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From the Margins: Assessing Policy Approaches to Addressing Suburban Disadvantage in Toronto

Supervised Research Project

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Abstract

This research paper looks at the issue of suburban decline and disadvantage in Toronto. Studies have shown that the number of low-income people residing in neighbourhoods in the inner suburbs is growing. This means that the inner suburbs must be adapted to servicing a low-income population. Land-use policies reflect how governments interpret and address these issues. Significant provincial and municipal policies in the realms of transportation, housing and the distribution of services and amenities were assessed to understand how suburban disadvantage is being conceptualized and addressed. A review of the policy documents revealed that suburban disadvantage is not a consistent focus in terms of policy concerns. However, many policy documents are concerned to varying extents with supporting low-income populations through policies related to housing, transportation and service provision. There are some policies at the city level that directly address aspects of suburban decline, such as the Tower Renewal Program and the Zoning Bylaw. The Province of Ontario has some higher-level policies in place that support mitigating suburban disadvantage to varying degrees. Two prominent concerns in many government documents are economic competitiveness and prosperity. These overarching concerns regarding the economy can detract from social concerns in policy and they may build on historical inequities, further entrenching the inequitable distribution of resources, services and amenities in Toronto. Although government policies do not speak explicitly about suburban decline as a concern, they do target areas of suburban decline through the identification of priority areas for investment.

Résumé

Cet essai porte sur l'enjeu du déclin de la banlieue et la localisation des personnes défavorisées à Toronto. Les études démontrent que le nombre de personnes à faible revenu résidant dans la proche banlieue est croissant. Ce faisant, les proches banlieues doivent être adaptées afin de pouvoir desservir adéquatement cette population à faible revenue. Les politiques d'utilisation du sol reflètent la manière dont les différents gouvernements (autant municipal que provincial) interprètent et tentent de trouver des solutions à ces enjeux. Un nombre significatif de politiques concernant le domaine des transports, de l'habitation et la distribution spatiale des services et aménités furent analysées afin de mieux comprendre comment l'enjeu des banlieues défavorisées de Toronto est abordé et traité par les gouvernements. La revue documentaire des différentes politiques disponibles a permis de révéler que l'accent n'est pas systématiquement mis sur l'enjeu de la pauvreté croissante en banlieue. Cependant, de nombreuses politiques s'intéressent tout de même à cet enjeu, selon divers degrés et tentent de venir en aide aux populations à faible revenu de la proche banlieue par l'entremise d'interventions et la mise en œuvre de mesures concernant le logement, le transport et la fourniture de services publics. À l'échelle de la ville, quelques politiques, dont le Tower Renewal Program et le Règlement de zonage, s'intéressent directement à certains aspects du déclin de la proche banlieue. Il existe aussi, à l'échelle provinciale, des programmes et politiques qui tentent, par divers degrés d'intervention, d'atténuer le déclin de la banlieue. La prospérité et la compétitivité économique sont deux préoccupations prédominantes et récurrentes des documents de politiques analysés. Cette surreprésentation de l'intérêt économique au sein des politiques peut nuire aux préoccupations de natures plus sociales et contribuer à la perpétuation d'inégalités historiques en consolidant la répartition inéquitable des ressources, des services et des aménités sur le territoire de la ville de Toronto. Bien que les politiques gouvernementales ne se préoccupent pas directement et explicitement du déclin de la proche banlieue, elles ciblent néanmoins certaines des zones en déclins à travers l'identification de secteurs d'investissement et d'intervention prioritaires.

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Chapter 1. Introduction to Suburban Decline

The dominant idea of homogenous, middle-class suburbs has been slowly ebbing, and is being replaced by a newer, less tranquil notion of the suburbs. The suburban areas bordering many cities in Canada and the United States have become poorer and more disadvantaged in the past thirty years, becoming home to a growing number of low-income and poverty-stricken people with limited access to resources such as transit, employment opportunities, social services, and housing (Kneebone and Berube 2013; Lucy and Phillips 2000; Hanlon and Vicino 2007). This is a result of a combination of factors, such as the progressive deterioration of the welfare state, economic recession, economic liberalism and globalization. The difference in income levels between central urban areas and their suburban outskirts – and the related issues of social, economic and spatial disparities – is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore because of the clear and defined spatial divisions it creates. These divisions manifest themselves in social dissatisfaction, reduced civic participation, and other societal ills.

As social, economic and spatial disparities are becoming increasingly pertinent issues in Canada and the United States, this paper explores these issues in the context of a major city in Canada: Toronto. This phenomenon of suburban decline has been chronicled in Toronto (Hulchanski 2010; Walks 2001). Research has found that the 'inner' suburbs of the amalgamated City of Toronto are experiencing higher levels of poverty and are becoming more unequal and more polarized. This research looks at how government bodies are addressing the challenge of suburban disadvantage. In other words, this research project will look at how Ontario is responding to growing suburban disadvantage in the City of Toronto, through a planning and land-use policy perspective. Although social and economic policies matter as well, the central research questions are: How are existing land-use policies addressing the issue of suburban disadvantage? How is the issue of suburban disadvantage framed in these different policies? How is the problem, as defined, being addressed in the policies? What changes to the policies does the experience of other jurisdictions suggest?

1.1 Context

The suburbanization of poverty has been observed in western countries, namely the United States, Australia and Canada. This is likely partially due to their spatial, political, economic and historical similarities. Research on this phenomenon varies in its methodological approach to quantifying and assessing its extent, the calibration of poverty, and the fundamental causes of the decline of inner suburbs, but despite this, a significant amount of research has indicated socioeconomic decline in these regions, commonly referred to as the inner suburbs, or those suburbs closest to the inner city. A report by the Brookings Institution demonstrated that the number of high-poverty neighborhoods declined in rural areas and central cities in the 1990s, but suburbs experienced almost no change. And in fact, many older, inner-ring suburbs around major metropolitan areas actually experienced increases in poverty over the decade (Jargowsky 2003). Kneebone and Berube (2013) have observed that currently, more Americans live below the poverty line in suburban areas than in the country's large cities. In their study of the 100 most populous metropolitan areas in the United States, they found the location of poor populations shifted away from rural areas to both cities and suburbs during the 1980s and 1990s; however, the rate of growth of the suburban poor population began to outpace that of cities for the first time. During the 1990s, the number of poor individuals in suburbs grew at more than twice the rate than in cities – 19 percent compared with 8 percent. And this trend continued to accelerate in the 2000s. From 2000 to 2010, the poor population of the US grew from 33.9 million to 46.2 million people. In tandem with this, the number of poor people living in the suburbs of the country's largest metropolitan areas rose by 53 percent (5.3 million people), and this was more than twice the rate of increase in cities, where the poor population grew by 23 percent, or 2.4 million people (Kneebone and Berube 2013).

With regards to the occurrence of suburban decline in Canada, Pavlic and Qian (2014) conducted a quantitative examination of the changing demographic pattern of post-war suburban locations in metropolitan areas across Canada. They found that inner suburbs across the country witnessed a decline in median household income and average dwelling value, and lower prosperity factors (high rate of property ownership, high proportion of households with high incomes, low incidence of low-income families and low unemployment rates) between 1986 and 2006. Given

these changes, government bodies and other social actors must react and respond to this growing problem.

1.2 Methodology

In order to answer the research question of how provincial and local governments are responding to suburban decline in the City of Toronto, and what role land-use policy serves, policies regarding transportation, housing and the distribution of services and amenities will be studied. Policies regarding the management of transportation networks, accessibility and coverage at the municipal, regional and provincial level will be assessed to appraise how they address the issue of suburban disadvantage. The research will be focused on major planning documents such as Metrolinx's *Big Move*, Toronto's *Official Plan* and current transit plans, as well as more detailed documents regarding transit infrastructure the inner suburbs. Analysis of policies regarding the spatial distribution of services and amenities will focus on small-scale regeneration and revitalization studies in the inner suburbs as well as provincial and municipal documents that address the distribution of amenities and services, such as community hubs, employment opportunities and commercial uses. Housing research will focus on affordable housing strategies at the provincial and municipal level, namely Ontario's *Affordable Housing Strategy*, the city's *Affordable Housing Action Plan* and the city's *Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy*. How land-use policies are addressing the issue of suburban disadvantage will be assessed through the *Toronto Official Plan, Provincial Policy Statement on Land Use*, Zoning Bylaw, and Toronto's *Tower Renewal Program*.

Policy documents will be analyzed to see if and how the issue of suburban disadvantage is framed and addressed, and whether the policies explicitly tackle suburban disadvantage or implicitly work toward mitigating the issue through actions on other urban issues. In order to determine what changes to these policies the experience of other jurisdictions suggests, academic research on the topic will be consulted. Cities or regions that are innovators in tackling the question of suburban decline will be identified; their policies will be studied to find relevant best practices that could be applied in Toronto.

1.3 Significance of Suburban Decline

The significance of suburban decline relates to the concentration of poverty (which also occurs in central areas) and the location of poverty in peripheral areas. The existence of poverty and the concentration of poverty are not new phenomena. The concentration of poverty in a certain area leads to the amplification of issues associated with poverty and a self-perpetuating cycle of the social problems that cause and are caused by poverty. A concentration of poverty entails areas with little to offer in terms of refuge from hardship, risk, temptation and limited options for progress. Thus the concentration of poverty is in itself a serious social issue with wide-ranging and persistent pernicious impacts. In addition to concerns regarding concentrations of poverty in general, the locational aspect of the phenomenon of suburban poverty is a significant distinguishing feature. Having poverty concentrated in the suburbs, as opposed to the central or inner city (where historically, it is typically assumed to be concentrated), brings forward a host of new concerns.

In the past few decades, the process of expansion and decentralization of cities has resulted in city regions taking on new, polycentric forms. In many metropolitan regions across North America, the decentralization of jobs to the suburbs in general and their distribution in suburban sprawl is having an effect on both employment and population patterns. Spatial patterns of employment growth (or decline) raise concerns with accessibility, i.e., the ease of reaching opportunities or amenities. If employment is more spread out across a city region, then this presents issues in terms of access to jobs. Research conducted by Weitz and Crawford (2012) in the United States has found that in the majority of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) studied, jobs became more inaccessible relative to urban centres and revealed that 63 percent of the 358 MSAs experienced job gains along with a decrease in job accessibility. This supports the notion that employment sprawl in city regions is quite common. Employment sprawl creates accessibility barriers for the population because it increases the distance needed to travel to jobs in some cases and this presents a disutility for two reasons. Firstly, poor access by public transit in the suburbs means people can be less likely to travel for reasons of expense and time. Secondly, the location of employment further away diminishes the chances of having access to local networks and, hence, knowledge of employment opportunities.

Another concern related to having poverty concentrated in the suburbs specifically is that conventionally, social services have been focused in inner cities as that was presumed to be where concentrations of people requiring these services would be located. Having services such as immigrant settlement assistance, youth services, and community facilities help in creating opportunities for people in need. The social infrastructure in Toronto is heavily concentrated in the city centre (United Way 2004), and if need is growing at a faster rate in the inner suburbs, this has implications for where new investments in social infrastructure should be directed. Suburban decline may also mean that people have to travel further to fulfill their needs or access other amenities such as retail and personal services. Compounding the issue of suburban disadvantage is the fact that many suburban communities were constructed in the middle of the 20th century and modern planning practice dictated a separation of uses so that these areas are predominantly residential and lacking nearby amenities. This places pressure on transportation systems, and places limits on how much these suburban neighbourhoods can develop and prosper, and serve their residents.

Another concern is the current lack of recognition and interest in inner suburbs compared to centre cities. With the contemporary focus on the centre of metropolitan areas as the source of economic growth and cultural significance, it can be said that we are currently in a 'postsuburban' era where the preceding primacy of the suburb has given way to the dominance of the central city. Renewed interest, investment and focus on city centres culturally and economically, along with continued sprawl in the outer suburbs, has in part caused certain, older suburbs to become the least desirable (and thus the more affordable) places to live, but this lack of interest has likely also resulted in their neglect. The locational aspect affects the understanding of and reaction to the issue of suburban decline and poverty. Aside from residing in suburbs, there are few reasons to visit them; this may affect the level of attention that suburban decline can garner. While research has shown that the concentration of poor individuals in the suburbs has been observed since the1980s, it is only now becoming a salient issue.

1.4 Understanding Suburban Decline

Ultimately, the phenomenon of suburban decline can be traced back to developments of the latter half of the 20th century. There are two main causes. The first is changes in the economy and political ideology. These have resulted in changes in social policy, the growth of inequality and the weakening of the middle class. The second is the effects of the housing market and the actions of government bodies. These have resulted in the spatial redistribution of poverty in urban space.

In the 1970s and afterwards, globalization, or the connectedness between the economies and cultures of all nations, increased along with developments in transportation, communications, trade and changes in people's migration patterns. Globalization encompasses a variety of processes, namely the spatial integration of economic activities, movement of capital, and people, the progression of advanced technologies, and shifting values and norms as they spread across the world. Currently, globalization means new technologies, increasing trade, mobile international capital, increasing concentration of economic control, and the lessening of government regulations. Globalization is connected to the proliferation of neoliberal ideas on the part of governments and corporations. Neoliberalism can be explained as the resurgence of laissez-faire economic policies. It sanctions the privatization of services, fiscal austerity, deregulation, free markets, and reductions in government spending, with the effect of broadening the role of the private sector in the economy. Marcuse and van Kempen (2000) postulate that globalization is creating a new spatial order of cities. This new spatial order exhibits features such as suburban decline – which began in the 1970s during a period of heightened globalization. Globalization and neoliberal policies have helped in creating spatial concentrations within cities that exhibit urban poverty and areas of 'high-level' internationally connected business activities. Spatial divisions between activities and segments of the population, such as these, are exacerbated (Marcuse and van Kempen 2000).

Government austerity measures have direct effects on those who are dependent on the state (such as unemployed, disabled, or elderly people), and declining incomes directly influence the housing market opportunities of low income households. In a declining welfare state, reduced subsidies for social housing and greater reliance on market forces lead to higher prices for new

dwellings while low-income individuals have less access to new dwellings and are relegated to a shrinking number of neighbourhoods where they can still afford housing. When these dwelling are spatially concentrated in certain areas of the city, increased spatial divisions may result. In addition, the separation between different "classes" is exacerbated by gentrification, as low-income individuals are bought out of more desirable neighbourhoods by higher-income people. In the current political climate, these processes and forces are unencumbered, and thus present a significant hurdle for local governments to overcome or at least compensate for.

Poverty and inequality are socially constructed issues, "the main causes of poverty and inequality are structural and the existence of 'poverty neighbourhoods' is simply a manifestation of these wider realities" (Badcock 1984, in Pawson et al. 2012). In contemporary developed nations, the main causes of poverty are under- or unemployment, inequality of power, restricted or lack of opportunities, and a paucity of state-run income redistribution provisions.

Another important aspect that must be considered in relation to suburban decline is that inequality between individuals is increasing, and has been increasing since the 1970s and income has been concentrating at the top, with the richest one percent of the population in the United States earning more than 23 percent of the total (Reich et al. 2010). This has also occurred in other western countries, most prominently in primarily Anglo-Saxon countries such as Britain, Canada and Australia. With a shrinking middle class, and increasing numbers of poor people, this occurrence heightens the contrast and separation between poor individuals concentrated in certain areas of the city, and the very rich, concentrated in other, more desirable areas of the city. Wealthier people are able to appropriate more desirable urban areas (such as those with attractive architecture, a central location, and good transit service) and as governments policies work to regenerate central urban areas and make them more attractive (such as old industrial areas and waterfronts), poorer households must locate in less central, attractive areas. These are often in the suburbs, where the housing stock is of poorer quality, there are less amenities and public transit is less present.

Understanding the approaches and definitions used in the research on suburban poverty and decline is important. The suburb is a well-known and a well-used concept, but consistent

definitions are hard to come by. While most people understand the distinctions between urban and suburban and rural, there are still ambiguities in understanding and defining where each begins and ends. There are three main methods by which to classify suburbs: by means of thresholds of population density, municipal and administrative boundaries or distance from the central business district (CBD). Researchers on the topic have employed a variation or a combination of these definitions. Despite the differences, there are a plethora of studies that have concluded that suburban poverty and decline is indeed occurring.

