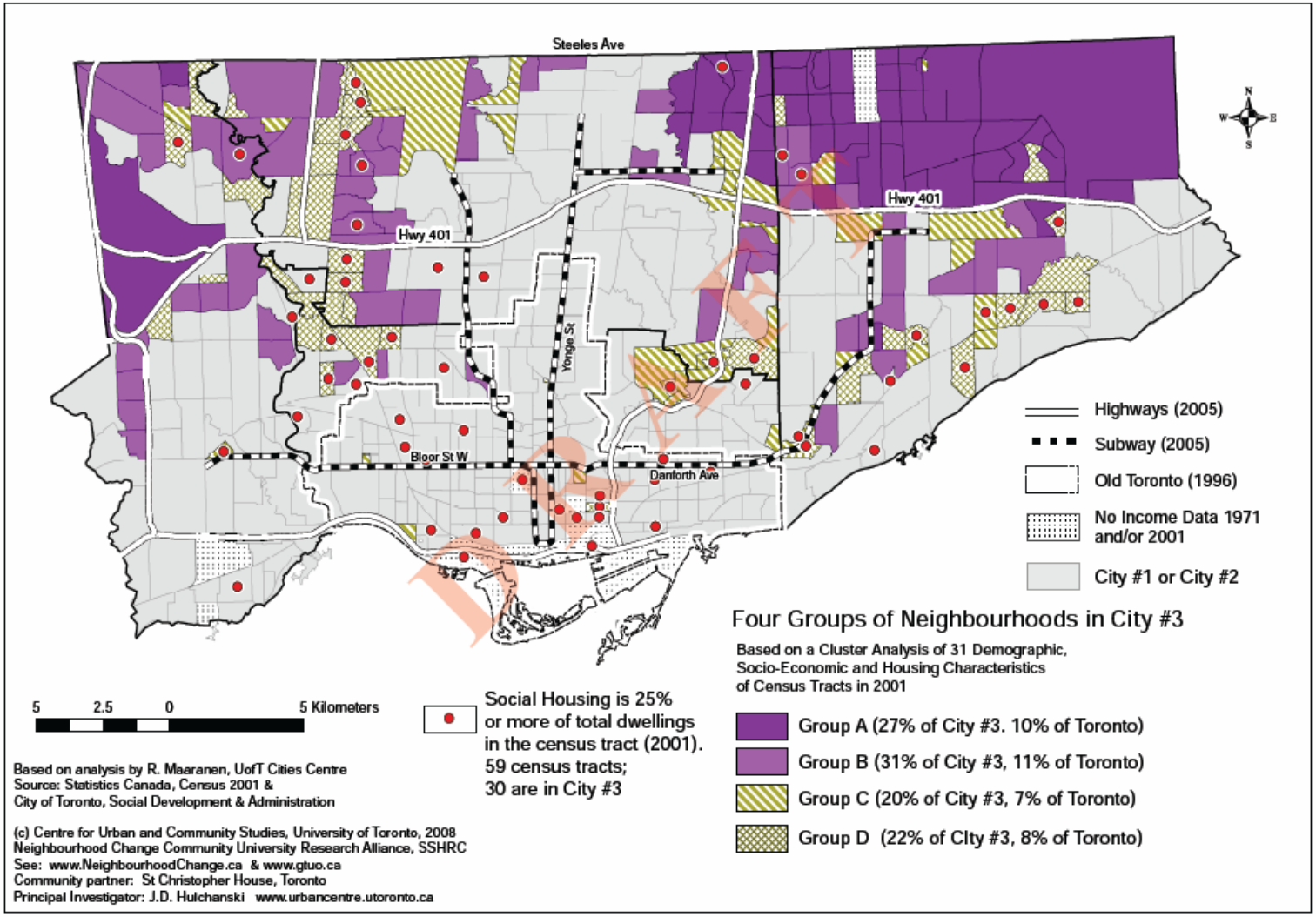

Figure 3: The Third City − Variations in Low Income Neighbourhoods

Source: (Hulchanski, Bourne, Maaranen, Murdie, and Walks, 2008)

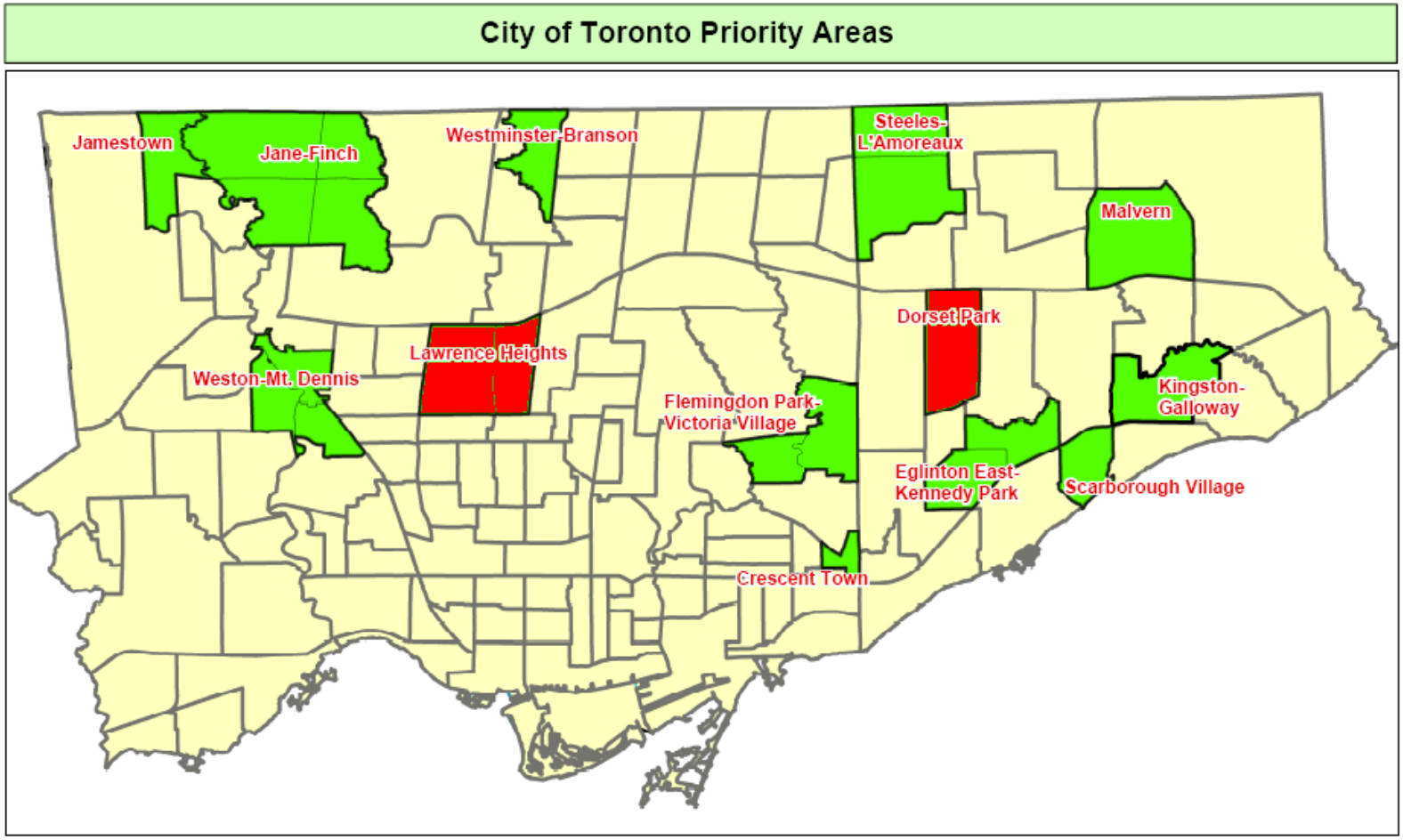

Figure 4: City of Toronto Priority Areas

Source: University of Toronto Centre For Urban and Community Studies
http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/pdfs/gtuo/City-Toronto_Priority-Neighbourhoods_Map_2005.pdf

3. Research Method

To understand how creative individuals contribute to life in the inner suburbs, I selected two Priority Neighbourhoods, which are partially defined by their *lack* of community infrastructure, and might be seen as particularly infertile territory for creative industries. I felt that this selection would allow me to learn about particular tools for revitalizing these neighbourhoods, which is a priority for the city.

The two neighbourhoods were Dorset Park in Scarborough (Figure 5) and Lawrence Heights in North York (Figure 66, Figure 77[4]). I felt that it was important to select one in each part of the city, and for comparison purposes, selected those that were broadly similar. Both neighbourhoods were developed primarily during the 1950s and 1960s, and extend north-south from the 401 to below Lawrence. Both are bisected by a rapid transit rail line–the Spadina subway and Scarborough LRT respectively.[5]

I began to explore these neighbourhoods with a few key questions in mind:

1. Who are the creative individuals that are active in these neighbourhoods and what activities are they engaged in?

2. Where do they tend to locate, and why?

3. How do they contribute to the community – economically, socially, physically and culturally?

4. What are the benefits, assets and challenges that they experience in the inner suburban environment, and how can the challenges be addressed?

When searching for creative individuals, I used Florida's definition of the "creative class": those whose primary job is to develop new ideas, products, services and technologies. With an eye

4 The city designates the Lawrence Heights priority area as comprising Yorkdale-Glen Park and Englemont-Lawrence.

5 A disadvantage of this method of neighbourhood selection is that it prevents a number of points of comparison. Examples include neighbourhoods, such as Malvern, which were built in the 1970s, and are more isolated. Comparisons with urban and exurban areas would also be a useful area of further study.

towards the value of Markusen's "artistic dividend," I placed a special focus on individuals working in arts and culture. Furthermore, rather than conducting a general survey of creative workers, I sought out those who were making special contribution to the community. This is why the case studies lean towards those involved in community organizations and initiatives.

I did, however, feel that it was important to include profit-oriented industries in this study. As noted above, there are various definitions and classifications of "creative industries," with local characteristics playing a key role in these definitions. I therefore elected to begin with a broad definition of industries and searched the study neighbourhoods for those that were the most locally significant. In Lawrence Heights I discovered an agglomeration of fashion industry businesses. In Dorset Park, many fell into the definition of the "new food economy" (Blay-Palmer and Donald, 2006).

My primary research involved interviews and personal observation, including walking and driving through the areas. I obtained Information on the neighbourhoods, and potential interview subjects through websites, newspaper articles, policy documents, and reports, as well as discussions with key informants in the city planning department, arts councils and the creative community.

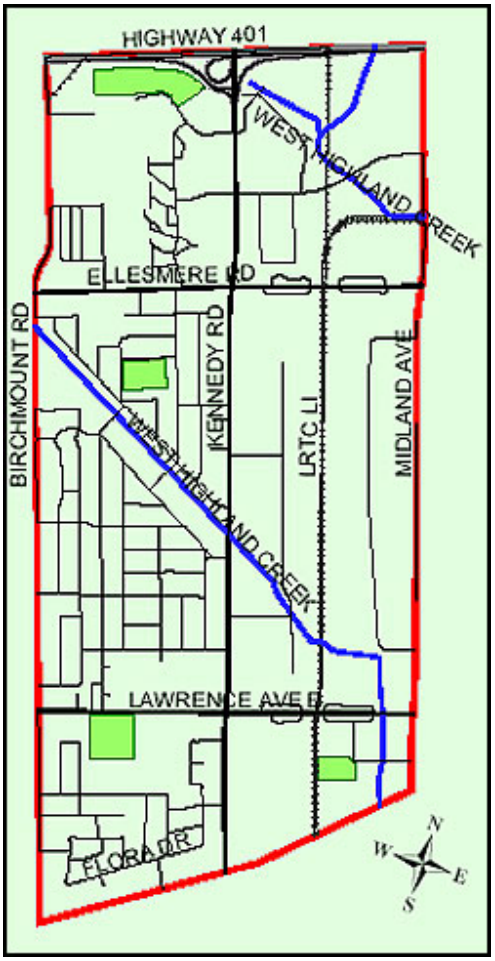

Figure 5: Dorset Park

Source: City of Toronto Neighbourhood Profiles, http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/cns_profiles/cns126.htm

Figure 6: Yorkdale-Glen Park

Source: City of Toronto Neighbourhood Profiles, http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/cns_profiles/cns31.htm

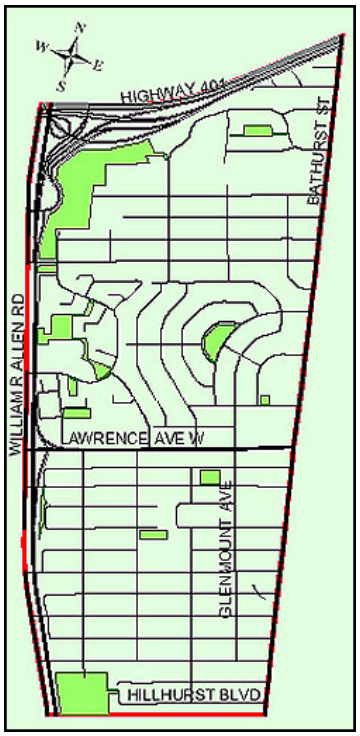

Figure 7: Englemont Lawrence

Source: City of Toronto Neighbourhood Profiles, http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/cns_profiles/cns32.htm

4. Case Studies

The inner suburban priority neighbourhoods of Dorset Park and Lawrence Heights could be perceived as particularly infertile areas for creative endeavours. Nevertheless, I found creative individuals and organizations making powerful contributions to their community, often with stories that are different from what one would expect. Below are six case studies, three from each neighbourhood, including one creative industry – the fashion industry in Lawrence Heights, and the food industry in Dorset Park − and two community organizations from each area.

Of the individuals I interviewed, the case studies below represent the most compelling examples of the relationship between creative individuals and organizations and their neighbourhoods. They do not represent the full extent of the interviews I conducted,6 nor the full extent of the vibrant creative activity occurring in these areas. Furthermore, since creative activities are not limited by neighbourhood boundaries, some of the initiatives discussed extend beyond the city-designated borders of Dorset Park and Lawrence Heights.

Dorset Park

Flavours Delight Bakery: Glenn Roces

Flavours Delight (Figure 8) is a five-year old Filipino bakery located in a small strip mall at Kennedy and Ellesmere Roads next to an apartment building. Owned by Glenn Roces and his wife, the business sells primarily to Filipino and Chinese takeout restaurants and grocery stores. They also cater events for Filipino civic organizations and have a particular connection to Couples For Christ, a Filipino Catholic Group.

The business began as a wholesale bakery business in an industrial building at Midland and Finch, before customer demand encouraged the Roces to move to their current retail location in late 2006.

6 Interview subjects not discussed in the case studies but whose experiences played a significant role in developing my observations and conclusions include: Wendy Nicolaidis from the Roland and Romaine dance school at Bathurst and Lawrence, jewellery designer Rita Tesolin from 63 Wingold Avenue, and other dancers, bakers, and community makers who preferred not to be named.

Figure 8: Flavours Delight Bakery: Interior View and Parking Lot[7]

The recipes that the bakery uses are a mix of family recipes, those learned from baking courses and cookbooks, and those developed over time by the owners themselves.

> People usually ask for breads that they thought were Filipino back home. So we did those, but there were certain items that I had to start introducing to the market, because you have to have something new every now and then (Roces, 2008).

Bakery owner Glenn Roces was a mechanical engineer in the Philippines before immigrating to Canada. He worked in a variety of jobs in Canada, most notably as midnight production supervisor producing baked goods with Dough Delight. This gave him the experience in running a factory and baking high-volume products – his key competitive advantage today. When Roces later found himself unemployed, he decided to turn what had been a hobby of his in the Philippines into a full time business in Canada.

Using money from Employment Insurance and the assistance from the federal government's Self-Employment Assistance Program[8] to develop his business plan, he and his wife began baking samples at home, starting with steam buns filled with meat, and bread with sweet filling. A friend in the Filipino community referred him to a nearby restaurant owner. Roces approached him with some samples; "I gave him some steam buns and after three samples he told me to mass produce the item...That restaurant owner really helped us a lot." Roces joined the Filipino Chamber of Commerce and began selling his baked goods at a booth at Filipino festivals. This grew into his current business, which supplies customers across the region.

Living Hope Community Church / TC3 Youth Choir: Rev. Denise Gillard

Located in two units at the back of an industrial building in the employment district of Nantucket Boulevard north of Lawrence, the Living Hope Community Church is almost invisible (Figure 9). The location was formerly a garage and storage area. Today, it is a church and arts school − The Toronto Children's Concert Choir and Performing Arts Company (TC3) that "uses performing arts as a medium to empower and elevate youth" (Gillard, 2008).

7 All photos taken by Michael Noble in 2008, unless otherwise indicated.

8 http://www1.servicecanada.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/grants/self-emp/desc_self-emp.shtml

Figure 9: The nondescript front door of Living Hope Church; Rev. Denise Gillard

Rev. Denise Gillard was a Ph.D. student in 2001 when a friend urged her to organize a youth gospel program. A self-taught singer and musician, she used space offered to her by other churches, invited students through word of mouth, and was overwhelmed when 70 youth arrived for her first class. Over time the program has grown and the school now employs professional dancers and musicians as its teachers.