The terms low income and poverty, similarly, are well-used but lack a clear definition. There are a variety of measures and cut-offs that are used to identify poor individuals. However, research tends to focus on a single measure rather than an aggregate measurement (Zhang, 2010). Thus research findings could vary based on what measurement was used, and populations could be overlooked or mislabeled. Cut-offs can be assessed by the cost of basic necessities or by the amount of income that a family of a certain size and residing in a certain city would need to survive (ibid.). Families with incomes lower than this selected cut-off would be categorized as experiencing poverty. The use of different measurements of poverty could thus have an effect on the findings; however, looking at poverty from a variety of different angles also allows for some robustness in research on suburban decline in terms of assessing and acknowledging that poverty is multi-faceted and is not simple to measure.

1.4.1 Symptoms and Effects

The symptoms and effects of poverty concentration and income inequality are varied. The concentration of poor people in high-poverty neighbourhoods results in a concentration of the social problems that cause or are caused by poverty. Concentrations of poverty create a cycle of poverty that is difficult to alleviate. Poor children and youth in these neighbourhoods must contend with an antagonistic environment that has few positive role models. Concentrations of poverty can also lead to disinvestment and a lack of income for the area if wealthier residents and businesses leave. Aspects of urban life that are organized geographically, such as school districts and attendance zones, can exacerbate this as the having concentrations of poor people residing in the same area frequently results in low-performing schools (Jargowsky 2003). Income

inequality promotes strategies that are more self-interested, less affiliative, often highly antisocial, more stressful, and likely to give rise to higher levels of violence, poorer community relations, and worse health (Wilkinson, 2005: 22). In more unequal and stratified societies the quality of social relationships is more strained, and that can be stressful to members. Many of the effects of unequal societies –health and social problems – stem from this chronic stress (Harrell, 2009)

A variety of studies indicate that the more equal and egalitarian a society is, the better the quality of social relations. Research on topics as varied as trust, crime, health, social capital and strength of community indicate that more equal societies fare better in terms of all these indicators. For example, a large number of studies with remarkable consistency have reported that homicide rates are consistently higher in societies where income differences are greater, and that there is a robust correlation between income distribution and involvement in local community life (Wilkinson, 2006). Thus high poverty levels and income inequality do not only negatively impact the poor, but also negatively impact society at large. While those who experience poverty must contend with health issues such as alcoholism or heart problems, poverty clearly correlates with increased crime, erosion of trust, and reduced social involvement in the wider society due to a lack of social cohesion. A lack of social cohesion can also negatively impact the economy as research has demonstrated that there is an association between social trust and economic growth, with higher levels of trust being linked with the level and growth of output (Helliwell and Putnam, 1995; Bjørnskov and Meon, 2015). Thus the benefits of supporting a more egalitarian and less stratified society are myriad and wide-ranging.

And while we are still in the midst of suburban decline we see the range of repercussions and devastating results of these sorts of divisions. Topical news items such as riots sparked by the murders of Michael Brown in Ferguson and Freddie Gray at the hands of police in Baltimore highlight the cleavage between the affluent and the deprived, and showcase a thoroughly divided society. The contemporary period of globalization and neoliberalism has produced large groups of people who are now economically irrelevant – their employment and involvement in society is not needed for the continued prosperity of the affluent. In the United States racial divides and tensions have been strongly correlated with the suburbanization of poverty (Randolf and Tice,

2014). In the case of Ferguson, tension has been building for decades, as blue-collar factory jobs became scarcer and wealthier residents moved to larger homes in the exurbs – eroding the local tax base and leaving little for the newer, less affluent black residents. As well, the governance structure in this suburb has not adapted to Ferguson's changing circumstances, as the majority of its law enforcement and political representatives are white. A lack of economic opportunities and effective representation of the majority black community ultimately came to a head with the shooting, resulting in 204 arrests, 3 related deaths at the hands of police and damages costing an estimated $5 million (Yerak, 2014). In Canada, the oil boom in Alberta has led to increasing salaries for those employed in oil and gas and corporate services, driving up the cost of housing and goods. Calgary has become Canada's most unequal city (Cryderman, 2013), with few of the benefits trickling down to those in lower income brackets, who are often visible minorities. This lack of inclusion in the economic prosperity of the city can be related to the patterns of disillusionment and rejection felt by the growing number of young people who leave the city to fight abroad for terrorist groups such as ISIL and al-Qaida.

The intense problems that these types of spatial and socio-economic divisions results in are evident. However, the research on this topic demonstrates that even small reductions in the level of inequality, which can be effected through government policy, can make a difference across a wide range of outcomes (Wilkinson, 2006). If societal well-being is predicated on material foundations such as the distribution of income, then policy solutions can developed to work towards improving the well-being and functioning of societies.

1.5 Suburban Poverty in the West

A growth in suburban poverty and disadvantage has been observed and documented across the western hemisphere. European countries, Australia, the United States and Canada are all experiencing – to different degrees – declines in investment, income levels and desirability in older suburbs.

The topic of suburbanized poverty and disadvantage has been studied most extensively in the United States. In metropolitan areas across that country, according to recent research, inner

suburbs are witnessing population loss, increasing poverty, economic stagnation, declining incomes, and reductions in homeownership (Hanlon and Vicino 2007; Jargowsky 2003; Kneebone and Berube 2013; Lucy and Phillips 2000). In an examination of 1639 suburbs in 13 metropolitan areas, almost 40 percent of all suburbs studied did not fit into the outdated image of suburbia as being primarily White, residential and non-industrial, with greater income levels than the central city, and a diversity of inner suburbs were identified, some being overwhelmingly poor, Black, dominated by immigrant groups or experiencing manufacturing decline (Hanlon et al. 2006; Howell and Timberlake 2013). In particular, the first-tier suburbs of the Rustbelt cities in the Northeast and Midwest (such as Cleveland, Chicago and St Louis) are ageing with a housing stock that is no longer marketable, infrastructure that is in need of repair and an ageing population with few of the younger generations immigrating to replace them. Many of these suburbs are experiencing social and economic problems typically associated with inner-city areas, such as increasing crime rates and poor school performance (Hanlon et al. 2006). After decades of growth and change in suburbs, in tandem with globalization and economic restructuring, and exacerbated by the 2008 recession, more Americans live below the poverty line in suburbs than in the nation's big cities (Kneebone and Berube 2013).

As the dichotomy of urban and suburban is no longer sufficient to accurately describe the nuances of contemporary spatial phenomena, some studies have sought to define inner suburbs; and example of which is Hanlon's work (2009a; 2009b). This research defines inner suburbs as being areas that possess 50 percent or more of their housing built prior to 1969 – housing that is deemed to be of lesser social status and is less desirable – and being contiguous areas that border a central city. This definition can be used as a starting point for policymakers to understand the geography of the locations in question.

In the United States most suburbs are politically distinct from cities, and as a large part of infrastructure and services in the United States are delivered locally, this creates issues for poorer suburbs that are dependent on a shrinking tax base. Declining inner-ring suburbs are in what has been referred to as a "policy blind spot" (Puentes and Orfield 2002, in Hanlon 2009b), i.e., in a spatial and political limbo, between the renewed intensification in city centres and the continuous expansion of suburban fringe areas.

Research on suburban disadvantage is predicated on developing measurements to assess disadvantage. Indicators that are commonly used to demonstrate the existence of disadvantage are such aspects as income levels, unemployment rates, and immigrant concentrations. Income ratio was used to identify declining suburbs (a relative measure of a suburb's average household income as compared to the average for the whole metro area).

Overall, the research on the suburbanization of disadvantage in the United States points to a varied suburban landscape. While inner suburbs differ among themselves, they are generally characterized by the lower socio-economic status of their residents. From 2000 to 2008, suburbs in the 95 largest metropolitan regions in the United States saw their poor population increase by 25 percent – and increase that was five times more than the growth of poor populations in central cities, and suburbs now house the largest portion of the country's poor (Howell and Timberlake 2013). Some inner suburbs are experiencing a shift in employment among residents, away from manufacturing and progressively towards service and construction industries (Hanlon 2009a). This is related to the transitioning economy in North America; beginning in the 1960s and in the decades afterward, the economy moved from manufacturing and production to a "bifurcated mix of low- and high-skill service jobs located increasingly in the suburbs" (Howell and Timberlake 2013: 82). Thus, low-skill work in metropolitan areas in the United States is now mainly in the service sector, and increasingly these jobs are in suburban areas. Black residents are also moving to suburbs in search of more affordable housing in regions such as the Washington DC area, and immigrants are no longer heading to city centres only but are also clustering in more affordable suburbs. Evidence of this phenomenon is seen in the emergence of inner suburbs across metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles and Miami that exhibit high concentrations of immigrant groups (Hanlon et al. 2006).

As in the United States, the "middle-ring" suburbs in Australia are mainly low- to moderate-income suburbs built between the 1940s and the late 1960s (Randolph and Freestone 2012). The literature regarding suburban disadvantage in Australia tend to use different terminology than in North America, with the term "middle suburbs" being employed most frequently as opposed to "inner suburbs" or "older suburbs". In contrast to the United States and its racial issues, Australia

has different racial tensions, in part due to its different history and to its national multicultural policy, in existence since the 1970s, which has had mostly bi-partisan support and led to better integration (Randolph and Tice, 2014).

Another important contrast with the American situation is the differences in government service provisions. In the United States, local government is responsible for infrastructure and service provision to a much larger extent than Australia. In Australia, social and economic infrastructure provision is the responsibility of state governments with a degree of federal assistance in realms such as social housing, education, transportation and social assistance services. Because of this, although there is a contrast in investment among suburbs in the country as well, decline in Australia has not been as drastic and is more evenly distributed spatially than in the United States.

Randolph and Tice (2014) link the decline of the older suburbs with "the retreat from the post-war Keynesian public investment and welfare regimes," which in the post-war era had resulted in more redistributive outcomes in terms of income and social welfare. All research corroborates the shift towards poverty being concentrated in the suburbs as occurring around the same point in time; beginning in the mid-1980s and continuing on until the present day. Randolph and Tice view the ascendancy of Neoliberalism as its permeation of social and economic policies as significantly altering the fabric of Australian society, resulting in a palpable polarization of wealth and increased inequality in metropolitan areas. Over the course of a decade, beginning in the mid-1980s, the Australian government introduced a wide range of policy reforms concerning such things as reductions in welfare support, privatization, financial deregulation and trade liberalization. Other research dwells on the effects of economic restructuring and globalization on settlement and land-use patterns (Forster 2006; Baum et al. 2005). One change linked to these alterations is the growing tendency for high-amenity central areas to attract office and institutional employment as well as "high-status residential development" (Forster 2006) and to grow and prosper in a distinctly different trajectory from other parts of their respective metropolitan regions.

Studies show evidence of polarization in Australia's major cities (Baum et al. 2005; Baum and Gleeson 2010). Evidence for the suburbanization of disadvantage is substantial; many suburbs around city centres are characterized by lower socio-economic status, overrepresentation of renters as opposed to homeowners, higher proportions of immigrant communities, greater unemployment, limited services, lesser housing values and undesirability of the housing stock as compared to the metropolitan averages (Randolph and Freestone 2012). This is in contrast to the central city areas. Political and cultural differences have been remarked upon – with central areas characterized by larger percentages of residents with higher educational qualifications, a smaller percentage of traditional nuclear family households, an acceptance of non-mainstream lifestyles and liberal values, while the disadvantaged middle suburbs are markedly different, recently supporting right-wing populist political movements and resenting the 'cultural elitism' of the central city (Forster 2006). An interesting finding is that Sydney, Australia's international, 'global city', actually contained the most deprived suburb in the country as well as the least deprived suburb – geographically close but economically and socially worlds apart (Baum and Gleeson 2010). Situations such as these can heighten sentiments of separation and exclusion. The issues that arise from having distinct, divided areas which contain residents who are poorer, more likely to be unemployed, and more likely to be immigrants, in opposition to wealthier, more homogenous areas, are of paramount concern, as governments and the public must make the decision of whether to commit to living in an increasingly unequal society, which requires shouldering the costs of policing those in society who believe they have no hope and no future, or whether to address the issue.

Canada too has not avoided the vagaries of changing economic and political structures. Like other western countries, Canada was affected by globalization and neoliberal ideology, resulting in the decline of the Welfare State and the process of downloading of governmental fiscal responsibilities onto provinces and municipalities from the 1990s onward. A study by Pavlic and Qian (2014) demonstrated that the inner suburbs in Canada's largest cities –Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary and Ottawa, among others – have become places of decline and instability. Using prosperity measures (such as rate of property ownership, median incomes, amount of low-income families and unemployment rate), with the 1986 census year as their baseline, the authors show that the inner suburbs lagged in prosperity relative to other urban zones, such as the outer

suburbs, rural areas, and the central city. Their results indicate that the inner suburbs of Canadian cities experienced a decline in median household income, average dwelling value, and prosperity factors between 1986 and 2006. Further evidence that inner suburban areas in Canada are facing severe issues regarding disadvantage and poverty is found in research on housing affordability stress by Bunting, Walks and Filion (2004), which determined that the inner suburbs of eleven major Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) exhibit a high incidence of households experiencing serious housing affordability problems and spending more than 50 percent of their income on rent.

Research on Canada's three major cities – Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver – has indicated that in addition to the suburbanization of poverty, immigrants tend to be concentrated in these inner suburban pockets of poverty (Ley and Smith 2000). This adds another dimension to this issue. Since the 1990s, immigrants in Canada have increasingly fared worse than Canadian-born residents, experiencing more severe unemployment and lower incomes. By the year 2000, it was found that adults who had immigrated in the 1990s were enduring a poverty rate of 33 percent in Toronto and 37 percent in Vancouver, Canada's immigrant gateway cities (Smith and Ley 2008), making the association between immigration status and poverty stronger. A concentration of immigrants in low-income neighbourhoods leads to increased segmentation and fragmentation in Canadian society, further deepening the divides that exist. The qualities of the social and built environment affect the behavior and activities of immigrant groups and colour their perceptions of life in Canada.

1.5.1 Suburban Poverty in Toronto

This study will focus primarily on Toronto. As the largest city in Canada, Toronto is facing circumstances of suburban decline; it is one of the most prominent and best-documented examples of this phenomenon in the country (Hulchanski 2010; Smith and Ley 2008; United Way 2004; Walks 2001).

The spatial and social patterns of the city have changed drastically over the past 30 years (see *Figure 1*). In the 1980s, Toronto's neighbourhoods (as defined by census tracts) exhibited more

variety in terms of income levels than they do now, and there were more mixed-income neighbourhoods. Today, low-income households are significantly more concentrated in specific neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty. Not only this, but the total number of high-poverty neighbourhoods in Toronto has grown in the past decades (Hulchanski 2010).

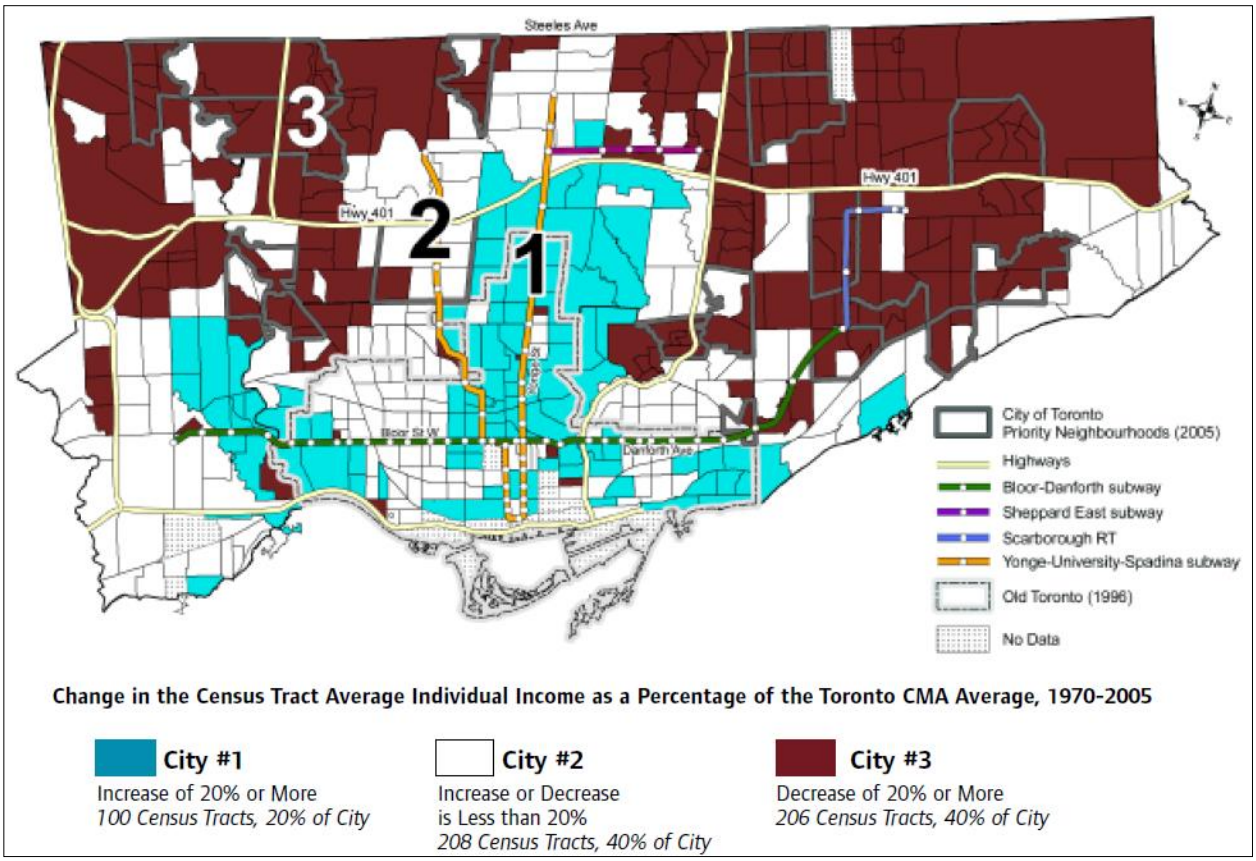

Figure 1: Change in Average Income in Toronto, 1970-2005. Source: *Hulchanski, D. (2010). The Three Cities Within Toronto*.