The church eventually moved into a single unit at 150 Nantucket Road and has since expanded into a neighbouring unit. The main attraction of the space is the low cost. Its seclusion and invisibility are not seen as ideal, but these characteristics do provide benefits in terms of affordability, safety from theft, and a lack of distractions for students. Initial renovations to the space were done by Rev. Gillard's family and friends. More recently, a dance floor and performance space was created through a grant from the African-Canadian Christian Network and the help of *Divine Restoration,*[9] a church makeover show on Vision TV.

Over 70, mostly African-Canadian young men and women, come for classes in different styles of dance, drumming, and gospel singing (Figure 10), as well as tutoring in math, computer skills, and other skills. In some cases, internships and job shadowing opportunities are provided. The students perform regularly in the space itself, as well as at events around the region, including festivals and an annual gospel show at the Toronto Centre for the Arts in North York. They have travelled across Canada and the United States and to London, England. Many graduates of the program have gone on to postsecondary education, in artistic programs or in law or business. The program is credited with playing a key role in their personal development; "A lot of young people come here without a vision for their life, but they don't leave without a vision" (Gillard, 2008).

9 http://www.visiontv.ca/Programs/lifestyle_divine.html

Figure 10: Dancers and Drummers at Living Hope Church

Graffiti and Mural Projects: Sady Ducros, Karin Eaton

Mural Routes is a Scarborough public art project that promotes and facilitates the creation of public murals. Each year, the organization, led by Director Karin Eaton, engages youth and community members to design a mural. Mural routes secures a wall, art supplies, and a professional artist to act as a mentor and facilitator. The youth create the design and are responsible for the entire project.

Mural Routes is responsible for the artistic development of the project, and works with partner organizations, such as Action for Neighbourhood Change and Youthlink. The organization also participates in the Graffiti Arts Festival in Malvern. The murals reflect the culture of the local community and empower the creativity of local youth. Some participants come back to become facilitators and mentors.

The origins of the program go back to a group of teenagers who sprayed graffiti on the backs of industrial buildings facing the Scarborough Light Rail Transit (LRT) line. In the early 1990s, Sady Ducros (Figure 11) and some friends of his were looking for ways to express themselves. They liked drawing, and were attracted to comic books and the hip-hop culture of the time. They decided to paint a large blank wall facing the LRT line, knowing that the walls were visible to the thousands of passengers who rode the outdoor TTC train back and forth.

The murals can take up to a month to draw, with artists working in teams, some sketching the pictures, others filling in with colour. Friends would come by and watch, or play music, dance and generally use the space as an “avenue for self-expression and rebellion” (Ducros, 2008). Initially they painted the walls illegally. The owners would clean them off, then they’d be tagged again. Eventually, Sady approached some of the building owners directly and one gave him permission to draw on his back wall. In 1994, the artists spent over a month drawing a huge mural across the entire building, an “iconic piece” (Eaton, 2008) that persists to this day.

The mural caught the attention of Karin Eaton, then at the Scarborough Arts Council (SAC) who saw the elaborate graffiti as a form of art that few others recognized or supported. Beginning with little knowledge of the community, SAC began to support the graffiti project in Dorset Park, hiring Sady to oversee a group of young artists.

Figure 11: Sady Ducros, and the mural facing the Scarborough LRT line

Photo of Sady Ducros: Beal Institute, 2008

Figure 12: The Stages of Art by Sady Ducros Peter Adas and Amann Merali

Source: (Mural Routes, 2008)

A few years later, Sady conceived of a mural project for the Kingston Road area in south Scarborough. For years SAC had worked with artists to put up pretty, historically themed murals in the area, but Sady had something different in mind. “This is not it. You need to give the community a voice, you need something more engaging” (Ducros, 2008). Sady was hired to work with youth in the community for two years to design a mural that reflected their own culture. Recruitment was organic. Among other things, boxes were put at McDonalds and Tim Horton’s outlets asking people for advice. It wasn’t a traditional public participation process, but “McDonalds and Tim Hortons do provide a certain type of community hub” (Eaton, 2008). The result was “The Stages of Art” (Figure 12). The mural program evolved over time, and Karin Eaton ultimately spun it out from SAC into the Mural Routes project that continues to this day.

Sady moved downtown, attracted by the eclectic Kensington Market neighbourhood. He also went to the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) and worked on a variety of other youth projects, visual arts and graphic design. He is currently a researcher at the Beal Institute for Strategic Creativity,[10] a creative research lab connected to OCAD.

Lawrence Heights

Tycos-Wingold Fashion District / Avon Sportswear: Albert Sliwin

Many people know about Toronto's fashion district in the Spadina Avenue and Queen Street area. In the last seven years, however, a new fashion district has emerged in North York, around Dufferin Road and Glencairn, on Tycos Drive and Wingold Avenue. The area is home to 350 fashion wholesalers, designers and manufacturers, each paying rent that is half of what they used to pay downtown (Kelly, 2006). They occupy what were once plain, mid-20th century commercial buildings, but are today bright, colourful fashion showrooms.

The area, just south of Highway 401 and within walking distance of the subway is accessible to international buyers by highway and downtown merchants by subway or car. A TTC bus route has even been added in response to growing commuter traffic to the neighbourhood.

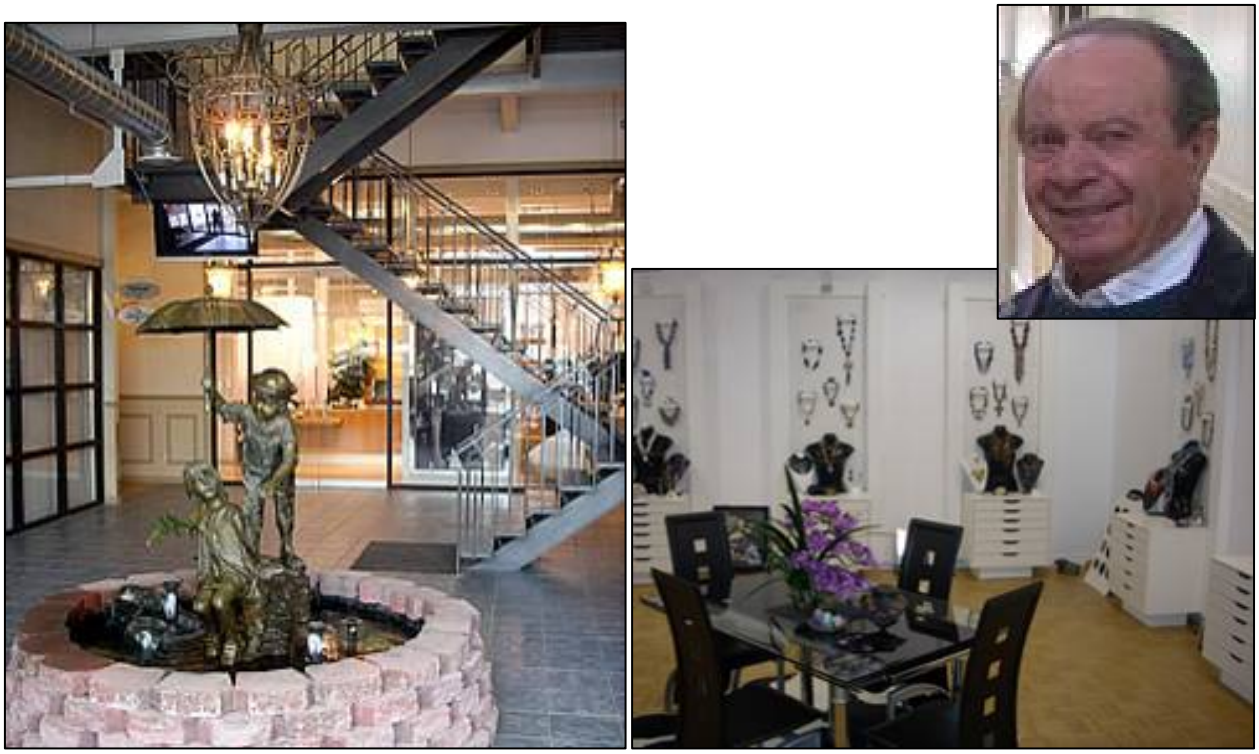

Figure 13: Albert Sliwin; inside the front entrance of 63 Wingold, and Rita Tesolin's Jewellery showroom

10 www.bealinstitute.org

The concentration of agencies is also strong draw. “Most businesses hate competition, but the fashion world can’t live without it” says Albert Sliwin (Figure 13), who created the district. Agents can park their car and spend the day walking through the pathways within and between the buildings, completing in a couple of days a series of visits that would have taken them a few weeks downtown. The area is economically vibrant, aesthetically attractive and – unusual for a suburban employment district –walkable and transit-accessible.

The genesis of this district was at 63 Wingold Avenue, a former factory that has been renovated to feature a fountain, ornate chandeliers, and natural light from skylights (Figure 13). Thin tiled pathways lead between the showrooms, each one decorated by the creative occupant and sized to their specifications.