The decline of inner suburbs is almost exclusive to the amalgamated City of Toronto, which encompasses the older suburbs of York, Etobicoke, Scarborough, North York and East York (see *Figure 2* for former boundaries). In 2000, the city had the highest poverty rate in the metropolitan area, at 22.6 percent, nearly twice as much as Mississauga, the municipality with the second-highest rate of poverty, at 12.7 percent (United Way 2004). The concentration of poverty has increased in inner suburbs, with a shift in the location to the suburbs: as of 2001, they held 77 percent of higher poverty neighbourhoods, an increase from 50 percent in 1981 (United Way 2004). In addition to this, the city has also become more polarized: over time, more

and more neighbourhoods could be categorized as 'high' and 'very high' in terms of poverty levels. The former City of Toronto, which is the city centre in the metropolitan area, was the only former municipality to see a reduction in its poverty rates.

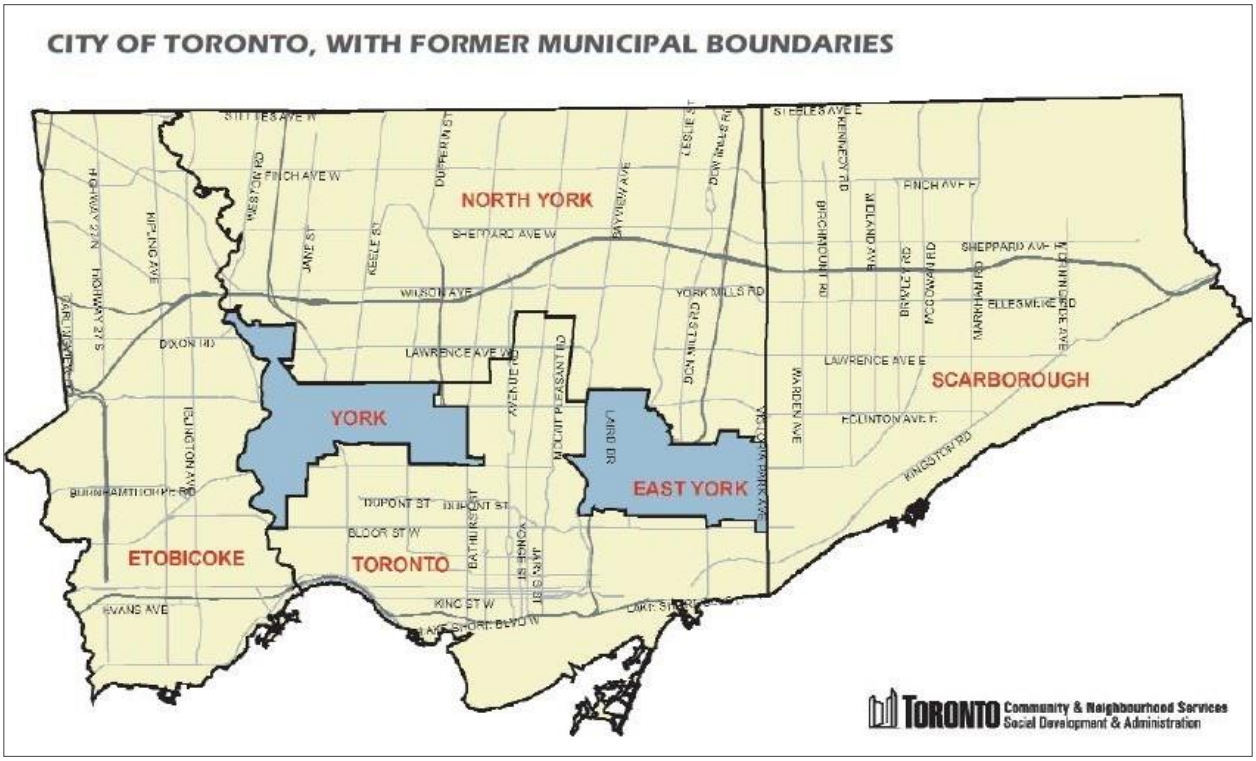

Figure 2: Former Municipalities of Toronto. Source*: United Way (2004), Poverty by Postal Code*

The existence of pockets of poverty removed from the city centre disproportionately affects certain segments of the population. The *Poverty by Postal Code* report by the United Way (2004) and the *Three Cities Within Toronto* report by Hulchanski (2010) state that children and youth are overrepresented in higher-poverty neighbourhoods; however seniors and adults are underrepresented. The higher proportions of children and youth can present more issues, requiring additional schooling and community facilities and services. Additionally, the number of immigrants living in poverty in the city increased by 125 percent from 1981 to 2001, a stark contrast to the mere 13 percent increase in the number of Canadian-born individuals in poverty in the same time period (United Way 2004). Visible minority families accounted for 37.4 percent of the total low-income population in higher-poverty neighbourhoods in 1981. However, by

2001, they accounted for 77.5 percent of the total low-income population in these neighbourhoods (United Way 2004), while 82 percent of the population in census tracts that experienced an increase in income levels over the past few decades is white (Hulchanski 2010). Distinct divides such as the ones that exist in Toronto can have adverse effects on both the inhabitants of high-poverty areas and on the city overall. Research shows that poverty correlates consistently with issues such as crime, poorer health, lower educational achievement, and developmental problems among children (United Way 2004). As in Australia's inner suburban areas, in the latest municipal elections in Toronto, the most disadvantaged areas were most likely to vote for the populist right wing candidate consistently, demonstrating that these spatial distinctions can create social and political complications.

For many people, the quality of their neighbourhood is of paramount importance. Neighbourhoods, especially for individuals who are restricted in terms of transit options, are the source of community life and provide the requisite social and service amenities. Smith and Ley (2008) determined that new immigrants valued neighbourhoods with transit options, good local schools, locally accessible services and active community centres. These desires show the importance of land-use policy and planning to the health and success of neighbourhoods. Land-use policy and planning can help mitigate the debilitating effects of living in areas with high levels of poverty.

1.6 Actors

In order to understand and address suburban decline, the perceptions, values, and resources of actors involved are important. Different groups perceive and assess the issue of suburban decline and alternative responses in different manners. Understanding these differences can aid policymakers in developing policies that are the most effective in terms of contributing to the well-being of their constituencies. The main actors involved in local urban development and planning are the government, developers, industry, community organizations and the public. These actors all have different roles to play regarding suburban decline.

Government

In Canada, municipal issues are generally the concern of provincial, regional and municipal governments. In the contemporary era, governments have faced continuing pressure to reduce operating costs and concomitantly have reduced a variety of welfare programs in the process. Limited resources and capacity to create new programs and support systems are of primary concern for government actors. In addition, governments have been adjusting to the decline in manufacturing and production employment in their respective regions, and are slowly adapting to the new service economy. In light of these changes, government bodies must decide how to address contemporary problems while working within these limitations.

Developers

The age and desirability of existing housing stock plays a significant role in determining where people who can chose, will choose to reside. Currently the bulk of development and real estate activity in the metropolitan region of Toronto occurs either in the central areas of the city, where high-rise, high-density condominiums are proliferating. Between the years 2009 and 2012, Toronto added 56,444 new condominium units, mainly in the inner areas of the city (Barber 2013). In addition, greenfield development and continued sprawl into rural areas continues to be an issue in the region. While inner suburban areas are likely perceived as undesirable and not lucrative by developers and builders, research shows that alterations to strategic properties can significantly affect the trajectory of an area in decline (Lucy and Phillips 2000).

Business and Industry

The choice of where to situate businesses is largely based on proximity to resources such as human capital, transportation infrastructure, markets as well as on the cost of location. The inner suburbs provide more affordable land than in the city centre and are relatively well situated in the Greater Toronto Area in terms of their proximity to other industry and resources within the city centre and in the sprawling suburban areas. The positive aspects of these locations for employment can be built upon.

Local Community Services

Non-profit and community organizations that work in the areas that are experiencing suburban decline can have a significant effect as they provide much-needed community resources. The need for locally accessible amenities becomes paramount with the increasing separations and divisions between neighbourhoods in the city. While many are aware of the need and importance of their services, their resources are typically limited, curtailing their ability to serve these communities.

The Public

The public can affect the trajectory of suburban decline in a variety of ways. Community activism has been crucial in advocating for change in the inner-suburbs and has helped sustain and expand investment in community services and infrastructure (Cowen and Parlette 2011). An engaged community can also mobilize to garner political support for the rejection of redevelopment projects in the inner suburbs that do not benefit existing residents and could initiate gentrification (Walks and August 2008). Voting constituencies – within or outside of inner suburban jurisdictions – can bring this issue of suburban disadvantage to the forefront in order to garner the attention of elected officials and policymakers. Currently, the issue of suburban decline is receiving progressively more media attention, reflecting the fact that this issue is becoming more commonly recognized. In terms of residential choices, people tend to select a residential location based on a trade-off of costs and locational attributes. The inner suburbs are currently low cost and relatively well situated in the Greater Toronto Area in terms of their proximity to the centre city and to portions of the sprawling employment areas and edge cities of the region.

Chapter 2. Transportation

Academic literature has documented and established the connections between lower incomes, social deprivation and transit ridership (Glaeser et al. 2008; Sanchez 2008). Low-income individuals are more likely to be 'captive riders' and be dependent on public transit due to their income level (Glaeser et al. 2008). The availability, commuting time, and cost of public transportation can significantly and adversely affect employment opportunities for low-income individuals. This issue is a result of the suburbanization of employment; the segregation of land uses and the dispersion of suburban destinations cause private vehicles to be the most efficient means of reaching suburban destinations. But public transit serves a social purpose. Providing public transit is a means for advancing larger social goals; it can be viewed as a way to advance equity, redistribute wealth, and offset the costs imposed by a transportation system skewed toward the car (Grengs 2005). In the United States, the government historically has viewed transit provision as a rightful means of redistributing wealth and as an acceptable counterbalance to the issues caused by a transportation system dominated by the automobile (Weiner 1999). While previously transit was aimed at providing mobility to those who do not drive, other goals have supplanted this as the primary aim of transit. Currently the need for transit infrastructure is positioned as serving the purpose of relieving congestion and of enhancing the competitiveness of an economy (and, increasingly, a third purpose is advancing environmental sustainability). The current climate of austerity and neoliberal politics has shifted the focus to concerns of efficiency and competiveness, rather than equity and social justice. The lack of attention paid to pressing social issues illustrates the need for a comprehensive and equitable public transit system and research has demonstrated its role in a healthy and just society. An unbalanced transportation system that caters only to certain segments of the population and that prioritizes economic development will only support and solidify spatial and social divisions (Grengs 2005).

2.1 Defining the Problem

As with many North American cities, in Toronto, most suburban areas have less access to public transit than more central, denser neighbourhoods. It has been demonstrated that residents of apartment towers, which are mostly located in the inner suburbs of Toronto, tend to rely more on

walking and transit compared to other residents (Stewart and Thorne 2010). Commuting to and from the periphery of the city is often more difficult, time-consuming and inefficient. Higher-order transit is rare in suburban Toronto, with very little of the suburbs served by subway or light rail. Research by Hulchanski (2010) shows that in Toronto neighbourhoods with the lowest average income, residents must travel farther to find employment. Despite this, they have the poorest access to subway stations, with only 19 of the transit system's 68 subway stations within or near declining neighbourhoods. In the inner suburbs bus service is less frequent and, in some locations, non-existent. This is due to lower densities in the suburbs making it difficult for transit agencies to provide adequate service. The dispersal of land uses results in longer travel distances for buses, and fewer origin and destination points within walking distance of a bus route. As well, within the city, the ultimate destination point of many public transit routes is in the downtown area. Although downtown Toronto is still an important employment hub, a significant amount of jobs are located in the suburbs. While some jobs in the suburbs are located in polycentric clusters, many are dispersed across the suburbs (Harris 2014). Commuting from suburb to suburb can be difficult, often requiring a detour to the downtown in order to eventually get to the final destination, increasing travel times and potentially deterring transit usage or trip generation. Improving access to transit in the inner suburbs is essential in addressing these problems.

2.2 Municipal Policies

In order to answer the research question of how provincial and local governments are responding to suburban decline in the City of Toronto, and what role transportation policy is playing in this context, several policy documents were analyzed, namely the Official Plan, Transit City and subsequent municipal proposals. In Toronto, municipal policymaking regarding transit is fraught with political interests and pressures overriding effective planning. The 1998 amalgamation of the six former municipalities that became the current City of Toronto has not brought clear or consistent benefits in terms of enhancing transit infrastructure in the inner suburbs, although the cultural and political divides between urban and suburban areas of the city have affected how transit issues are approached. Some mayors have been more connected to the suburban electorate while others have been more connected to the downtown electorate, which has affected their

perspectives on public transportation. Municipal transit plans have changed fairly rapidly with each new municipal government using transit as an opportunity to advance their political goals. In 2007, Mayor David Miller introduced the Transit City Plan, which consisted of seven new Light Rail Transit (LRT) routes through major corridors distributed across the city, increasing the frequency of buses along important routes as well as introducing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines. This Plan would have brought in higher order transit to inner suburban areas in Toronto. The addition of seven light rail routes could serve to reduce the displacement of residents that can occur with the addition of new transit infrastructure; because there would be an addition of seven lines, and because these routes are distributed across the city, transit would not be a rare commodity and would be the cause of less intense gentrification pressure. The subsequent mayor, Rob Ford, did not support this plan, instead proposing his own transit solution of an expanded subway system, but with a lack of financial and political backing, the proposal stalled. Although some parts of David Miller's Transit City Plan – specifically the Eglinton, Sheppard and Finch LRT lines – became incorporated into the existing Big Move provincial plan. The mayoral election of 2014 saw the current mayor, John Tory, propose Smart Track as a centerpiece of his platform. This proposal (see *Figure 3*) is currently being studied, although the plan essentially parallels existing provincial plans for regional rail. The Smart Track proposal aims to implement a regional express rail that connects the north-eastern outer suburb of Markham to downtown Toronto, and then connects to Mississauga in the west. The plan leaves out most of the inner suburbs, and is focused on connecting the far-flung outer suburbs to central Toronto. Despite it being a municipal plan it is regional in scale and neglects to address many of the transit concerns of the inner suburbs of North York, Etobicoke, and to a slightly lesser extent, Scarborough in the east. It bears noting that, in most of the areas that were not covered by John Tory's Smart Track proposal, Tory did not receive a majority of votes.

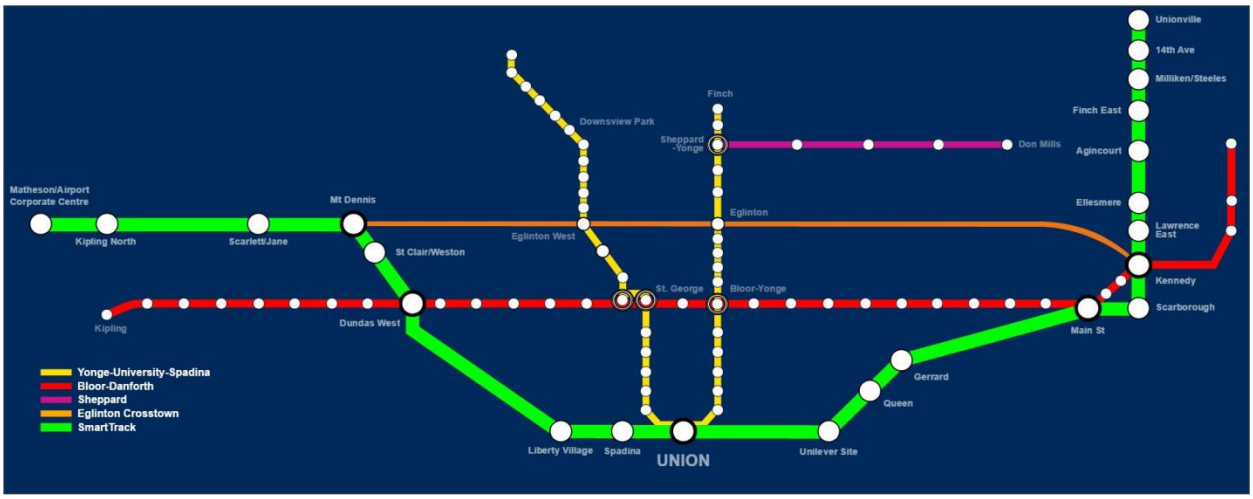

Figure 3: Smart Track Transit Proposal. Source: *smarttracker.ca*

The City of Toronto's Official plan is quite vague on transportation policies. It focuses on the integration of transportation and land use, focusing development and transit infrastructure in the 'Centres', 'employment districts' and 'Avenues', designated areas and corridors for intensification. The Centres are the downtown, North York, Scarborough, Yonge-Eglinton and Etobicoke centres; however, only one of these locations, Scarborough Centre, is situated within the large swaths of Toronto that are experiencing suburban decline.

The Official Plan states that the policies "will create a better urban environment … and a more socially cohesive city by attracting more people and jobs to targeted growth areas" (2-5). This can only have a significant effect on suburban decline if affordable housing is a central consideration in the development of these targeted areas. While the Plan's policies state that growth will be directed to these focal areas "in order to offer opportunities for people … to be affordably housed" (2-5), this section does not emphasize this aspect to the extent affordable housing warrants. The Plan states that the priority is maintaining the existing public-transit system, which, for the reasons discussed above, has significantly less infrastructure in suburban locations. While this could be considered an achievement in the face of budget cutbacks, this could mean that new investments would be used in ways that confirm the existing geography of the system. The Plan also states that buses and streetcars should have priority over cars – this can be in the form of dedicated lanes, signalized intersections or the reduction of on-street parking. While there are no streetcars in suburban environments, there are mostly buses and this would

help in addressing the issue of the lack of adequate transit infrastructure and service in the suburbs. Although implementing priority measures for buses and streetcars would not have the greatest impact, it is feasible and cost effective. The policy does not dwell on the need for improved bus infrastructure although this is a constant concern in Toronto. The sections on mobility and accessibility focus heavily on downtown Toronto, understandably, as it is the economic and cultural engine of the region.

Other centres are also discussed. For Scarborough Centre, the only centre situated in a milieu of decline, the Plan states that improving its connectivity is "crucial for its success" and proposes improving service and extending the existing rail transit route that passes through the centre and also extending the Sheppard subway line east to connect Scarborough and North York. Both of these changes would benefit Scarborough Centre, as the rail line is aging and in need of upgrades. As well, the subway connection would provide an important link, allowing people to travel from inner suburb to inner suburb more efficiently and without having to detour through downtown. Scarborough Centre is also the focal point of 13 different bus routes. Thus, implementing the subway connection and upgrading the rail transit route would help in improving the connectivity and accessibility through this fairly high-traffic area.

2.3 Regional/Provincial Policies

Metrolinx was created in 2006 by the Government of Ontario, as an agency designed to oversee transportation planning and management in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). Metrolinx is mandated to develop and implement a regional transportation system for the GTHA. Towards this end, *The Big Move*, a Regional Transportation Plan, was published in 2008.

The Big Move Plan demonstrates the province's attempt to plan and understand transportation issues at the regional level. The GTHA is considered a region because of the economic ties between the cities and towns it encompasses, and because of the potential economic growth regional transportation can support. Throughout the document, the focus on economic prosperity and other economic concerns is evident and is to be expected in the current political climate,

though this can be to the detriment of addressing issues of social exclusion. How the document deals with other issues is also important.

At the outset, in the Message from the Chair, the Plan does recognize the social goals of transit. For example, this is demonstrated in the statement: "we plan to build over 1,200 kilometres of rapid transit […] so that over 80 per cent of residents in the region will live within two kilometres of rapid transit, with an emphasis on areas with large senior and low-income populations which rely on transit to get around daily" (*i*). The Plan thus states that it will focus on issues related to low-income populations, continuing on to declare that "more residents will be able to access jobs that were once inconvenient to reach by transit" (ibid.), although this does not necessarily mean low-income residents.

In Section 1.3 the Plan lists a "lack of options in areas of higher need" as a challenge for the region going forward, asserting that "as energy costs increase, the potential for social exclusion grows, as more people are unable to afford to participate in activities due to the high cost of travel", (8). This section highlights the social reasons for providing transit to marginalized groups, and the role transit plays in having an inclusive and healthy society, so noting it as a challenge is an important step in the process.

In terms of understanding the global trends that relate to suburban decline and disadvantage, Section 1.4 discusses global challenges that transportation plans must take into consideration; importantly, the plan mentions "shifting economies" and hints at global economic changes. The Plan states that "we can increase productivity in Ontario by providing transportation access to groups that historically have had limited access to the labour market, such as new Canadians, visible minorities, Aboriginals..." (11). This statement is directly related to issues of income polarization and their spatial expression in the disadvantaged inner suburbs. However, through the document, the solutions related to the challenge of "shifting economies" is presented as making specific parts of the GTHA region more competitive, rather than more socially just, in the era of globalization.

Section 3.0 discusses the goals and objectives that support Metrolinx's vision for the region, which is to enhance the sustainability, competitiveness/prosperity and quality of life in the region. The vision posits that the transportation system will support the region's diversity, accommodate everyone, and that services will be delivered fairly and equitably (13), though there is not much detail in the vision about what this means. For the most part, the goals focus on economic growth, efficiency, customer satisfaction and environmental sustainability. While these are important concerns, the concern for an equitable system becomes obscured; the goal that most closely addresses this concern is Goal A, which is to provide a range of transportation options regardless of age, means or ability (15). But the statement does not differentiate between groups of people who are lacking transit and those who are not, and does not address the fact that they may be dealing with different levels of transit service. Furthermore, the objectives related to Goal A remain general, despite tacking on a quick detail about improving accessibility for "all income levels" (15). The main thrust is to improve transportation for all people; the nuanced needs of different segments of the population and that some groups may require more attention or resources is not recognized in the objectives.

Out of the ten strategies that Big Move lays out to achieve its vision and goals, quite a few are geared towards customer satisfaction and two are relevant to suburban decline: building a comprehensive regional rapid transit network and building communities that are pedestrian-, cycling- and transit-supportive.

The 15-year regional rapid transit network plan has some gaps in poor areas in the north-east and north-west of the City of Toronto, and many of the improvements are focused on the outer suburbs and linking them to well-established central locations within Toronto, such as Union Station downtown and the North York, Etobicoke and Scarborough Centres, none of which except Scarborough are in the poor inner suburbs. The plan (see *Figure 4*) is regional in scale and is meant to connect regional hubs and existing centres, building on existing travel patterns, potentially exemplifying Grengs' (2005) position that a focus on economic concerns can solidify social exclusion. The 25-year plan proposes new transit infrastructure in the inner suburbs. It does not specify what type of rapid transit will be implemented, but does propose a rapid transit

line running east-west through North York and Scarborough as well as a north-south transit line through Etobicoke.

Figure 4: Metrolinx 15-year Regional Plan. Source: *Metrolinx (2008). The Big Move.*

In order to sustain transit-supportive communities, the Big Move Plan aims to "create a system of connected mobility hubs [...] at key intersections in the regional rapid transit network that provide travellers with access to the system, support high density development, and demonstrate excellence in customer service" (45). This type of planning creates transit-oriented design, which encourages a variety of land uses, residential density and links between different transit modes in the vicinity of transit stations in order to support transit usage. But what places are "key" and how is "key" defined and understood? In the Metrolinx Mobility Hub Green Paper the proposed mobility hubs for the GTHA are outlined. The majority of these are in the centres of towns and cities across the GTHA or centred on existing higher-order transit stations. The Mobility Hub Green Paper identifies Etobicoke, North York and Scarborough centres in the inner suburbs as

hubs and these centres are identified as urban growth centres in the provincial land use plan. Again, all these centres except one, Scarborough, are located in wealthier areas of the City of Toronto. Social need or social goals do not feature strongly in the plan. The selection of mobility hubs and establishment of their hierarchy is based on "optimizing the efficiency of the transit system" (21). If efficiency is a main criterion, then the inner suburbs would be an unlikely location for a mobility hub in their current state of dispersed land use and lack of transit. In the Big Move Plan, the principles of planning stations in the regional transit network are stated; there is no social goal stated in the principles, and the principles are more focused on efficiency and active transit. Thus the rationale and plans for Mobility Hubs in the GTHA does not recognize the utility or role that transit-oriented developments could play in making the suburbs more amenable to transit. Mobility hubs, and the attendant changes in land use in terms of density, walkability and service provision, could serve to help create mixed-use centres in declining suburbs. This could address many of the issues present in these inner suburban areas, namely the lack of walkability and proximity to services.

Importantly, in the Big Move Plan the need for new east-west transit connections are noted; the Plan states that "one of the most significant gaps in the current transit network is the lack of east-west higher-order transit connections to destinations other than Union Station"(61). The proposed solution is a light rail rapid transit line along Eglinton Avenue in Toronto, which is currently under construction. This transit route will provide rapid transit service for local residents as well as a crucial new east-west corridor that runs from the inner suburb of Scarborough in the east of Toronto to York in the west. The transit route is an important connection that does bring rapid transit to areas outside of the downtown; however Eglinton runs across the centre of Toronto and is much farther south than many of the poor areas in the north of the city. A significant move that would address transit issues in inner suburban areas is the plan for intensification corridors. A main objective of the Ontario Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe as well as of Toronto's Official Plan is to direct growth and development to intensification corridors along major roads. The Big Move Plan supports this objective through the proposal of transit service along several corridors such as Finch Avenue, Sheppard Avenue, Eglinton Avenue, Jane Street, Don Mills Road and Lakeshore Road West in Toronto. Many of the corridors listed span priority neighbourhoods across the city and reach Scarborough,

Etobicoke, North York and York. This has the potential to be the beginning of the revitalization of inner suburbs. The aim of having intensification concentrated along major corridors is to increase employment and housing along arterial corridors throughout the city, making amenities, services and transit closer to where people are. Although how it will be accomplished is not yet evident.

2.4 Summary

The current provincial and municipal transportation plans mostly neglect inner suburban areas in Toronto. The provincial plan, done through Metrolinx, recognizes the social importance of transit and outlines the role transit can play in furthering social cohesion and citizen inclusion in the initial stages of the plan; however, these issues are not a focus and become obscured behind the need to support economic prosperity and competitiveness in the region and the need to develop transit in order to prepare for resource shortages and environmental uncertainty. The more immediate focuses of the plan are primarily on how many of the outer suburbs will be connected to economically significant locations in Toronto, which are mostly in the central areas of the city. The objectives and rationale behind them demonstrate the influence of neoliberal politics on transportation planning and urban systems.

The inner suburbs are, for the most part, neglected in the current municipal transit policies, with policies focused on improving existing routes and enhancing the competitiveness of central areas. Coverage should be an important consideration in looking at transit's effectiveness in a city. In the case of Toronto, low-income inner suburbs are not served by higher-order transit. It could be argued that, currently, there is no reason they should be, as people and land uses are dispersed in these environments, making them not conducive to transit use. However, low-income people do rely on transit and they are concentrated in the inner suburbs. While it is arguably not feasible to implement higher-order transit in most of the inner suburbs in a time of cost cutting and reduced government spending, through a review of the many transportation plans proposed for Toronto, it has been demonstrated that on some corridors, light rail could function (for example, as outlined in the Transit City plan) and enhance accessibility and spur development. On other major corridors, the potential to increase ridership and density could be

initiated by bus rapid transit lines coupled with intensification. The policy towards intensification along designated avenues holds an opportunity to address suburban decline. Intensification along transit corridors can concentrate a variety of services and uses in an area and lessen the need for and duration of travel. Mass transit can play a significant role in countering inequality and socio-spatial division, and furthering social justice, but in the case of current plans for the City of Toronto, this potential is obscured by the neoliberal concerns of efficiency and economic competitiveness.

Chapter 3. Housing

Available and affordable housing is essential to the health and well-being of individuals and communities. A main contributor to urban poverty is unemployment (Sivam 2014), yet the lack of access to affordable housing can even cause those who are employed to spiral into poverty. Poverty can lead to homelessness, which in turn can lead to other social ills. For individuals, experiencing housing instability can impact their life trajectory, negatively affecting their jobs, families and health. The existence of adequate housing options provides a foundation to help people rise out of poverty and also allows people to better manage other challenges.

3.1 Defining the Problem

The Toronto Region has consistently ranked as one of the most unaffordable regions in the world, and the second-most unaffordable in Canada after Vancouver (Toronto Foundation 2014). The Canadian Government usually defines affordable housing as shelter that does not cost more that 30 percent of a household's gross income. Expenditure of 50 percent or more of a household's income on shelter significantly increases the risk of homelessness (CMHC 2012, in Toronto Foundation 2014). Housing trends in Toronto demonstrate a steady increase in the use of shelters and in the number of households waitlisted for social housing since 2011 (Toronto Foundation 2014). The number of affordable housing units constructed in 2013 was extremely low compared to previous years and projections for the near future continue to be low (City of Toronto, 2014a).

In a recent report, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2014) states that a shortage of rental housing, especially in the range that is affordable to low-income households, and overbuilding in the condominium sector are two central concerns for Toronto. The OECD also states that policies should support mixed-income housing and increase incentives for private-sector development of affordable housing in order to avoid the further marginalization of low-income households.

Most of Toronto's public and private rental accommodations are in the form of high-rise buildings. Although it may appear that these buildings are geographically dispersed in the

Toronto Region, in reality, a majority (60 percent) of them are in the inner suburbs (Ghosh, 2014). Toronto's inner suburbs were planned as mixed neighbourhoods of high-rises built alongside low-density, single-family homes in proximity to transportation arteries (Searle and Filion, 2011). There was large-scale development of high-rise complexes in Toronto's inner suburbs, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. After that period, they began to fall into disrepair and the Modernist style they were built in fell out of favour. The towers became increasingly populated with people with limited housing options. Wealthier residents elected to move to more central areas of the city with more amenities and the inner suburbs continued to deteriorate, becoming areas of higher poverty. Suburban densification has slowed down since the mid-1970s, with few towers being built since then. This trend is still occurring today and, in addition, there has been no significant new construction of affordable housing in Toronto since 1995 (Ghosh 2014).

There is currently not enough affordable housing in Toronto to accommodate the growing population, and it is not available in sufficient quantity to accommodate low-income households. Most of the housing that is considered affordable or close to affordable in concentrated in the inner suburbs, and a large portion of this is in private, multi-unit rental residences. The existence of this type of housing stock is important because high-rise rental apartments are generally viewed as undesirable by gentrifiers (Walks and August 2008), which allows current residents to remain in their neighbourhoods. As well, the existence of social housing allows for the continued occupancy of low-income residents regardless of neighbourhood development pressures. Affordable housing construction should be augmented and distributed throughout the city to counteract the concentration of poverty. From a housing perspective, in order to support a mixed-income, integrated city, the construction of new and revitalization of existing public housing, inclusionary zoning laws and construction of units intended for rental are essential.