Figure 14: Front entrance of 63 Wingold

Albert Sliwin, the entrepreneur behind this fashion cluster, is the 77-year-old President of Avon Sportswear and Victory Caps. Sliwin started his business in 1956 in a small factory space above a restaurant at Queen and Beaconsfield Streets (today part of the West Queen West neighbourhood). Over the following decades, as the business grew, he moved progressively northward, ending up in 1978 with a 78,000-square-foot manufacturing space on Wingold Avenue.

Through his career, Sliwin, a self-taught fashion designer and engineer, developed and adapted his own machinery and clothing designs.11 In the 1980s and 90s, Sliwin parlayed his fashion success into real-estate acquisition, including many of the large buildings in his neighbourhood that housed his fellow manufacturers.

However, as the manufacturing industry declined and moved offshore, Sliwin was faced with lost tenants and open space in his buildings. In 2001, a new idea came from fashion agent Hildy

11 One highlight of his career was the design of the Roots “poorboy cap” that became popular at the 1998 Nagano Olympics.

Swimmer. The dot-com boom had raised the cost of rental space in the downtown area and she could not find appropriate and affordable space. Her mother, Gloria Naken, Albert Sliwin's long-time secretary, approached Sliwin, who had space available. Sliwin offered to renovate the space for Swimmer if she could gain the commitment of 10 agents.

From those 10 agents, Sliwin developed an entire fashion district. Over time he has expanded north to buildings on Bridgeland Avenue, at Dufferin Street and Highway 401, where he has created a small cluster of independent furniture stores. His most recent project, further east at Bayview Avenue and Highway 401, is the Jewellers' Market Vault, which will house 45 jewellery retailers selling to the public at discount prices (Kelly, 2008).

Lawrence Heights Community Centre: Brian Rendon and Don "Frogz" Barnes

The Lawrence Heights Community Centre (LHCC), a city-run facility, is located in the heart of the Lawrence Heights public housing community. Brian Rendon and Don "Frogz" Barnes are both artists from the community who use their skills to lead programs for youth in art, and music, respectively. Among a number of projects, Rendon's group is designing a mural that will decorate the outdoor swimming pool adjacent to the community centre. In the community centre's music studio (Figure 15), Frogz helps youth write lyrics and record hip-hop songs.

The two projects often overlap. For example, Barnes' students will record an album, and Rendon's will design the art for an album cover and promotional package. Overall, students learn graphic design, sound recording, use of computer programs such as Photoshop, and general writing skills.

Figure 15: Brian Rendon (Left) and Don Barnes in front of a mural painted by Rendon

These programs may ultimately help the youth involved pursue careers in the arts. For example, one song that Frogz produced in the LHCC studio is "Anything," by vocal artist Jaydahmann, which became a hit on Flow 93.5's Megacity countdown. The main focus, however, is for young people to achieve personal growth, which can lead them in a variety of directions. The thrust of the music program for example is described as "literacy through hip hop and R&B."

> Through this program I hope to not only to find some stars in the rough, but also to help these kids with their literacy...to give these kids in the community and beyond an opportunity to grow as a person. (I want to) be a friend to them, be a mentor to them, and help them to understand life on a whole different level (Barnes, 2008).

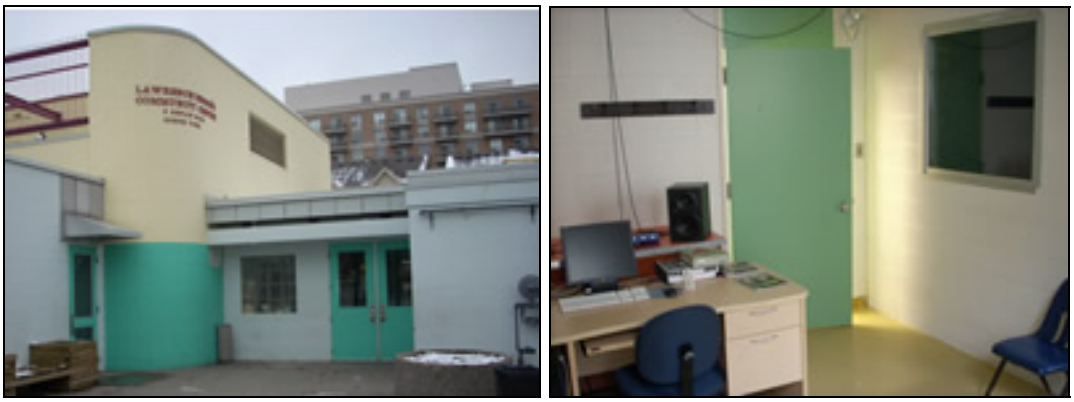

Figure 16: Lawrence Heights Community Centre exterior and Recording Studio

Both Rendon and Frogz have been and continue to be involved in a mix of artistic pursuits. Rendon spends his days working in product design and graphic design at Seagull Canada, a company that sells home furnishings such as picture frames and mugs. He also designs posters for community events, draws murals and tattoos, and, with a friend, is developing a fashion line called Rep clothing (Figure 17). Frogz has been a DJ, radio host, break dancer, rapper, and recently has moved into producing with his own label "Hug the Block Entertainment." While both would like to be prominent artists, the primary vision that they express for the future is not a personal one, but is focused on the development and improvement of the music program and the youth in it.

Figure 17: Poster, Sweatshirts, and Tattoo designed by Brian Rendon

North York Community House: Lucy Santos

North York Community House (NYCH) is a multi-service organization located in a former store at the Lawrence Square shopping mall (Figure 18) at the northwest corner of Lawrence and Allen road. The organization also has programs at other locations around North York, typically along Lawrence Avenue, in the recreation rooms of apartment buildings.

The NYCH is a community hub in Lawrence Heights. It offers an impressive array of services, particularly for newcomers to Canada. These include ESL classes, assistance with settlement issues, counselling for domestic problems, and exercise programs for older adults. Creative programs include cooking, dance, and arts and crafts, such as knitting clothes and creating wall

hangings and jewellery. The NYCH also offers daycare facilities within their building so that children are taken care of while mothers participate in programs.

Figure 18: Lawrence Square Mall Exterior and Interior: NYCH Office Beside Food Court

Figure 19: Lucy Santos with wall hanging designed by her students

The organization's outreach process is particularly extensive. The Newcomer Connection Program trains newcomer women as facilitators, peer leaders, and settlement workers. The newcomer women, who speak over 15 different languages, will visit apartment buildings where a certain ethnic community is prominent, knock on doors, and invite residents to participate in programs. This process also allows them to better understand the nature of these buildings and the community within them.

NYCH initially began in 1991 as a three-person group in a recreation room at a senior's building at Bathurst and Lawrence. They were initially funded through a $900,000 grant from an anonymous donor. Since then they have been able to attract funding from several foundations and corporations and have grown dramatically. The organization will be forced to move their main

location within two years, as the owners of the Lawrence Square mall are planning to redevelop the land. NYCH is hoping to be able to buy a building to use as their headquarters, but are still in the process of developing a plan on this front.

The arts program at NYCH is led by Lucy Santos (Figure 19), a self-taught community artist from Colombia who learned to make various crafts at home, working with her mother and sisters. In Colombia she made a living designing and selling her own crafts and initially came to Canada as an exhibitor at a cultural festival. However, after immigrating, language barriers prevented her from running her own business and led her to spend several years as a waitress. Through volunteering at NYCH, she was offered the opportunity of leading a Spanish-language arts program. This program has since spun off into an independent craft group, and a new multicultural group began this year.

The arts programs provide participants with enjoyable social and cross-cultural activities that help them express themselves creatively and integrate into the community. While final products are not sold yet commercially, they are used as gifts and home decorations and donated to various charitable causes.

5. Observations

The stories told by the interview subjects yielded a number of observations about the characteristics of the inner suburbs and the role of creative initiatives within them. These initiatives benefit the community in a variety of ways, remaking physical structures, providing social services, increasing economic vitality, and enriching its culture.

The existence of such initiatives is the result of enabling conditions that benefit creative individuals and organizations. Other neighbourhood characteristics, however, present challenges for future development. The list below is a summary of the benefits of observed from creative initiatives and the community characteristics that enable and hinder these endeavours. The observations are then discussed in greater detail below.

Benefits of creative activities:

1. Adaptive Re-Use
2. Thriving Businesses
3. Local Economic Spinoffs
4. The Minor League System
5. Psychic Income and Other Benefits for Community Artists
6. Social Service Delivery
7. Local Flavour
8. Intra-regional Tourism

Enabling factors of the inner suburbs:

1. Inexpensive Space
2. Old Buildings
3. Apartment Recreation Rooms
4. Regional Location
5. Beyond Neighbourhood Boundaries
6. Public Transportation
7. Parking and Road Access
8. The Importance of Individual Talent
9. Colleges and Universities

10. Ethno-cultural Networks and Types of Tolerance
11. Conservative Values – The Not So Experiential Life

Challenges of the Inner Suburbs

1. Clusters and Dispersion
2. Underdeveloped Areas Around Transit Stations
3. Lack of Heritage
4. Networking – Lack of Weak Ties
5. Funding

Benefits of Creative Activities

1. Adaptive Re-Use

Modifying old buildings to new uses – often referred to as adaptive re-use (Brand, 1994) − can improve the character of a neighbourhood, turning spaces that are unappealing and ignored into places that are economically valuable and physically attractive, with opportunities for self-expression by artists in the community.