3.2 Municipal Policies

In order to understand how provincial and local governments are conceptualizing and responding to suburban decline in the City of Toronto, and what role housing policy is playing in this context, fundamental policy documents were analyzed to understand how different levels of

government are conceptualizing the issue. The main documents that will be discussed at the municipal level are the Toronto Official Plan (as it pertains to housing), the Toronto Affordable Housing Action Plan and the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020.

The *Toronto Official Plan* sets the overarching planning directives for the City. The plan recognizes the importance of affordable housing and its role in supporting a healthy Toronto. It states the need for "affordable housing choices that meet the needs of everyone throughout their life" (1-2)

Affordable housing is specifically identified in the City's Official Plan as a potential community benefit that can be achieved through Section 37 (where the City can request community benefit contributions from developers in exchange for additional height or density) and, subject to other relevant policies, is the first community benefit sought in relation to large residential developments.

The Official Plan states that Toronto will work with the province and other municipalities to "encourage GTA cities to provide a full range of housing types (form, tenure, affordability and encourage rental construction)" (2-2), and aims for "future growth [to] be steered to areas which are well served by transit, existing roads and have redevelopment potential" (2-3). These areas are the "Centres", "Avenues" and employment districts; however, most of the inner suburbs are not included in these areas. This presents some issues with regards to paying heed to the specific needs of the inner suburbs as communities in the inner suburbs may not experience revitalization in their proximity. However, the construction of affordable housing in any location in the city (although in this section affordability is not specified) can help in alleviating suburban disadvantage. The Plan proposes to encourage a "full range of housing opportunities" through residential intensification and infill in mixed-use areas and downtown sites. While this is commendable, the housing system in Canada is dominated by the private market, which prefers the construction of more lucrative projects, thus reducing the likelihood of the procurement of affordable and rental housing without more stringent requirements.

The Plan also states that four key locations will play an important role in managing growth and will be a focus of revitalization efforts through the development of mixed uses and a range of housing (2-12). These four areas that are currently transit hubs and the former centres of former cities which are now part of amalgamated Toronto. Although three (Scarborough, Etobicoke, North York Centres) are located in the inner suburbs, Hulchanski (2010) demonstrates that only Scarborough Centre is located in and around poorer neighbourhoods, while Etobicoke and North York Centres are some of the wealthiest areas within the inner suburbs. Thus the policies and plans that aim to revitalize these centres will have little effect on declining suburban areas of Toronto.

The Official Plan states that Avenues – major corridors that have or can support transit service expansion – are important corridors on which to create new housing and that Avenues with one- or two-storey buildings, vacant land, or surface parking will be priority. This is quite relevant to the few Avenues that are located in the disadvantaged inner suburbs. The Official Plan discusses the need for mixed uses and housing types, but it does not pay much specific attention to inner suburbs and how to address their problems. The closest approximation to directly addressing the housing and land use issues of the inner suburbs is in the section on designated Priority Neighbourhoods, now replaced by Neighbourhood Improvement Areas. These are neighbourhoods identified as socio-economically disadvantaged, and are mostly located in inner suburbs. In reference to these, the housing policies are to identify opportunities to improve the quality of existing housing stock and build new housing, identify priorities for capital and operational funding to support these policies, and to identify potential ways to stimulate investment.

The Official Plan recognizes that specific policies are needed when a particular kind of housing is not sufficiently supplied by the market to meet demand or maintain diversity in the housing stock, and it identifies a significant need for mid-range and affordable rental housing. It can also be argued however, based on long waiting lists for social housing and on declining income levels in the city, that there is also a need for more low-income housing.

The Official Plan housing policy is to support a full range of housing options across the city. In order to support rental housing, and especially affordable rental housing, the City is to work with all levels of government to implement strategies, incentives, new taxation structures and regulations. The policy also calls for the preservation or replacement of virtually all rental and social housing units. The City has determined that most residential development in Toronto is on sites of less than five hectares in size (City of Toronto, 2008). Proposed developments on sites less than five hectares are not required by the Official Plan to include affordable housing when they apply for zoning changes to permit an increase in the new housing to be built, which could be a partial reason for why Toronto continually falls short of it affordable housing goals.

The Official Plan does make a distinction between 'Neighbourhoods' and 'Apartment Neighbourhoods', which is an important step in conceptualizing the differences in residential areas across Toronto. The location of postwar apartment towers is shown in *Figure 5*. However, in Section 4.2.2 the Plan states that "Built up Apartment Neighbourhoods are stable areas of the City where significant growth is generally not anticipated" and that "significant growth is generally not intended within developed Apartment Neighbourhoods" (4-6). This section does not directly address the needs of inner suburban apartment neighbourhoods, as it does not recognize their unique issues. The Plan also states that "all land uses provided for in the Neighbourhoods designation are also permitted in Apartment Neighbourhoods" thus annulling the distinction previously made between the two, rendering the Plan inconsistent as it sets up different categories but fails to elaborate on how and why they differ. In addition, inner suburban areas are in need of proximate community facilities, access to good transit, and affordable housing. This is not addressed properly in the new development policies for apartment neighbourhoods, as these are vague and lack detail.

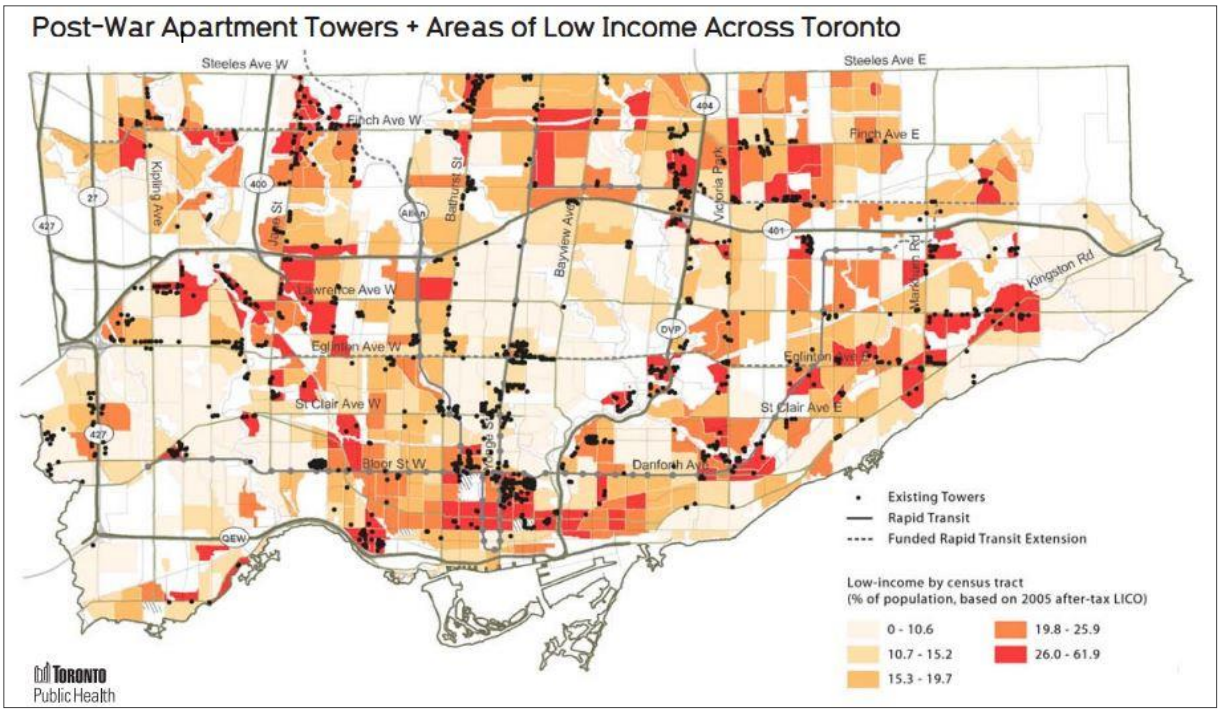

Figure 5: Location of Apartment Towers and Low-income Areas. Source: ***Toronto Public Health (2012). Toward Healthier Apartment Neighbourhoods.***

The Toronto *Affordable Housing Action Plan* acknowledges the need for affordable housing in creating "healthy, diverse and prosperous neighbourhoods" (City of Toronto, 2008: 4). The Action Plan also recognizes the growing socio-economic divisions that are occurring in Toronto and states that affordable housing is a "key component of the strategy to create mixed income neighbourhoods and reverse the trend of income polarization" (5).

The Action Plan dedicates two of its strategic themes to focusing on housing policy as it relates to rental units. One of the Strategic Themes is to preserve and repair rental housing. This recognizes a fairly unique aspect of the situation in Toronto; currently a very significant portion of the rental housing stock in Toronto is private, and a focus on public housing is not necessarily the most important with regards to suburban decline. The plan states that "over the next decade, the housing needs of many low- to moderate-income residents will be met primarily through Toronto's existing 440,000 rental homes" (21).

The Action Plan supports the construction of 1000 new rental homes annually; it calls for an extension of Toronto's incentives to create affordable housing within mixed-use developments and within condominiums through a revised Housing Incentives (Municipal Capital Facilities) Bylaw (34). This proposal has the potential to be the foundation of a solution to the stated need for mixed-income communities: many new construction projects (especially condominiums) are located in more central areas of Toronto – areas that are increasingly higher-income. However, other proposed actions do not emphasize the significance of the location of new housing relative to concentrations of poverty, focusing primarily on funding mechanisms.

The Action Plan does note some important policies and programs in terms of improving affordable housing, namely the Tower Renewal Program's proposed investments in high-rise neighbourhoods and the use of secondary suites and rooming houses to provide an effective way to integrate affordable housing into neighbourhoods. Strategic Theme Six concerns providing new affordable rental housing. This theme and its recommended actions relate directly to the main concerns regarding low-income housing and propose strategies to increase the amount of affordable housing and to disperse it across the city.

In relation to helping people afford rent, the Plan recommends facilitating access to employment resources and opportunities and supporting the development of social enterprises working towards this. While these recommendations are essential steps, they are not entirely addressed through a land use perspective and the spatial component of these recommendations is not a focal point. However, where these services are located is of primary importance in addressing suburban decline.

Another relevant strategic theme is focused on revitalizing neighbourhoods. The Action Plan states:

> . . . decisions to build large public housing communities with limited services and infrastructure have contributed to the marginalization of low-income families and individuals in social housing buildings. Much of this social housing can be found

> within high needs neighbourhoods where there is a concentration of poverty, coupled with a lack of community infrastructure. (27)

Although social housing is not the primary housing type in declining neighbourhoods, there is a significant focus on creating mixed-income communities on social housing sites and leveraging the value of the land to pay for social housing renovations. While this is important, and almost necessary, as a solution because provincial and federal funding is severely lacking, it is more valuable to build public housing where there is none, especially as the waiting list for social housing continues to grow exponentially. The importance of attaining inclusive communities (a broad term) is paramount throughout the document, and the recommendations towards this end include adopting an Official Plan amendment requiring more family-sized housing within the downtown area, prioritizing the use of the Official Plan housing policies for large sites and new neighbourhoods to secure affordable housing as part of the planning approval process, and providing Toronto with the power to implement inclusionary housing and tax increment financing to increase affordable housing opportunities in new developments.

The Affordable Housing Action Plan consistently supports the goal of inclusive, mixed-income communities in order to help mitigate social divisions in Toronto. In terms of discussing spatial divisions, one of the proposed actions is to support the revitalization of 13 social housing communities (30). Although it does dwell on the lack of social housing, the Plan focuses on actions geared towards rental housing, as opposed to owned housing. The expiration of federal funding programs and provincial downloading are serious concerns and barriers to providing adequate affordable housing in the city. Overall, the Action Plan emphasizes the need for consistent federal and provincial funding for city-identified projects. The lack of funding and of control at the local level limits the ability of Toronto to move forwards with its Action Plan.

Through the *Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020*, the City of Toronto is currently in the process of identifying actions towards supporting 31 'Neighbourhood Improvement Areas' (NIAs) identified as being in need of specialized attention though a variety of socio-economic indicators. The NIA concept built on the Priority Neighborhood concept, which was introduced in 2005. The designation of Priority Neighbourhoods was undertaken to address under-

investment in neighbourhoods in Toronto. Priority Neighbourhoods were considered in need of investment based on the level of service access and crime in the neighbourhood. The NIAs were determined by an assessment of "which neighbourhoods in Toronto are facing the most inequitable outcomes" (City of Toronto 2014: 2) and incorporated a wider range of indicators. The level of inequity for neighbourhoods is evaluated based on indicators in the realms of economic opportunity, civic participation, social development, built environment and health. A large proportion of neighbourhoods that received lower equity scores are located in the inner suburbs of Toronto (see *Figure 6*), and many of these neighbourhoods were designated as NIAs (see *Figure 7*). The designation of NIAs is based on a benchmark, which is necessary to facilitate to selection of NIAs, but there is no obvious benchmark value that exists under which neighbourhoods are unequivocally facing underinvestment. The City will work with local stakeholders in order to identify goals and will monitor the areas and report their progress and findings. The City plans to use the findings it obtains from its work in the Neighbourhood Improvement Areas to inform both municipal and broader regional, provincial and national policies, programs and funding priorities. While this Strategy is still being developed, it presents a way of coordinating government policy and funding in order to make it more responsive to local issues. As well, the Strategy demonstrates that the City is aware of the inequities between different neighbourhoods in Toronto and is attempting to assess and address them.

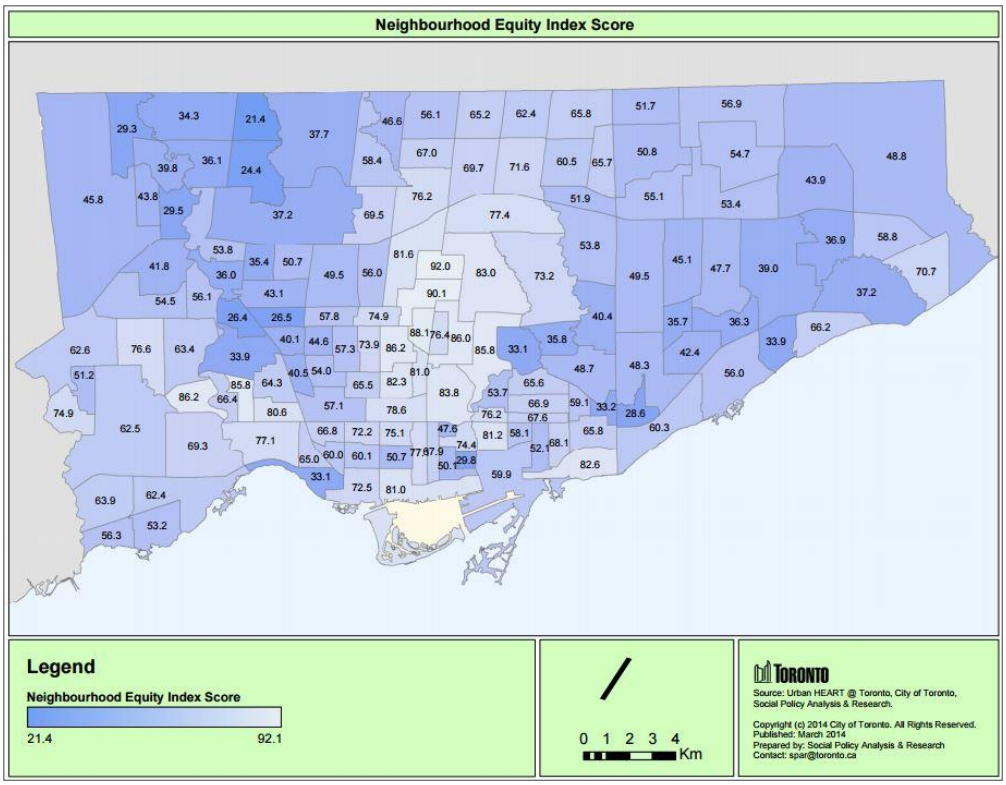

Figure 6: Equity Score for all Toronto Neighbourhoods. Source: ***City of Toronto (2014). TSNS 2020 Neighbourhood Equity Index Methodological Documentation.***

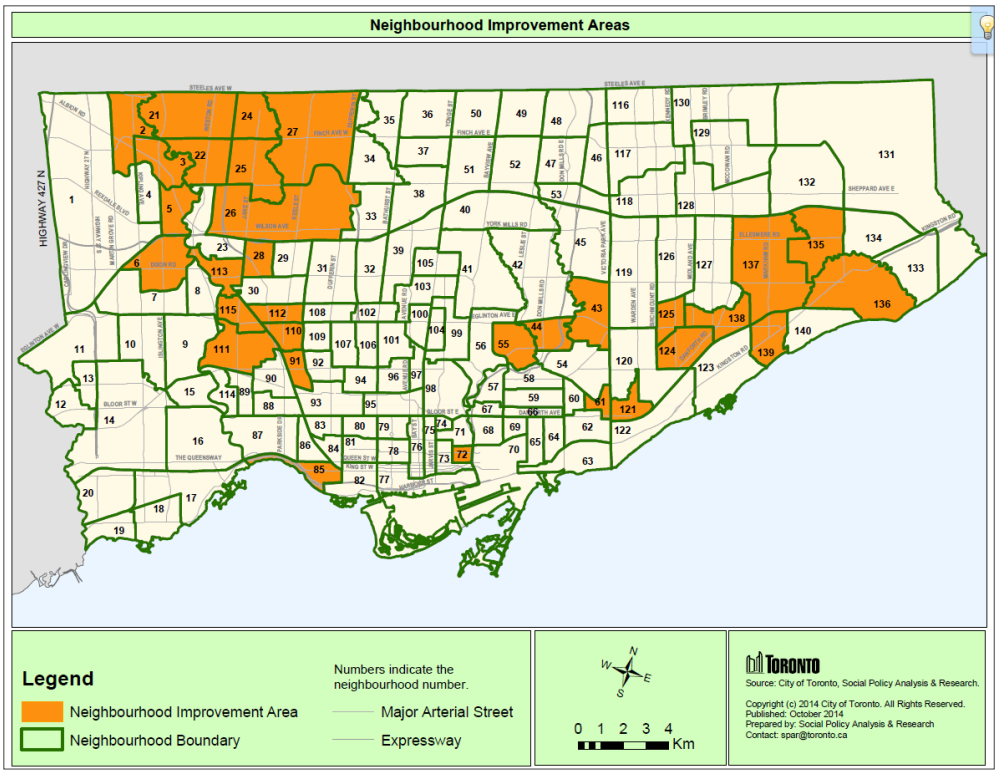

Figure 7: Location of Neighbourhood Improvement Areas. Source: ***City of Toronto (2014). www1.toronto.ca.***

3.3 Provincial Policies

Commencing in the mid-1990s, the Ontario government downloaded provincial affordable housing funding and programs to municipalities. While in recent years the province has acknowledged that these decisions were "short sighted" (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing 2010: 4) and has increased its funding levels for affordable housing, current funding levels are still lower than they were previously (Shapcott 2012). The current provincial policies reaffirmed the continued discharge of affordable public housing management responsibilities to municipalities.

The *Ontario Housing Policy Statement* is broad in its outlook. The Statement demonstrates that affordable housing is still the primary responsibility of cities, and requires municipalities to create local housing and homelessness plans. The Statement notes that the interests of the Province are to address the housing needs of residents in a way that is coordinated with community services and pertinent to local circumstances. As well, it is supportive of a range of housing options in order to meet a range of needs (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing 2011: 2). The Statement allows for a variety of measures, and the Province's policies are elaborated on in the Ontario Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, which goes into more detail. The *Ontario Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy* recognizes the importance of local government in reference to housing provision. The strategy gives more responsibility to municipalities and municipal actors, working under the principle that housing support, programs and services should function at the local level, stating that "affordable housing must be locally relevant and provided in a supportive environment that includes access to jobs, community resources and services." (3). This demonstrates that the province recognizes that different municipalities will have different situations and will require different responses, but does not address the issue of lack of funding for these initiatives. The Province's Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy confirmed that social housing would remain the responsibility of regional governments and municipalities (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing 2010: 5). The discharge of these responsibilities to municipalities makes it difficult for them to achieve their affordable housing goals, as they have fewer resources and less ability to generate revenue which

can be put towards social housing development and maintenance. The Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy also recognizes that housing and poverty are connected and makes affordable housing an important part of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy. This shows that affordable housing and related planning and social concerns are receiving an increasing amount of attention.

While the downloading of fiscal responsibilities to municipalities remains an issue, an important aspect of the Long-Term Strategy is its proposal to allow municipalities to develop a local vision for housing and to use provincial funding in a more flexible manner, so as to be responsive to local needs. This will be done by consolidating a range of housing programs into a housing service managed at the municipal level. Municipalities will also be able to play a more active role because they are able to create comprehensive local housing and homelessness plans that identify community priorities and better target housing resources for people in need. With adequate funding, this can allow municipalities such as Toronto to address the issue of housing affordability and housing quality in the inner suburbs.

The Ontario Government permits a range of tools to be used by cities in order to achieve their affordable housing goals. However, a focus of the Long-Term Strategy is the implementation of secondary units and preservation of non-profit housing. While both of these are needed and important, the Strategy is not as flexible as it intended to be, because the Strategy is limiting in the ways in which it proposes to expand affordable housing. Thus the tools the plan provides can be limiting. Following from the Ontario Planning Act, the Affordable Housing Strategy does not provide or discuss location-based tools that municipalities can opt to use, such as inclusionary zoning, limiting the flexibility of the provincial strategy.

Provincial funding is intended to be focused on priorities such as preventing homelessness, supporting rapid re-housing options for homeless individuals and families, providing emergency shelter and linking housing and human services. However, many of these priorities are reactive or are focused on extreme housing need. Affordability issues are serious and complex, and the needs of individuals should be better addressed before they approach homelessness or the need for emergency shelter. The Strategy, for the most part, does not address the causes of housing affordability problems and eventual homelessness in its policies. While the root causes of

housing unaffordability may not be easily addressed, solutions such as rent control or a variety of tools to help in the construction of affordable housing could be more effective in addressing the issue.

3.4 Summary

The municipal policy documents discussed here demonstrate that the City is aware of the need and lack of affordable housing in the Greater Toronto Area. As well, policy documents such as the Official Plan and the Affordable Housing Action Plan allude to the importance of affordable housing in creating healthy and prosperous neighbourhoods. The policy documents do not entirely recognize the unique situation of the inner suburbs as an entity in themselves, but do recognize that Toronto can differ significantly in terms of housing needs in different parts of the city. As well, the policies do recognize the role of rental and public housing to an extent. Where to direct construction is not entirely discussed in these documents; however, the dearth of affordable housing makes it evident that it needs to be provided across the city. The Affordable Housing Action Plan provides an important foundation for addressing the need for housing, but is not stringent enough in its proposals. Through this Plan, the City can strengthen the focus on poverty reduction by putting forward goals that adequately respond to the diverse housing needs of low- and moderate-income people. In addition, the plan does not have an implementation strategy or any funding assurances in order to help keep the City on track towards achieving its affordable housing goals.

The provincial strategy is broader, and many of its priorities are not immediately useful in addressing the issue of housing affordability and the inner suburbs. The province could provide a wider range of tools to municipalities to use in order to adapt the Strategy to their locality. With regards to housing, many critics believe that Toronto has not been aggressive enough in negotiation with developers for more affordable housing (especially in regards to how it negotiates using Section 37 for community benefits) and that the tools available to the municipality are limited because the Province has not expressly authorized certain requirements for affordable housing provision (Mah and Hackworth 2011). Currently there is a growing desire for the province of Ontario to explicitly permit inclusionary zoning policies so municipalities

such as Toronto are able to implement them without the threat of litigation at the Ontario Municipal Board. Inclusionary zoning would be a more stringent measure to ensure that affordable housing is built across the city.

Chapter 4. Service Distribution and Land Use

The availability and distribution of services and facilities across an urban region is an important consideration. Having dense, mixed-use development in terms of a variety of different services and amenities (for example: recreational, community, personal care, health services, and education services, as well as commercial and employment uses) located in a concentrated fashion is considered to be an important part of sustainable planning for healthy and vibrant communities. Mixed-use development allows people to travel shorter distances to meet their needs and compactness in terms of urban form is viewed as more socially just as it does not favour individuals who travel by automobile (Echenique et al. 2012).

Typically, suburban areas were built around automobile usage and different land uses were separated. Separation of land uses is, for the most part, a vestige from the past - it was deemed necessary to separate residential, industrial, commercial and other land uses in order to reduce nuisance and have attractive urban landscapes.

4.1 Defining the Problem

In Toronto, many apartment tower neighbourhoods in the inner suburbs lack proximate amenities and services; as well, they have poor access to employment opportunities. For example, it has been shown that some apartment neighbourhoods are 'food deserts', where it is difficult to access fresh food and produce (Stewart and Thorne 2010). Land-use policies, namely zoning bylaws, can restrict the ability to provide amenities and services in the inner suburbs, as there is spatial separation between land uses and the distance between residential and commercial or mixed-use areas is large enough to make it difficult or inconvenient to travel to a desired destination. While separating noxious land uses, such as heavy industry and some transportation infrastructure, from places that people inhabit is still an important consideration, land-use policies should strive to integrate uses such as commercial, institutional, residential and leisure so that people can easily access and fulfill their needs via active transportation modes or transit. As well, land-use policies should aim to reduce the need for cars.

When these areas were built during the apex of the Modernist era, it was assumed that the automobile would be the travel mode used by inhabitants of these suburban towers and accordingly zoning by-laws restricted uses in these areas to purely residential (Stewart and Thorne 2010). This single-use zoning pattern has remained until today, making cars the most desirable form of transportation.

These neighbourhoods were built in the 'tower-in-the-park' style, composed of a high-rise tower situated in an expanse of open or green land. These substantial open areas are currently underutilized for the most part, and thus provide an opportunity to introduce services and amenities into these areas, allowing residents of the inner suburbs improved access to needed services and amenities as well as increasing local employment opportunities. Thus these inner suburban neighbourhoods have the potential to become healthy, diverse, and self-sufficient communities through targeted infill and responsive intensification efforts.

Essentially, mixed use areas should be the rule, not the exception. This is especially needed in the inner suburbs, as many of these areas are low-income with people either spending a significant amount of their income on automobiles and their upkeep or experiencing difficulty and inconvenience when using the existing transit system.

4.2 Municipal Policies

The *Toronto Official Plan* discusses the need for mixed uses as a broad directive for the future of the city, but there is no specific attention paid to inner suburbs and how to address their lack of services and amenities. In relation to the inner suburbs, the Official Plan lays out some strategies towards neighbourhood enhancements in Priority Neighbourhoods (of which a significant portion occur in the inner suburbs). However these strategies do not address the need for proximate services in the inner suburbs effectively. The need for improved community services as well as the need to identify ways to stimulate investment is mentioned in the strategies (2-23). But they are more focused on beautification efforts and environmental concerns.

Section 3.2.2 of the Official Plan deals with the provision of community services and facilities.

The Plan states that strategic investment in social infrastructure promotes greater levels of "equity, equality, access, participation and social cohesion" (3-17). Indeed, community services are an essential component of healthy, vibrant, mixed-use communities. The Plan aims to expand local community services in neighbourhoods that are currently not well served, and encourages the "shared use of multi-service facilities" (3-18). This is in reference to the permitted addition of other uses on existing institutional sites. While this does support the proliferation of mixed-use development, the location of these sites is important. They may not be located near inner suburban areas that are in need of increased community services. The Plan goes into further detail about how new social infrastructure will be provided in areas that are inadequately serviced. It mentions that a community services strategy will be employed to tailor services to the needs and priorities of the local residents (3-19). This is could be a potential benefit to inner suburban areas that are underserviced, but this is dependent on what areas are deemed to be 'inadequately serviced', as this is not discussed in the section. Furthermore, the Plan states that "community services strategies and implementation mechanisms will be required for residential or mixed-use sites generally larger than 5 hectares and all new neighbourhoods" (3-19). This policy can also be beneficial if significant infill projects are slated for construction in areas in the inner suburbs, but it could preclude inner suburban areas from being considered for tailored community service strategies, as most have been built up and currently have less development interest than more central areas of Toronto.

Employment districts serve an important function in sustaining mixed use areas and slowing down gentrification. Official Plan policy is to preserve employment districts and to nurture a diverse economic base (2-19). The inner suburbs contain most of Toronto's manufacturing and industrial employment areas. These areas provide a declining but important source of working-class jobs, which are in proximity to a growing number of low-income residents. The existence of these industrial employment areas is vital in terms of accessibility to jobs, and also because they inhibits the process of gentrification (Walks and August 2008). Proximity to employment uses that produce undesirable noise, congestion and odours inhibits the propensity for surrounding areas to be viewed as potential locations for higher-income groups and helps in retaining their affordability.

Retail is another important component of a vibrant and healthy mixed-use neighbourhood. The Official Plan aims for a "strong and diverse retail sector" (3-34). This aim is supported through permitting a "broad range of shopping opportunities for local residents and employees in a variety of settings" (3-34). This has the potential to positively impact the inner suburbs although the target is vague. In addition, retail development along the Avenues is encouraged (3-34). This can also positively affect neighbourhoods in the inner suburbs, although the Avenues are not evenly dispersed throughout the city, and are more frequent in central regions. The Plan also aims to provide local opportunities for small businesses through "zoning regulations for ground-floor commercial retail uses in new buildings in new neighbourhoods or in *Mixed Use Areas*" (3-34). Supporting small businesses is an important step towards addressing some of the economic and social issues in the inner suburbs (for example, unemployment and the lack of local amenities). However the focus of this policy appears to be new developments in new areas, and it is unclear if it would apply to infill development in the inner suburbs and would not apply to the renovation or rezoning of existing neighbourhoods.

Mixed-use areas feature fairly prominently in the Official Plan. It states that mixed-use areas are intended to create a balance of commercial, residential, institutional and open space uses that reduces automobile dependency and meets the needs of the local residents (4-10). They are intended to provide new jobs and homes for Toronto's growing population, mainly on underutilized lands in the Downtown, on the Avenues or in the Centres. While most of the designated mixed-use areas are not located in the poor inner suburbs, Scarborough Centre is, and the Secondary Plan pertaining to it outlines how mixed-use development can play a role in a milieu of suburban decline. Overall, how much these policies can affect the inner suburbs is sometimes unclear. The Plan states that "significant growth is generally not intended within developed Apartment Neighbourhoods. However, compatible infill development may be permitted…" (4-6). This statement underscores how the inner suburbs are understood and how they are viewed in the Official Plan. Since they contain many apartment neighbourhoods, a significant portion of the inner suburbs is not a focus for growth and development. While policies such as infill development can have a positive impact, they are not explicitly targeted at inner suburbs. Explicit recognition of the problem may be needed because the inner suburbs are not considered lucrative areas for development and could be ignored.

The *Scarborough Centre Secondary Plan* outlines the policies and intentions for an area in the eastern part of the city. As previously mentioned, this centre, which has grown up around the Scarborough Rapid Transit line, is situated in a milieu of decline in the inner suburbs. The centre is adjacent to and is part of neighbourhoods that have experienced a decrease in income over the past few decades (Hulchanski 2010). Although Scarborough Centre is relatively small in size compared to the total amount of Toronto neighbourhoods experiencing suburban decline, it is important for two reasons. First, it is important because it is the only large centre in the poor inner suburbs that is recognized as an important hub and is the subject of revitalization efforts by government bodies. Second, it is important because it provides a major hub and centre for neighbourhoods that are in its vicinity. The Scarborough Secondary Plan recognizes the area as a destination point for employment, recreational institutional and other uses. Through this Plan the City aims to create a "vibrant mix of employment, cultural, institutional, educational, recreational, commercial and residential uses" and to "enhance the Centre as a destination focus" (1). Creating a mixed-use centre is a fundamental focus of the Secondary Plan. The plan attempts to integrate diverse uses as well as encourage density and new employment growth in the area. The policies therein support high-density development where possible, especially in proximity to transportation infrastructure (8). The Secondary Plan places an emphasis on commercial and retail development in the central precinct of Scarborough Centre, by proposing development to complement the existing elements here and through the creation of a Main Street to the west of its core (11). As well, the Plan promotes the provision of community facilities and programs, stipulating that the Centre should at least include non-profit child-care and youth services in addition to health, employment and senior services. These provisions relate directly to some of the characteristics of inner suburbs that have been observed, namely the greater numbers of children and youth (United Way 2004). Furthermore, that Plan states that the community services delivered will be flexible and responsive to demographic changes and service gaps in the area the Centre serves (14).