Adaptive re-use also has environmental benefits, by reducing the need for resources to be invested in new construction, and contributing to intensification which can help to reduce environmentally damaging sprawl. Albert Sliwin's Fashion district and Denise Gillard's church/music school are two examples of neglected spaces that have gained new uses.

2. Thriving Businesses

Economically, the presence of thriving creative businesses, such as fashion and specialty food, is extremely important in areas that have lost significant manufacturing employment over the years. As these organizations often reflect local character and serve the needs of particular communities, they may be better able to compete against larger, international organization and help maintain jobs and profits in the local area.

3. Local Economic Spinoffs

Creative organizations are often seen to have characteristics that create spinoff benefits for other organizations nearby, such as when visitors attend a theatre production and then eat at the local restaurant or shop at nearby stores. Such organizations can also encourage uses by different types of people at different times of day. For example, in the evening, when offices are closed, theatres are open.

Youth programs in the study neighbourhoods were observed to provide spinoff value to local shops and services. Parents will often drop children off at classes and then spend the time in a local coffee shop, restaurant, or grocery store. Similarly, when an organization was located in a shopping mall, those who attend their programs may use the opportunity to shop as well. This is the case for North York Community House members visiting the Lawrence Square mall.

This benefit did not characterize all organizations, however. For example, the Living Hope church's isolated location limits the ability of students to buy food from local shops, and therefore limits the positive community spinoffs affects of the organization.

4. Social Service Delivery

The interview subjects are involved in projects that provide valuable services directly to vulnerable populations such as youth, newcomers, and older adults. They provide participants with training, education, and avenues for self-expression. They also help individuals avoid isolation, increase self-confidence, and build connections to mentors, social networks, and other community resources.

Such programs can help reduce youth crime, improve relations among ethno-cultural groups, and boost the health of senior citizens. They also help groups such as newcomers and youth advance their education and obtain jobs. In some cases, working with the organizations can be a career gateway, such as Sady Ducros's evolution from community graffiti artist to corporate graphic designer, researcher, and facilitator.

5. Local Flavour

The cultural impact of creative initiatives is significant, but generally locally based. Artists like Jaydahmann and the TC3 choir do perform for larger audiences and have the potential for a career in the arts. The majority of organizations that were interviewed, however, are working to develop "artist-citizens" (Resonance Creative Consulting, 2006) who do not produce art as their primary occupation, but use art as a form of self-expression. They create artistic works that are primarily directed towards their own family or local community, rather than the larger cultural marketplace.

The fact that artistic activities are locally oriented does not prevent them from having a compelling impact on the personality of the neighbourhood and the city. Downtown neighbourhoods such as Kensington Market have traditionally been admired not for their professional works of art, but the small, unique pieces of community personality that appear there. The murals and other reflections of local flavour in the inner suburbs can play a similar role.

6. The Minor League System

Many new artists who grow up, or immigrate from other countries to inner suburban neighbourhoods use local creative organizations as an incubation and training space before moving to larger downtown hubs. Sady Ducros, for example, developed his skills in the suburbs, which offered an incubation space that ultimately led him to an artistic career. He says, "I learned more doing graffiti that I ever could in school" (Ducros, 2008).

The suburbs also provide an opportunity for mature artists like Wendy Nicolaidis to move (along with her school) from a downtown career performing on television and in major productions, to a role as teacher grooming young dancers for musical theatre and television.

In some ways then, inner suburban cultural spaces are similar to the minor leagues in professional sports; they provide opportunities to artists before and after the prime years of their ca-

reer. In doing so, they play a key support role to the region's broader cultural community. Furthermore, just as European soccer teams can move up to higher leagues through their performance, certain neighbourhoods or institutions may grow into areas with national or international prominence. The Tycos-Wingold fashion district may be a local example of this phenomenon.

7. Psychic Income and Other Benefits for Community Artists

For community artists who seek to make their career with the arts, working for a community organization such as the Lawrence Heights Community Centre can offer a variety of benefits. These including the opportunity to exercise artistic skills, get access to resources (recording studios, computer software), and connect to networks of potential collaborators in both students and fellow teachers. Generally, it is difficult for an artist to make a sustainable living solely through art and many take on one or more different jobs to pay the bills (Hracs, 2008). Community arts jobs offer a source of income to such artists as well as opportunities for potential customers. For example, Brian Rendon does graphic design work for the Lawrence Heights Community Centre, which has given him connections to other city-based organizations who have used his work.

Working in the community gives artists a form of "psychic income" (Markusen and King, 2003) or personal satisfaction that is highly valued. For artists, psychic income is typically derived from an audience's reaction to one's work. Community arts practitioners, however, can gain this satisfaction through work and performance at the community level. As Don "Frogz" Barnes states: "I don't have delusions of grandeur... I'd like to see the music thing get where it's supposed to go for me...but if it doesn't, I'm still content, because I do this for the love, not for the money or recognition" (Barnes, 2008).

8. Intra-regional Tourism

While TC3 / Living Hope church does perform internationally, the majority of its work is not designed to attract distant tourists. They and the other interviewees typically direct their work to local audiences, within their own family, community, and ethnic groups. This can still provide tourism benefits however. These tourists, however, come from within the region. For example, shows by TC3 at the Toronto Centre for the Arts boast audiences "from Oakville to Oshawa" (Gillard, 2008). Events at Lawrence Heights Community Centre and North York Community House are also said to draw from across the GTA.

Such tourism can have a valuable economic impact. In a review of arts impact studies in New York, Seattle and Los Angeles, Ann Markusen notes that only 10 to 20 percent of cultural tourists typically come from out of town, while the majority are local residents. She argues for the promotion of dispersed artistic spaces to promote cross-neighbourhood tourism that encourages "local spending with high local multipliers" (Markusen, 2006).

Enabling Factors of the Inner Suburbs

1. Inexpensive Space

Physically, the most common enabling factor is the importance of inexpensive space. For example, the cost of space for a fashion agency on Wingold Avenue is half that of an agency on Queen Street. In many cases, this low cost provides the entry point that allows individuals to make the hardest step in a creative career – moving from the home-based office/studio/bakery to a professional space (Strategies for Creative Cities Project Team, 2006).

2. Old Buildings

Old buildings offer a particular type of inexpensive space. As Jane Jacobs famously noted, "New ideas need old buildings...not museum piece old buildings…but also a good lot of plain, ordinary, low-value old buildings, including some rundown old buildings" (Jacobs, 1961). Like the inner cities, the inner suburbs have many such buildings.

The principles that apply to the downtown model of adaptive re-use apply in the inner suburbs, and buildings may be modified by creative individuals with the help of family and friends. The main difference is in the specific nature of the built form. In place of turn-of-the-century post-and-beam warehouses, mid-20th century industrial buildings provide high ceilings and large and adaptable spaces with load-bearing walls on the outside. This makes it easy to manipulate interior spaces. Such buildings can then be used to house a church (Living Hope), fashion showroom (Tycos/Wingold) or specialty bakery. In place of downtown main-street storefronts, the suburbs have strip malls (Flavours Delight), plazas (Roland and Romaine dance school) and shopping malls (North York Community House), which combine inexpensive space with shopping opportunities.

For many of the organizations, it is not a problem to locate in "low road buildings" (Brand, 1994) such as strip mall basements. While such spaces may be unappealing to some, a dance school such as Roland and Romaine benefits from the space's privacy and lack of distraction. "It would be nice to have windows and see outside, but having people walk by and peer into a studio is not always a good thing when you're teaching dancing to children" (Nicolaidis, 2008). Rev. Denise Gillard also notes that an industrial location removes noise as a potential issue and the anonymity of the space reduces the threat of theft.

The unattractive nature of such buildings, however, can cause their utility to be disregarded by planners and developers. As Linovski (2008) notes, in Toronto's Official Plan, the Avenues policy treats strip malls as if they were antithetical to the goal of vibrant pedestrian-friendly main streets and; "actively encourage(s) the redevelopment of existing strips." The creative uses of such buildings are further evidence that such policies may be misguided.