A slightly ambiguous aspect of the Scarborough Centre Secondary Plan is that at the outset it states that a principle is to make the area more pedestrian-friendly. Being pedestrian-friendly is a crucial component of a successful mixed-use hub; however, it is unclear what 'enhancements' to the pedestrian environment will enhance walkability. The Plan does propose streetscape

improvements and beautification to enhance the pedestrian experience, but it is not clear if infrastructure changes to the suburban environment will complement this. For example, Scarborough Centre was evidently designed at the scale of the car, and changes to the street grid and scale of the Centre may be needed to enhance walkability. Finally, the most salient issue of the Plan in terms of how it addresses suburban decline is that it has little effect on the rest of the inner suburbs and obviously cannot address their lack of services and amenities.

The Zoning Bylaw for the City of Toronto exhibits the separation between land uses that can be problematic for improving and revitalizing the inner suburbs. A significant proportion of mixed-use and commercial-residential zones are located in the downtown core or along major corridors, focused more in the central areas of Toronto. There are wide expanses of the inner suburbs that are purely residential in their zoning. The inner suburbs also contain a large proportion of the employment-industrial uses in the city. These two broad zoning categories dominate the inner suburbs in large swaths, and are not interspersed with many mixed-use, commercial or institutional zones. This separation of uses (coupled with the fact that the inner suburbs are car-centric in their design) can make it difficult for residents to access services and facilities and fulfill their needs.

One important recent change to the zoning bylaw is the addition of the residential-apartment-commercial zoning (RAC) designation. This relates to the Official Plan Review, which seeks to further differentiate between 'apartment neighbourhoods' and 'neighbourhoods', and recognizes the complexity of the former. In order to implement the Tower Renewal Initiatives (such as the RAC zone), the Review proposes new policies that will actively encourage infill and permit the addition of a wider range of amenities. This new RAC zoning allows a range of commercial and community uses on apartment building sites throughout the city. This can provide increased opportunities in terms of employment and access to services and amenities. The RAC zoning designation will contribute to the health and prosperity of apartment neighbourhoods. For example, this zoning designation allows for small-scale retail, food, workshop, community, educational, religious, and other similar services to exist alongside residential units. While this sort of spatial organization is commonplace in more central areas of cities, it is currently rare in suburban environments. The Residential Apartment Commercial zoning regulations are part of

the City of Toronto's Tower Renewal Program. The Program is still in its early stages, although some apartment building neighbourhoods in Toronto's inner suburbs have already been rezoned to permit a variety of small-scale commercial and community uses on apartment building sites. The Program proposes improving access to parks and public spaces as well as augmenting the availability of public gathering places in order to support community cohesion. The Program also supports the inclusion of a variety of uses around and in suburban tower neighbourhoods that will provide new and needed services, support community prosperity, and reduce the need for automobile usage.

4.3 Provincial Policies

At the provincial level, land use plans are necessarily broad and do not always include enough detail to wholly comprehend how the provincial government expresses its understanding of and solutions to suburban disadvantage. The *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* discusses land use at the regional scale, in which the inner suburbs of Toronto are a comparatively small part. However, one of the overarching aims of the Growth Plan is to create complete communities that offer more options for living, working, learning, shopping and playing. And while the inner suburbs appear to be obscured behind the focus on urban growth centres – which are considered "particularly important" (12) – and the interest in rural areas, which are significant in size, in its general directives, the Growth Plan aims for intensification in existing communities, for a range of community infrastructure to foster complete communities, and for municipalities to continue to diversify their economic base. While these directives do not directly refer to the inner suburbs, they can affect them.

The *Provincial Policy Statement* (PPS) builds on the Planning Act by providing more specific provincial policy direction to guide land-use planning. Municipalities must implement the PPS via their land-use planning policies and outlook; all decisions in relation to land use planning must be consistent with the PPS. Provincial plans, such as the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, build upon the policy foundation provided by the Provincial Policy Statement.

Section 1.1 of the PPS deals with directing land use for efficient and resilient development. This section does not directly discuss mixed-use development in ways that would be relevant to the inner suburbs, but touches on related concerns regarding land use. For example, the PPS mentions that an "appropriate range and mix of residential [...] and other uses" (6) sustains a liveable and healthy community. The concepts of mixed uses and service distribution are not elaborated on in this section; however, the PPS does approach the issue to a degree. Concentration of settlement areas and minimizing land usage are concerns that approach the issue of mixed-use development in planning communities, as denser communities would necessarily have more activities concentrated in an area, although not necessarily have a mix of uses.

Section 1.1.3 focuses on settlement areas, stating "the vitality of settlement areas is critical to the long-term economic prosperity of our communities" (7). While this is accurate, the vitality of settlement areas is also critical to other concerns, such as social and environmental sustainability. Though environmental concerns are mentioned later, the section introduces the topic with this sentence, demonstrating the importance attached to economic concerns. Social justice does not feature significantly in the introduction which emphasizes economic efficiency primarily, and environmental sustainability as a secondary concern. For example, an excerpt states: "It is in the interest of all communities to use land and resources wisely, to promote efficient development patterns, protect resources, promote green spaces, ensure effective use of infrastructure and public service facilities and minimize unnecessary public expenditures" (7).

Intensification is an important method of revitalizing the inner suburbs. The PPS states that "appropriate development standards should be promoted which facilitate intensification, redevelopment and compact form, while avoiding or mitigating risks to public health and safety" (8). With regards to suburban revitalization, this is a vital part of the PPS, although it is broad. However, the PPS does become slightly more specific in its directives for development.

The PPS specifies that "new development taking place in designated growth areas should occur adjacent to the existing built-up area and shall have a compact form, mix of uses and densities that allow for the efficient use of land, infrastructure and public service facilities" (8). This is the

most specific directive in terms of requiring mixed uses and intensification. However, as mentioned previously, most of the inner suburbs in Toronto fall outside of the Province's designated growth areas, although they may be near major corridors. As well, many inner suburbs are in need of revitalization in areas that are already built up. Consequently it is not clear what should occur with regards to development outside of designated growth areas, such as in most of the existing inner suburbs, and this is evidently not a prominent concern.

The PPS also states that intensification and redevelopment efforts shall be directed in accordance with the policies of Section 2: Wise Use and Management of Resources, and Section 3: Protecting Public Health and Safety. Intensification and redevelopment are crucial aspects of redesigning and revitalizing the inner suburbs. However, these sections primarily deal with environmentally sustainable development in order to preserve natural resources and avoid hazards; again, social concerns do not feature prominently. The PPS states that a planning authority may permit the expansion of a settlement area boundary solely at the time of a comprehensive review and only when it has been demonstrated that sufficient opportunities for growth are not available through intensification or redevelopment within settlement boundaries, or in designated growth areas to accommodate the projected needs over the identified planning horizon (8). This stipulation could benefit the inner suburbs as intensification, and to a lesser extent, redevelopment, could aid inner suburban communities in becoming more concentrated and bringing in a greater mix of land uses. Furthermore, the PPS gives municipal authorities the responsibility to identify where growth and development will be directed and to identify targets for intensification or redevelopment. While the municipality cannot go against provincial directives for designated growth areas, these responsibilities do give it some flexibility in determining where to target further reinvestment and revitalization efforts.

Section 1.6.5 states that public service facilities should be co-located in community hubs, where appropriate, to promote cost effectiveness, service integration and improve access to transit and active transportation (16). However, while the document does provide an official definition of public service facilities, the PPS does not formally define ‘community hubs’. Some community hubs have been constructed in the inner suburbs in Toronto. This phrase is present in their municipal documents, although it is unclear if the definition is consistent between municipal and

provincial documents. This lack of clarity could affect whether the characteristics of community hubs, and how they are employed is consistent and relevant to the issue of suburban decline.

The content of the PPS demonstrates that land-use compatibility, and the separation of noxious land uses from others, is still a primary concern. This concern is expressed in such policies as the Toronto Zoning Bylaw. While separation when warranted is an important consideration, this could present some limitations in terms of rectifying historical separations between uses that are no longer considered necessary or desirable.

In regards to employment, Section 1.3 of the PPS states that planning authorities should provide a mix and range of employment uses and should encourage compact, mixed use development (13). This is an important addition. However, in the following section, the PPS states that employment lands can be converted upon review. Conversion of employment lands has presented an issue in Toronto, usually though rulings by the Ontario Municipal Board, where employment lands are lost and converted to residential uses, mainly for condominium developments. Although this tends to happen primarily in more central areas, this does present an issue in attempting to add or maintain a variety of uses in an area, and could potentially affect the inner suburbs. The PPS also states that long-term economic prosperity should be supported by promoting opportunities for economic development and "encouraging a sense of place by promoting well designed built form and cultural planning and by conserving features that help define character" (20). Overall, the PPS contains broad directives, some of which can be applied to the inner suburbs in Toronto. A final observation is that the PPS policies "represent minimum standards" (3). This could be problematic as there are few instances of people/organizations exceeding the minimum in terms of zoning or other planning regulations.

4.4 Summary

Land-use policies that provide significant benefits to declining inner suburbs should address the lack of local services and amenities, while also addressing the need for easily accessible and walkable neighbourhoods by allowing these services and amenities to be in close proximity to the people they serve. Land-use policies should be flexible and broad enough so that local

policymakers and communities can respond to the specific needs of a neighbourhood. With regards to flexible policies, provincial documents such as the Provincial Policy Statement and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe discuss land use directives that can be relevant to the issues faced by suburban decline. The goals of building complete communities, encouraging intensification, and economic development can support the formation of healthy and vibrant communities in the inner suburbs. The Provincial Policy Statement focuses on the densification of existing settlement areas and economic development, and to an extent, developing mixed use communities. Concerns about economic prosperity are paramount and are presented as the justification for various land-use policies – although further justifications, such as pursuing equity, are not mentioned – which could serve to enhance many of the policies in these documents.

While provincial policies do touch on land use issues relating to the lack of services in the inner suburbs, equitable service distribution – and social issues in general – are not obvious concerns. Many aspects are left to the responsibility of municipal planning authorities, such as where to direct further intensification and revitalization efforts beyond designated areas. Many of the land-use policies that address aspects of suburban decline are at the City level. The City of Toronto is beginning to become aware of the issue of suburban decline within its boundaries and the topic has entered public discourse with notable news outlets writing about the contrasts between wealthier and poorer areas of the city and interviewing residents of these areas to discuss their needs and issues. This awareness is demonstrated in the city's policies towards apartment neighbourhoods, many of which are nuanced and focus on the unique issues of the inner suburbs. The RAC zoning regulations allow for a broad range of small-scale commercial and community uses in and around apartment neighbourhoods, allowing increased opportunities for local entrepreneurship and employment, and also providing much-needed services and amenities to the community.

The clearest references to the inner suburbs are found in the City's land-use policies. The Official Plan has directives specifically for 'Priority Neighbourhoods' and 'apartment neighbourhoods'. Though these directives will serve to enhance these neighbourhoods, they do not completely recognize or address the land use issues related to all of the inner suburbs.

Through the Official Plan, it is shown that the City does recognize the importance of providing social infrastructure and intends to increase local community services in neighbourhoods that are currently not well served. While this intention is not focused specifically on the inner suburbs, it paves the way for investment in these neighbourhoods.

The Scarborough Centre Secondary Plan aims to enhance the Centre as a designated growth area and as a destination point for employment, recreational, institutional and additional uses. The Plan includes the provision of community services and attempts to tailor them to the specific needs of the area. However, as previously mentioned, the Centre covers a small area as a percentage of the total area of the inner suburbs. The designated growth areas are based on the historical centres of settlements and areas that have experienced development interest and typically a corresponding rise in prices. Understandably in a market-driven economy, low-income neighbourhoods are not located in areas that are considered desirable or in areas in which low-income people can be priced out. Although the Province has employed designated growth centres in its regional Growth Plan, on a smaller scale it could be beneficial to have local mixed use (either in the form of corridors or nodes) within walking distance of residential areas. Mixed use areas should vary in size and scale and become more common in the inner suburbs of Toronto in order to address the issue of the lack of services and amenities.

Chapter 5. Best Practices and Conclusion

This research project aims to review provincial, regional and municipal land-use policies with regards to suburban decline in Toronto. This paper answers the research question of how provincial and local governments are responding to suburban decline in the City of Toronto, and what role land-use policy serves. Policies concerning transportation, housing, service distribution and land use were examined and assessed. While there is no policy document that attempts to confront inner suburban decline in a holistic, comprehensive manner, policy documents in the conventionally set out fields of transportation, housing and land use conceptualize, to varying extents, the specific challenges that inner suburban areas, or at least low-income areas, are facing.

Although this research has divided the policies studied into separate chapters regarding transportation, housing and service distribution, this approach is more in response to the well-established separation of different fields of urban planning. All three of these subjects (and more) must be considered in developing effective solutions for mitigating suburban disadvantage and decline. Transportation, housing and service distribution considerations are interrelated and dependent on each other; developing and managing human environments requires acknowledging and engaging with the complexity and interrelatedness of the various qualities of these environments. Essentially, while compartmentalizing different aspects is useful, planning solutions must be holistic in their approach.

5.1 Best Practices

Suburban decline and disadvantage has become an increasingly evident and noticeable issue in western countries. Although occurring in different contexts, suburban decline has been observed in many American, Australian and western European cities. Some cities and regions have already begun addressing the issues associated with suburban areas in decline through planning initiatives and programs. The following best practices are location based and address a range of concerns related to declining areas. They are examples of what a holistic approach to mitigating suburban disadvantage could look like. Of course, solutions to suburban decline will never be the

same across regions and will always be context-dependent. These examples are all in different locations, and they will not exactly replicate the situation in Toronto, but they can help spark ideas that may have merit here.

The Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, Netherlands

The Bijlmermeer is a district located south-east of central Amsterdam. It is in some ways comparable to public-housing estates that are common in French suburbs, which have been plagued by numerous social problems. The French government has taken a number of initiatives over the years, such as economic revitalization, redevelopment and infill (Audirac et al. 2012) to try and deal with problems similar to those that plague Bijlmermeer, with limited impact. The experience of Bijlmermeer is more positive.

The history of the Bijlmermeer also parallels that of the inner suburban tower neighbourhoods in Toronto. It was built between 1967 and 1975 as a prime example of the application of the tenets of Modernist urban design. There are about 13,000 dwellings in total, contained in 31 large-scale slabs, each 10 storeys high containing 300-500 dwellings each (Helleman and Wassenberg 2004). The layout for the district featured large open spaces between apartment blocks, with expansive green landscapes surrounding the buildings, as well as a clear separation between different functions: residential, leisure and employment uses were clearly split. In addition, the Bijlmermeer featured parking garages and an orthogonal pattern of raised main roads which served to separate traffic movement (Stal and Zuberi 2010). The neighbourhood was built as a reaction to the severe middle-class housing shortage in Amsterdam. However, the middle class did not elect to live there, as was planned, and in its place, the Bijlmermeer attracted low-income households with no other options. Over time, the Bijlmermeer district became an area in which residents were ethnically diverse, low-income and experiencing high unemployment. It progressively became a non-white enclave at the edge of the city (Helleman and Wassenberg 2004). The neighbourhood continues to serve as site of arrival for new immigrants and is home to residents who come from more than 30 different countries (Stewart and Thorne 2010).

One of the major land-use issues that the Bijlmermeer district faced was the lack of amenities and facilities nearby. Originally, the plans for the site included walkways with shops, recreational facilities and leisure spaces. These were not constructed due to financial issues (Helleman and Wassenberg 2004). As well, it had been intended that the site would be served by a planned subway link to central Amsterdam. The subway line was eventually built, but this was two decades after the construction of the Bijlmermeer (ibid.). As well, the low-income populations that settled here tended not to own cars. This made the area isolated and the residents disconnected from the rest of the city.

The scale at which the Bijlmermeer was built was uninviting. The district, with its separation of uses, was not walkable and there were numerous semi-private spaces around the apartment blocks, such as alleyways, corridors, storage spaces, and parking garages. These became 'blind spots' with little activity and no 'eyes on the street', resulting in spaces that were not maintained, were littered with garbage and were the sites of drug deals, making them unpleasant and unwelcoming.

Figure 8: Improved Connectivity in the Bijlmermeer. Source*: Stewart and Thorne (2010). Tower Neighbourhood Renewal in the Greater Golden Horseshoe*.

Within the Bijlmermeer high-rise apartments were the only form of housing available. This housing type was not appealing to different segments of the Dutch population, and people opted

to live in other areas of Amsterdam, resulting in a high vacancy rate for the Bijlmermeer. The spatial layout and design of the Bijlmermeer has affected the level of crime, poverty and tenant discontent that the neighbourhood has experienced (Stal and Zuberi 2010).