3. Apartment Recreation Rooms

A particularly interesting and often underutilized type of old, often inexpensive space in inner suburban neighbourhoods is apartment building recreation rooms. Unlike many North American inner suburbs, which are dominated by low-density development, Toronto's have hundreds of

high-density slab apartment buildings dispersed across the city, putting it behind only New York in number of such buildings (Stewart, 2007). Many of these buildings contain recreation rooms, characterized by large spaces, often including cooking facilities and running water. Furthermore, some of these buildings are owned by Toronto Community Housing Corporation and therefore potentially available for socially valuable uses. While these buildings typically require rehabilitation, once they are improved, their regular use encourages monitoring and upkeep of building structures.

One example of a recreation room currently being used effectively is by the North York Community House partner program, *Community on the Move* at 720 Tecumseh near Jane and Lawrence (Figure). The room houses arts, music, cooking, and homework programs for youth and newcomers. Other projects that have used apartment recreation rooms include Artstarts in Steeles-L'Amoureaux. Recreation rooms in some of the public housing buildings in the Dorset Park neighbourhood have been described as "in bad shape and need fixing up" (anonymous) but still house a variety of youth programs.

Figure 20: 720 Tecumseh: Exterior, Recreation Room and Door to Recreation Room

4. Regional Location

While a suburban location is on the periphery relative to downtown, within the context of the regional economy, it may be quite central. Jewellery designer Rita Tesolin, for example, is happy to be located on Wingold Avenue, which is close enough to access downtown connections whenever necessary, while still providing space that is larger, more affordable and more accessible to her suburban home than a downtown location would be. Her presence within the Toronto region has also allowed her to make the connections to become internationally recognized as a jewellery designer. Many of the food producers interviewed in Scarborough made similar comments – their suppliers and customers exist throughout southern Ontario, and in some cases, in other provinces.

5. Beyond Neighbourhood Boundaries

The majority of creative initiatives are not restricted by the lines of neighbourhood boundaries. Food businesses and fashion agents have regional or international audiences, while organizations like Mural Routes and North York Community House serve individuals and groups across Scarborough and North York, respectively. The corollary of this observation is that there are

many organizations in other parts of the city-region that attract creative individuals in priority neighbourhoods. Therefore, while it makes sense to direct certain aspects of funding and support within the defined borders of priority neighbourhoods, it is also necessary for initiatives to provide consistency of services across larger geographical areas. Spreading investments may also help to create a balanced process of neighbourhood development that can avoid gentrification pressures.

6. Public Transportation

Public transportation is extremely important. Most of the organizations relied on public transit in some way. Clients, employees, or students may take the bus or subway either by choice or because they cannot afford to drive. This includes students at a variety of different programs, the outreach workers at North York Community House, as well as the fashion buyers and storekeepers who take the subway up to the Tycos-Wingold area from downtown Toronto.

In this environment, good subway service is important, but even more significant is efficient bus service. The bus was the second-most common mode of transportation that organizations relied on, after the car. In this light, the TTC's recent expansion of suburban bus services – including some of the busses that crisscross the study areas − is good news for creative industries in priority neighbourhoods (TTC, 2008).

7. Parking and Road Access

Good car access can be as important as good transit access. When asked about the benefit of their location, many interview respondents noted the importance of proximity to Highway 401 and other arterial streets, as well as free parking − both significant benefits relative to downtown locations. Some interviewees suggested that their location would be even better if more parking was available. Therefore, while the car-dependent nature of the suburbs has many downsides, automobile access is an important asset for cultural groups in the suburbs.

8. The Importance of Individual Talent

Interestingly, the specific characteristics of local geography were often described as unimportant in location choice. While general characteristics of road and highway access and cheap rent were significant, no specific street, intersection, or other location distinguished itself as particularly important. When asked why they chose a particular location, many individuals said that they just selected what was available. Some interview subjects suggested that this may indicate the importance of fate in one's success. However, it may also reinforce the value of individual talent. For many of the interview subjects in this research, their creative efforts – not the geographical strengths of their location – were the key to their success.

9. Colleges and Universities

The importance of individual talent raises the question of how this talent is developed. In artistic endeavours, it is not surprising that virtually all interview subjects described the value of their natural ability and curiosity, learning on the job, and training from friends and family. Academic institutions however, are also important.

Some inner suburban neighbourhoods have public educational institutions within their borders. For example, Centennial College has campuses throughout Scarborough, including one just south of Dorset Park. However, the value of colleges and universities is derived not just from the local neighbourhood, but the broader region. The Greater Golden Horseshoe is blessed with many strong institutions and they have the ability to support creative initiatives both directly and indirectly.

For individuals like Sady Ducros and Brian Rendon, training in schools like OCAD and Humber College, respectively, helped them translate their natural talent into marketable job skills. For Denise Gillard, her work in the Master's of Divinity program at McMaster University helped to motivate the founding of her church and music school. Regional institutions also provide a valuable education to Rev. Gillard's former students. Even when they have not pursued artistic careers, the skills and capacity's that alumni develop allow them to return to the organization and contribute to it by proving funding and organizational support. Another value of educational institutions is that they often have specific programs designed to build community capacity in arts and culture. Centennial College's Community Program Initiative is one example of this.

Beyond these public institutions, inner suburban neighbourhoods have many private training schools and programs which build the capacity of the neighbourhood. These include language schools, technology training, and artistic schools such as those discussed in this report.

10. Ethno-cultural Networks and Types of Tolerance

Strong ethno-cultural communities are a significant enabling factor in the development of the creative initiatives discussed here. They also serve as a magnet, encouraging newcomers to settle in these neighbourhoods in the first place. In turn, these individuals interviewed take a number of actions to strengthen the social cohesion of these communities.

These findings reinforce the importance of social cohesion and tolerance that is emphasized in much of the creative class literature. However, they also illuminate the importance of a certain type of social cohesion – a cohesion that extends beyond the ability to "fit in" to mainstream society and includes the achievement of economic and social power, and strong ethnically based institutions (Sandercock, 2004). Entrepreneurs such as Glenn Roces and Rev. Denise Gillard would not have their organizations if not for the specific support provided by organizations such as the Filipino Chamber of Commerce and the African-Canadian Christian Network, and the continued relationship with these communities as customers, students, and donors.

11. Conservative Values – The Not So Experiential Life

Florida describes the members of the creative class as footloose individualists seeking the intense "experiential life" (Florida, 2002). The creative class workers interviewed in these neighbourhoods do not generally correspond to this model, however. Nor are they the white, middle-class "hipsters" that many critics point to as the darling of the creative class literature (Peck, 2005). The majority are self-taught artists and creators who are either first- or second-generation immigrants and describe themselves as rooted in their current community. Many have strong connections to their own cultural groups, expressing active participation in and support for religious institutions.

Although this is a small sample, rather than an extensive survey, it suggests that in Toronto's inner suburbs, members of the creative class are more ethnically and economically diverse, and have stronger community roots than are typically attributed to the creative class.

Challenges of the Inner Suburbs

1. Clusters and Dispersion

Unlike downtown neighbourhoods, creative organizations in the suburbs are physically disconnected from each other rather than clustered. This is even true of the North York Community House and the Lawrence Heights Community Centre. The two are located quite close to each other, near the Lawrence West subway station. However, they are on either side of Allen road, which acts as a boundary between them. Furthermore, the Lawrence Heights Community Centre is hidden within the internally facing Lawrence Heights housing project.

The exception to this dispersion is Albert Sliwin's fashion district. Some writers on the revitalization of suburban industrial areas have recommended marketing spaces to particular industrial clusters (Fitzgerald and Leigh, 2002) and Mr. Sliwin's success seems to indicate the value of such strategies. Sliwin's buildings were actively marketed to a single industry, to the exclusion of most others. Furthermore, from an urban design perspective, there seemed to be a conscious effort to create a comfortable pedestrian experience not only between buildings, but also in the connections of storefronts within the buildings.

2. Networking – Lack of Weak Ties

The dispersed nature of the suburban environment often works against the type of valuable networking associated with creative organizations in the downtown. The term "buzz" is often used to describe the intensity of direct communications in vibrant urban environments, in which proximity and regular face-to-face contact result in a continuous, often unconscious and unanticipated, sharing of ideas and information (Storper and Venables, 2004; Bathelt et al., 2004).

A particularly important concept in this regard is the value of "weak ties" over "strong ties" (Granovetter, 1983). Strong ties are those within one's tight network of closest friends, while weak ties are connections with acquaintances, who also have their own network of close associates. Weak ties provide access to ideas and information that are not present within one's own circle. In Granovetter's view, social systems, such as neighbourhoods, that are characterized by a lack of weak ties, are less likely to spread new ideas or to achieve strong relationships between diverse groups.

My research indicates that there may be a lack of weak ties in suburban neighbourhoods. As a result, while many programs provide artists with valuable skills, they often lack the bridges necessary to help participants apply these skills to a professional career. This includes a lack of horizontal ties to different types of organizations such as between mural painters and dance schools. There is also a lack of vertical ties to similar organizations such as those between mural painters and professional graphic designers. Where ties do exist, they tend not to be along geographical lines, but within cultural groups or other communities of interest. The exception to

this is that youth often have many weak ties with people that they meet at school or in their local street or apartment building.

Techniques currently used to improve ties within these neighbourhoods include the use of social media websites such as Facebook to make connections and organize events. Multi-ethnic social organizations, such as North York Community House and Lawrence Heights Community Centre, can also help build these connections.

3. Underdeveloped Areas Around Transit Stations

Physical dispersion is a general characteristic of inner suburban neighbourhoods across North America, even in neighbourhoods with mass transit. In the late 20th century, some inner suburbs, such as Arlington, Virginia, successfully linked the building of transit lines with the development of high-density mixed use nodes (Lucy and Phillips, 2000). However, the majority of jurisdictions − including Scarborough and North York − simply added a subway line to a dispersed urban form. The Scarborough LRT line is particularly underused, as its stations in this neighbourhood are typically surrounded by low-density employment lands and are some of the least-used stations on the TTC (TTC, 2006).

As a result, while proximity to a subway or LRT has some value to these neighbourhoods, it is not as significant it seemed at first. For example, one business located right next to an LRT station stated that this proximity was just a coincidence and they and their customers rarely used it. Similarly, while the Living Hope church is less than one kilometre from the Lawrence East LRT station, there is no direct pathway to the industrial street, nor is there a bus that goes along Nantucket Boulevard. Students therefore have to take a circuitous route, taking a bus from the LRT to Kennedy road, and walking on a pathway in between two industrial buildings to get to the church.

4. Funding

A common issue faced by many community initiatives is a lack of funding, and a focus on year-by-year program funding rather than ongoing operational support. The requirements for completing extensive proposals to philanthropic foundations can often be overwhelming. Local businesses are also often reluctant to support certain initiatives. This is particularly the case when seeking support for programs for youth, who may be stigmatized as dangerous and not worth helping (Clark, 2008).

More experienced organizations such as the North York Community House are better at establishing funding relationships at a variety of levels and have become experts at cobbling together money from different funding sources and programs. In general, however, most community-focused organizations feel that they are potentially a year away from extinction, despite doing high-quality work;

> If you look at every program…the thing that's lacking is...some security, some sustainability. You provide this wonderful service, and once people get used to you and comfortable, you walk away [because of lost funding]. (Clark, 2008)

5. Heritage

Heritage preservation is often seen as a key tool and important funding source for culture-led regeneration processes. This, however, is a limited tool in the inner suburbs, where few buildings are old or distinctive enough to qualify for heritage preservation. Some have argued compellingly for the aesthetic value of some of Toronto's mid-20th century modernist buildings (McClelland and Stewart, 2007) and recommended the expansion of heritage designations to include these structures from the recent past (Collins, 2006). In certain specific cases there may be opportunities to use special buildings – such as old hospitals or malls − in regeneration processes, but these will likely be limited to special circumstances.

6. A Creative Cities Strategy for the Inner Suburbs

At the time that this research was being conducted, in late 2007 and early 2008, the City of Toronto's culture division was studying the inclusion of cultural potential as an element in the planning process (Economic Development Committee, 2007).[12] The strategy was expected to focus on strengthening downtown creative clusters in the interests of regional economic competitiveness, and not to address creativity in the inner suburbs. At the same time, programs supporting priority neighbourhoods are being coordinated within the city by 13 Neighbourhood Action Teams and by the United Way through Action for Neighbourhood Change groups. While these processes support a number of grassroots initiatives, they had no specific creative component at this time.

My research indicates that the city could benefit from a culture plan which integrates these processes. The report from Toronto Culture should be treated as one phase in the development of a more comprehensive city-wide culture agenda. The primary goal of the next phase of this process should be a *Creative Cities Strategy for the Inner Suburbs* integrating the goals of the creative city and strong neighbourhood plans. This strategy should be developed collaboratively with the involvement of city staff – including Neighbourhood Action Teams and Toronto Culture − as well as creative individuals such as my interview subjects.

For several years, Artscape has played a leading role in the research and development of Toronto's Creative City agenda and could play a similar role in this process that I have proposed. This work is consistent with Artscape's five-year vision, which calls for it to "explore how our development models might be adapted for the City's priority areas." (Artscape, 2007)

Preliminary Policy Ideas

Developing a Creative Cities Strategy for the Inner Suburbs would be a lengthy process, involving city staff and many stakeholders. As a contribution to this discussion, below is a series of principles and ideas for such a strategy, based on the findings of my research. The ideas pre-

12 The Economic Development Committee referred the following motion to the Planning and Growth Committee for consideration: "That the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, and the Executive Director, Toronto Culture be requested to report to the Planning and Growth Committee on including cultural potential as an element of the planning process, and that a set of criteria be recommended and included as part of future planning."

sented in this section are not meant as precise recommendations, or as an exhaustive analysis of potential tools, but as a preliminary draft for future discussion.

Principles and Goals

While the strategy will connect with broader regional development goals, its focus should not be on the international competition for creative workers and creative industries. At the most basic level, this should be a strategy oriented towards *community cultural development*. From this perspective, the development of creative endeavours is encouraged not only for their intrinsic value, but for the contribution that they make to the neighbourhood across social, economic, physical and cultural dimensions.

This is fundamentally an *asset-based* strategy which identifies, nurtures, and mobilizes the capacities contained within the individuals, associations and institutions that already exist in the neighbourhood (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). With this perspective, and the particualr characteristics of the inner suburbs in mind, three goals can guide policy:

1. Capacity Development Within Organizations: The challenges and opportunities of the inner suburbs often relate to the particular capacities within organizations. Developing resources such as individual talent and organizational funding are key to any strategy.

2. Connectivity Across Organizations: Many of the challenges identified are related to the physical and social dispersion of organizations. This separation can be bridged through the development of mutually reinforcing bonds, within the neighbourhood and across the city. These bonds can be established based on diverse areas of commonality; including physical proximity, ethnocultural ties, and other communities of interests.

3. Evolution Within and Across Neighbrouhoods: Creative initiatives within and across neighbourhods are currently strengthening them in a variety of ways. Development policies should therefore focus on amplifing successful processes already in place, rather than creating or importing entirely new ones. This helps to ensure that neighbourhood changes are driven by internal needs, priorities and wisdom.

Source Documents

With these principles and goals in mind, I reviewed eight current policy documents which have directly addressed, or are particularly relevant to, Toronto's Creative City agenda. Most of these documents are produced by or for the City of Toronto, but other organizations, such as Artscape, are represented as well. The policy proposals often recommend actions by organizations outside the city as well. The documents are:

- Agenda for Prosperity / Creative City Planning Framework (AuthentiCity, 2008)
- Imagine a Toronto: Strategies for a Creative City (Strategies for Creative Cities Project Team, 2006)
- Long Term Employment Land Strategy − City of Toronto: Phase 2 Report (Hemson Consulting Ltd., 2007)

- Moving Forward: a report on The Creative City: Block by Block Creators and Communities (Resonance Creative Consulting, 2006)
- Toronto Culture Plan for the Creative City (City of Toronto, 2003)
- Toronto Official Plan (City of Toronto City Planning, 2006)
- Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy (Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force, 2005)
- Vision 2011: Thinking Big About Culture-led Regeneration (Artscape, 2007)

In most cases, the policy proposals presented in these documents are focused on a downtown agenda, often with an eye to regional economic development. The policy proposals listed below examine specific recommendations from these reports and suggest how they could be extended or adapted to address an inner suburban strategy. These policy ideas are not limited to actions by the City of Toronto, but include the involvement of a variety of other organizations.

Capacity Development

Fundraising Assistance

> Being a knowledge centre for practitioners (Artscape, 2007).

Organizations such as Artscape should provide support to fundraisers in local creative organizations, including training courses on developing funding proposals and maintaining donor stewardship. Central research is also needed to identify changes to funder requirements and the availability of new funding sources.

Entrepreneurial training

> Creative entrepreneurship support...writing business plan, finding work space...websites to display creative goods for sale (Strategies for Creative Cities Project Team, 2006).

Programs such as the Self-Employment Assistance Program that Glen Roces used should be well known to all creative entrepreneurs. Governments and other service providers should use multilingual outreach programs to recruit participants.

There are currently few avenues for individuals creating arts and crafts for community programs to sell their work. Electronic and co-operative public markets – developed by private entrepreneurs, NGOs, or public organizations − could be used to facilitate the display and sale of these products.

Community Arts Employment Training

> Increasing diversity among community arts practitioners...the field is largely comprised of white, middle-class artists...Post-secondary institutions (have) a growing number of courses in community arts practice (Resonance Creative Consulting, 2006).

There is a growing demand for artistic individuals to work as community arts practitioners – paid professional artists who can work with community members in the development of public spaces. There is a particular desire for greater ethnic diversity in this field.

Educational institutions and a variety of other funders could therefore provide scholarships and training for the development of diverse, local community arts practitioners.

Connectivity

Vertical Connectivity: Mentoring and Apprenticeship

> Expand participation in existing mentoring, internship and apprenticeship programs and networks to increase opportunities for youth, immigrants and persons with disabilities with particular emphasis on priority neighbourhoods (Toronto Mayor's Economic Competitiveness Advisory Committee, 2008).

Neighbourhood projects often have natural allies with creative businesses, and would benefit from "vertical" connections to organizations working in similar artistic areas. For example, some youth working in the Mural Routes program may be natural recruits for graphic design companies.

Industry groups should partner with neighbourhood organizations to develop opportunities for these individuals, including mentoring and apprenticeship programs. Incubators such as the Toronto Fashion Incubator and Food Incubator could be particularly valuable in recruiting aspiring chefs and designers from priority neighbourhoods.

Horizontal Connectivity: Diverse Networks

> Connect existing creative activity...organize networking activities and events...link creative support throughout civic life (Strategies for Creative Cities Project Team, 2006).

The City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Action Committees and the United Way's Action for Neighbourhood Change Teams can work to establish regular interactions between different types of neighbourhood groups across the city, including ethno-cultural organizations. These groups can learn from each other about how to deal with common issues and can partner to advocate for necessary supports.

Public Art – From the Public

> The Culture Division will expand the scope of the Public Art program (City of Toronto, 2003).

Currently, public art for a particular building is usually designed by artists with certain credentials, but not necessarily any connection to the local community where the art is being erected. Rather, talented neighbourhood artists could be recruited to produce the public art for their own communities. Local arts councils, such as the Scarborough Arts Council could be involved in developing such a program, just as they developed the mural routes program. Similar connections can be made for facade improvement programs on local retail strips.

Another way to encourage public art in the inner suburbs specifically is for City of Toronto policies to change to allow public art funds from development projects to be directed to any neigh-

bourhood in the city, regardless of the location of the development. Currently, the majority of land development, and therefore the majority of official public art is located downtown.

Improved TTC Access

> Improve public transit … implement the Toronto Transit City Light Rail Plan…provide a transit pass or transit pass subsidy to residents (Toronto Mayor's Economic Competitiveness Advisory Committee, 2008).

Governments and transit agencies should fulfil and expand recommendations for improved transit, including increased bus service. Planning approvals can also be used to create better pedestrian links to rail stations and bus stops.

Evolution

Space: Creative Community Hubs, Recreation Rooms, Energy Retrofits

> Transform local community centres into creative community hubs (Strategies for Creative Cities Project Team, 2006).
>
> Expand community enterprise and employment hubs (Toronto Mayor's Economic Competitiveness Advisory Committee, 2008).
>
> Broaden the understanding of infrastructure needs and market conditions. Expand geographical reach across Toronto (Artscape, 2007).

Those involved with the development of facilities should go beyond community centres and explore options for creating hubs through the adaptive re-use of older industrial buildings, malls, and plazas. Organizations such as Artscape and Toronto Culture, which work with cultural organizations, could facilitate this exploration and disseminate informational tools for assessing the value of certain properties. The potential for conversion of more apartment recreation rooms into community spaces may be a particularly fruitful target of this process.

From an environmental point of view, there is a benefit to providing incentives for combining apartment energy retrofits with development of creative spaces. For example, E.R.A. Architects is working with the city of Toronto on a Tower Renewal Project, which will perform greenhouse gas saving structural retrofits on older apartment towers, while seeking to improve the public realm in and around these buildings (Stewart, Tower Renewal Project, 2008).

Employment Land Clustering

> Incentives could be provided for…the achievement of higher density building forms or, if the City so chooses, growth in specific industries or economic clusters (Hemson Consulting Ltd., 2007).

With Albert Sliwin's work as an example, the City of Toronto can target incentives towards creative industry clusters. At one level, this can involve simple marketing and branding of areas, combined with outreach to particular industry groups. Project approval processes could be

streamlined based on certain criteria. Financial incentives such as tax credits and grant could also be provided, perhaps tied to community development activities.

Suburban Avenues: Evolution Not Replacement

> Avenues that are characterized by one or two storey commercial buildings, vacant and underutilized lands and large areas of surface parking will be priorities for future Avenue Studies (City of Toronto City Planning, 2006).

Current City of Toronto Avenue policies view strip malls as an unacceptable building form that should be replaced. Instead, Avenue studies could focus on renovating and upgrading existing buildings, particularly those that support existing creative and cultural enterprises. Urban design and architecture schools, journals, and trade groups could also examine opportunities for modifying, rather than replacing existing structures.

Update to December 2008

In November 2008, the report; *Creative City Framework Implementation*, was presented to the City of Toronto Economic Development Committee as a "municipal strategy to establish the conditions necessary for local creative and cultural activity to flourish."

As expected, this strategy focuses on creative clusters specifically through an initiative known as "Placing Creativity." This is a group that works to "identify and establish cultural hubs and districts and support the retention and creation of cultural space in the city" (City of Toronto, 2008, Creative City). It is a partnership between the City of Toronto, the Martin Prosperity Institute, the University of Toronto Department of Geography and Planning, the Ontario Ministry of Culture, the Toronto Arts Council, and Toronto Artscape.

The three recommendations of the *Creative City Framework Implementation* report are:

1. advance cultural mapping by working with the "Placing Creativity" partnership, and develop cultural resource mapping to identify areas of high cultural industry concentration or potential;
2. develop a shared definition for creative and cultural industries for the City of Toronto to better measure and advocate on behalf of the sector;
3. retain and create cultural space in Toronto through targeted programs, increased collaboration between City divisions, development of staff teams, and ongoing engagement with the community. (City of Toronto, 2008, Creative City)

This report did not explicitly discuss the challenges and opportunities of the inner suburbs. Other policy documents developed within the same period do address these areas. At the same November meeting in which the *Creative City Framework Implementation* was adopted, the Economic Development Committee adopted a *Community Arts Action Plan for Toronto*. This action plan is designed to enhance funding and profile of community arts, create more accessible space and share available resources. The plan explicitly notes the importance of serving the city's priority neighbourhoods and includes strategies that align with the findings and policy ideas discussed in this paper. They include:

- Cultural Services will work with the City's Community Partnership Investment Program to review funding models that will assist with equitable access to all city funding for underserved communities, including the city's 13 priority neighbourhoods, seniors, and youth.
- Cultural Services will work with youth-led and emerging community arts organizations and artists to ensure they are aware of resources available for developing entrepreneurial skills and other business related training.
- The City will consider use of unconventional physical space for use by arts organizations and artists (i.e., benches, walls, portable-equipment arts labs), as well as other use of unconventional arts spaces (i.e., TTC, schools, vacant buildings, etc.).
- Community arts sector will explore opportunities for setting up a branding framework that allows all community arts organizations to participate and to showcase their programs and services to the public.
- Cultural Services will work closely with the City Planning Division to ensure culture is included as an element of the City's planning process where possible. (City of Toronto, 2008, Community Arts)

My research indicates that it would be beneficial for the activities supporting the city's *Community Arts Action Plan* to be coordinated with those of the *Creative City Framework Implementation*. It is not clear to what degree this will be the case. It is encouraging, however, to see elements of a Creative Cities Strategy for the Inner Suburbs in being incorporated into the city's planning processes.

7. Implications for Creative Cities Research

> The suburbs have no charms to soothe the restless dreams of youth (Lee, Peart, and Lifeson, 1988).

In the 1980s, the Canadian rock band Rush sang these words, accompanied by video footage of North York and Scarborough. At that time, these neighbourhoods were seen as dreary, middle-class, and white. Today they are often seen as dangerous, lower-class and multiethnic, but still with few charms to excite the dreams of a creative city.

The findings in this study indicate that rather than simply being the deficient and unfortunate periphery of the city, Toronto's inner suburban neighbourhoods constitute distinctive geographical entities, with their own particular assets, challenges, and opportunities. Some of the inner suburban characteristics that may be particularly interesting to creative city and creative class theories include:

- patterns of re-use similar to downtown environments, but adapted to different built form;
- the continued importance of individual creativity in seeking expression in difficult environments − either in spite of, or because of them;
- a lack of weak ties that hampers organizational development;
- members of the creative class who are rooted in their communities;
- the importance of economic and social power within ethnic communities as an tool for entrepreneurship.

Further study with larger sample sizes is needed to reinforce or modify these findings and to further illuminate the characteristics of the inner suburbs. Some fruitful explorations would include:

- a more comprehensive exploration into the attitudes and motivations of creative individuals in the inner suburbs;
- categorization and comparison of different suburban neighbourhoods;
- testing the effectiveness of different connectivity tools in a dispersed urban environment, including the uses of social media technologies;
- urban design study on potential for evolution of built form rather than replacement or abandonment.

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