Since the 1990s, the Bijlmermeer has become a testing ground for a host of redevelopment strategies that aim to address these problems. The renewal program has focused on addressing the roots of social problems in conjunction with physical redevelopment, and has been led by community engagement. The revitalization efforts for the Bijlmermeer have involved spatial reconfiguration, management changes and social renewal (Leeming and Shakur 2004). Urban redesign and spatial reconfiguration began in the 1990s and has continued until the present. This aspect resulted in the demolition of some of the Bijlmermeer in addition to infill and redevelopment in order to increase the social mix. The new development features a mix of housing styles – high-rise, low-rise and single-family homes – as well as a mix of tenures – rental, owned and social housing (Leeming and Shakur, 2004; Helleman and Wassenberg 2004). The results of these revitalization initiatives have altered the district from a low-income housing project to a more diverse area in terms of housing and income levels. As well, management of the apartment blocks was consolidated for the most part into one organization in order to simplify the administration and decision-making process.

In addition, more uses are being brought into the Bijlmermeer, such as small shops and businesses. As well, some amenities have opened nearby, such as a stadium and a cinema. The parks have been landscaped and cleared of bushes, leaving only trees and lawns for clearer sight lines. The original separation of traffic has been reversed by lowering the raised roads to ground level and mixing motorized and other types of traffic (see *Figure 8*). Most of the original large parking garages have been demolished or converted to other uses.

Along with the redevelopment and physical redesign measures, social and economic initiatives were implemented to improve liveability. An important consideration has been economic opportunities in the Bijlmermeer to address the issue of unemployment. For example, an employment services office has been established, as well as adult education programs, and entrepreneurship is encouraged among residents through services and programs. Other social

interventions support place-making through multicultural activities and religious celebrations (Helleman and Wassenberg 2004).

Although not perfect, the revitalization efforts in the Bijlmermeer have been successful. The addition of the metro stop and the development of the areas around the Bijlmermeer have helped dispel the isolation of the Bijlmermeer district, and made it part of the urban network (ibid.). The physical, social and economic revitalization efforts complement each other, making the area attractive to a broader range of people and while improving the economic and social situation of the low-income residents.

Baltimore County First-tier Suburbs, Maryland, United States

Similar to the inner suburbs of Toronto and other Canadian cities, the majority of Baltimore County's inner (or first-tier) suburbs have experienced moderate to severe decline from 1970 to the present (Vicino 2008). This decline is characterized by a decrease in average income, stagnating population levels, disinvestment in the housing stock, and changes in the labor market (Hanlon, 2009a). The inner suburbs of Baltimore are separate from the City of Baltimore, but all belong to Baltimore County (see *Figure 9*).

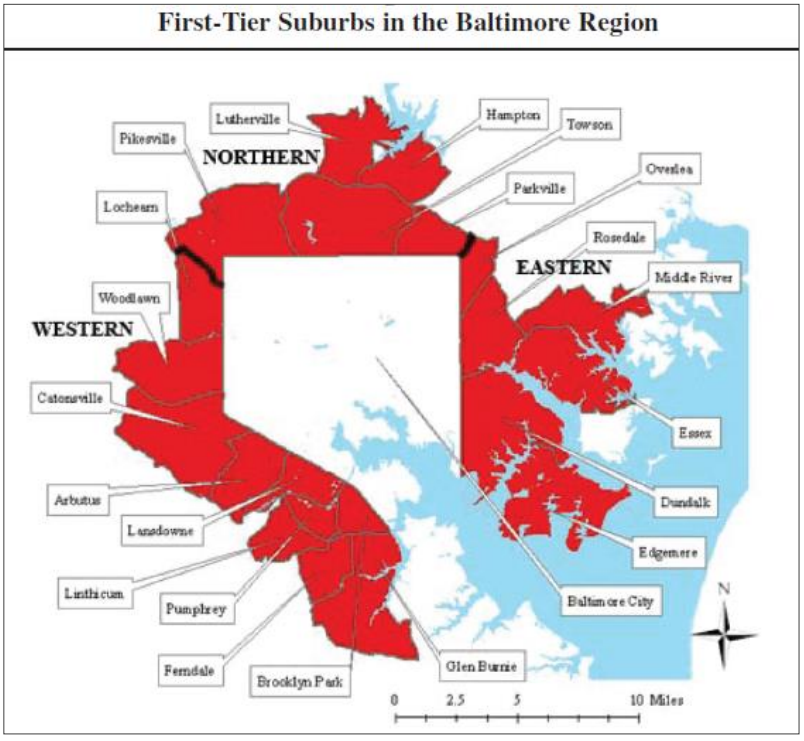

Figure 9: Baltimore County Inner Suburbs. Source: *Vicino, T. (2008). The Quest to Confront Suburban Decline*.

A piece of legislation that has helped spur re-investment in the inner suburbs of Baltimore is the Smart Growth Areas Act of the State of Maryland. The Act designates certain areas of existing urban development as 'priority funding areas' which are eligible for government funds and resources for redevelopment and growth. For an area to be designated as a priority funding area, it must be part of a municipality that existed before 1997, be inside certain regional boundaries and be anticipating revitalization. This legislation functions at the state level and virtually all of Baltimore's inner suburbs are eligible. The priority funding areas model can curb sprawl by directing government resources in the form of state funding to already built up areas in order to curb growth. The resources come in the form of major road, sewer, school, and other related funds, which are directed towards inner suburbs in need of improvements to infrastructure (Hanlon 2009b).

Smart Growth initiatives in the state are intended to encourage redevelopment and infill development in older communities through incentives, so local governments are encouraged rather than mandated to implement Smart Growth policies. In the case of Baltimore County, Smart Growth policies have been successful because they are implemented on a regional scale through Baltimore County. Typically Smart Growth policies can be ineffective if local governments have exclusive power over local zoning and land use decisions, as they may not elect to embrace Smart Growth (Hanlon 2009b). In the case of Baltimore County, revitalization plans are implemented on a county-wide scale, and the County holds zoning and planning powers (Vicino 2008). There are no further political subdivisions in the County, and each County councillor represents a different inner suburb. Thus the County government, comprised of many inner suburbs, embraced the state's Smart Growth policies.

As a regional governing body, Baltimore County developed strategies to address the issue of suburban decline commencing in 1995, with the creation of the Office of Community Conservation. The mandate of the Office was to arrest decline and revitalize the county's older neighborhoods and commercial areas in the inner suburbs. The county's reinvestment strategies (such as commercial and housing renewal) are recognized for being well-tailored to each inner suburb and for their focus on revitalizing housing and local infrastructure (Vicino 2008). The situation in Baltimore Country highlights the fact that even within the same region or

metropolitan area, different suburbs in decline can have many unique characteristics and issues. Thus one strategy may be more effective in one area but not another, which demonstrates the importance of tailoring revitalization efforts to the specific circumstances of a locale.

As many revitalization projects required substantial land use authority – such as the ability to re-zone land for other uses, condemn properties and conduct county-wide planning – having a strong regional government was important (Vicino, 2008). These powers were essential to the success of Baltimore County's revitalization initiatives; as the county is comprised of many declining suburbs, this allowed suburban revitalization to come to the forefront of planning concerns and to be addressed at a regional scale.

Baltimore County also designated official Commercial Revitalization Districts. These districts are comprised of areas that previously were the commercial centres of the County's inner suburbs. The aim was to develop mixed use centres by supporting small businesses and introducing a greater diversity of uses into the areas. As well, the state government supports the redevelopment of individual commercial properties through the Community Legacy program. The program aims to assist communities categorized as experiencing decline and disinvestment that are located in 'priority funding areas' (Hanlon 2009b). Funding is used to support "a variety of capital and noncapital projects, including public infrastructure [to support] redevelopment projects, land acquisition, streetscape improvements and the development of mixed-use ventures" (Hanlon 2009b: 140).

The state government also supports policies targeting the aging housing stock through revitalization programs. Housing renewal is accomplished mainly through financial assistance to local governments and community organizations, as well as tax breaks to homeowners. This is done through the Community Legacy program, which provides funding to encourage such things as homeownership and housing rehabilitation in communities that are located within priority funding areas. For example, Dundalk, an inner suburb near Baltimore City, has been the focus of local housing investment. A local community development group, using funds provided though the Community Legacy program, acquired and revitalized aging residential properties (Hanlon

2009b). Though the revitalization process is slow, housing stock quality is one of the most visible signs of declining suburbs.

Arlington County, Virginia, United States

Arlington County is a small, inner suburb bordering Washington D.C. In the 1960s and 1970s, Arlington experienced suburban decline: while the population of Virginia grew by 21 percent, this inner suburb experienced a population decline of 10 percent (Lucy and Phillips 2000) while the state continued to sprawl.

Lucy and Phillips (2000) determined that between 1980 and 1990, the population in 33 of Arlington's 39 census tracts began growing again; as well, 54 percent of the tracts increased in median family income. This was due to significant planning decisions regarding transit-oriented development in Arlington.

The first important decision occurred in the 1970s. Arlington County opposed the construction of an interstate freeway running through Rosslyn, an existing commercial hub. This resulted in the highway forming a more circuitous route and prevented destruction of the neighbourhood fabric (Grabar 2014). Around the same time, Washington D.C. began implementing its METRO heavy-rail transit system. The metro system would link the capital city with its adjacent Virginia and Maryland suburbs via radial transit lines. Places such as Arlington, which lay in the path of the suburban rail lines, had to make decisions about how to deal with the arrival of METRO. The local government decided to bring METRO rail service to areas that already had considerable commercial density, such as Rosslyn and Clarendon. These lay along a major arterial, Wilson Boulevard. The local government also decided to focus development around the incoming metro stations, devising plans for dense, mixed-use and walkable neighbourhoods around stations. Additionally, planners pressed for some stations in the midst of the urban fabric to be built underground, in order to maintain the continuity of the urban fabric. Clarendon, also located along Wilson Boulevard and the METRO line, was redeveloped around Clarendon Metro station, which became the cultural and economic centre of this neighbourhood. Older buildings were redeveloped for leisure and entertainment uses. Zoning changes permitted the addition of

sidewalk cafes and restaurants and eliminated parking requirements for occupants (Ehrenhalt 1998). These decisions were decisive. The completion of the metro stations along Wilson Boulevard in 1979 spurred residential and office construction. More than 6000 housing units and 16 million square feet of office space were constructed by 1991 (Lucy and Phillips 2000), and construction continued afterwards. Arlington now had high-density, mixed-use development around its metro stations (an example of which is seen in *Figure 10*). This provided needed employment and commercial services in a pedestrian-oriented environment.

In terms of housing, many of the new residential units near METRO stations were rental units, supporting a mix of incomes in Arlington as a whole. Concentrating development around metro stops also helped in garnering community support for this move, because it helped preserve older suburban residential neighbourhoods nearby. In Arlington, the median household income declined in areas where the new units were developed, but rose in the older residential census tracts nearby, demonstrating the appeal and success of this plan.

Figure 10: Office Towers in Arlington. Source: *Grabar, H. (2014). Salon Media*.

Arlington's transformation is lauded as an example of successful suburban revitalization. Following revitalization efforts, both employment and population grew in the County. As well, the County is now one of the few suburbs where there has been a reduction in automobile travel (Lucy and Phillips 2000). While its proximity to Washington D.C. did help in its success, Arlington demonstrates that suburban decline can be stopped and even reversed through mass transit investment, high-density, mixed use construction and careful planning.

5.2 Limitations of the Research

One limitation of this research project is that it is fairly narrow in its geographical focus. It does not cover all policy and government documents related to the issue of suburban decline, but rather focuses on significant documents that play a central role in planning policy for the Greater Toronto Area and the City of Toronto specifically. As well, since suburban decline is not constrained by political boundaries, approaching suburban decline from a regional perspective is important. While most of the poor inner suburban neighbourhoods in the Greater Toronto Region are located in the City of Toronto, there are also others in nearby municipalities such as Mississauga. This highlights the fact that suburban decline is a regional problem that is unaffected by political boundaries and should be treated as such.

Another limitation of this research is the scope of policy documents covered. Additional research on other policy responses to suburban decline is also important. The focus of this research project was on land use planning, infrastructure and facilities (i.e., the built environment), and social welfare policy and programs were not assessed. Two central questions that follow from this research project are: what is the role and effectiveness of social welfare policies in addressing suburban disadvantage, and how do these people-based or service-based policies interact with physical or place-based policies? Another limitation of this project is that this research project does not deal with the planning process or how changes should be implemented, and is primarily concerned with proposing solutions to a contemporary planning policy issue in Toronto. The way in which policy solutions are implemented is also very important, however. Public involvement and consultation, as well as further research on implementation strategies are needed to have effective and equitable planning policies.

These arguments are predicated on the assumption that there is institutional commitment to the policies and interventions outlined in the government plans and strategies discussed in this research. The extent to which government agencies are actually committed to carrying out the policies and interventions assessed in this research project has not been established. The stated policies and interventions demonstrate what an elected body deems important and what its priorities are, but they do not offer proof of a commitment to act. Lack of action may be due to a variety of factors, such as lack of capacity, financial constraints, conflicting policies, differing interpretations of goals, change in government, and current priorities may therefore yield little change in practice.

Finally, this research project also does not address how revitalized inner suburban areas will retain their affordability in the face of improvements in transportation services, housing options and access to services and amenities. The main reason these inner suburban areas are affordable is their lack of appeal because of their dearth of infrastructure, amenities, resources and services. This allows lower-income people to avoid being priced out by higher-income individuals. Retaining affordability is a central concern, especially in the current climate of austerity.

5.3 Conclusion

Over the past few decades, the older suburban areas bordering many cities in Canada and the United States have become poorer and more disadvantaged. The inner suburbs now host a growing number of low-income and poverty-stricken people, who have poorer access to resources such as transit services, employment opportunities, social services, and housing in these areas (Kneebone and Berube 2013; Lucy and Phillips 2000; United Way 2004). This phenomenon has been observed in Toronto (Hulchanski 2010; Walks 2001). Recent studies have found that the inner suburbs of Toronto are experiencing higher levels of poverty and are becoming more unequal and more polarized. This research looked at how government bodies are addressing the challenge of suburban disadvantage in terms of land-use through policy.

The findings demonstrate that suburban disadvantage is not commonly a focus in terms of policy concerns; however, many policy documents are concerned with assisting low-income

populations through policies related to housing, transportation and service provision. In their opening stages, transportation policies do recognize the role transit can play in furthering social cohesion and citizen inclusion, but this recognition becomes obscured by the goals of enhancing economic prosperity. In terms of housing, municipal policy documents mention the need for affordable housing in Toronto; however the policies lack adequate goals with regards to providing affordable housing and lack an implementation strategy. As well, provincial housing policies and regulations do not provide municipalities with enough tools or funding to enforce their targets for affordable housing provision. For example, the Province could explicitly provide goals and provisions for inclusionary zoning. In terms of service provision, municipalities are given flexibility is selecting their focus. City-level policies do focus on enhancing mixed-use areas (though these are not primarily in the suburbs), these policies will have an effect. As well, some municipal strategies, such as the Tower Renewal Program and the RAC zoning designation, are responsive to the needs of neighbourhoods in the inner suburbs; these programs are currently the most robust in terms of how they address inner suburban decline, but these policies are limited to specific neighborhoods.

Some government policies, especially at the municipal level, are recognizing and beginning to address some of the issues regarding suburban decline in Toronto. So far the outcomes have been piecemeal, with different policies addressing different aspects or features of the inner suburbs, or proposing policies that will have an effect on them. An important step so far is the identification of "priority areas" for public investment. The criteria that are used in the identification relate to many issues that the inner suburbs face, such as a lack of amenities and opportunities. However, steps such as these do not address the issues of the inner suburbs or all of the inner suburbs entirely. The suburbanization of poverty is being approached indirectly more than directly. Governments in Ontario are not yet seeing the suburbanization of poverty as a priority issue, and social equity does not rank high on the policy agenda compared to economic growth. Concerns regarding economic competitiveness and prosperity feature prominently in many government documents, and are presented as the rationale for such policies as investment in transportation infrastructure and the creation of complete communities. The overarching concerns regarding the economy can detract from social concerns as they may take priority.

Toronto and other municipalities could benefit from having a regional approach to dealing with suburban decline.

The best practices detail a variety of measures that can be employed in suburban revitalization. The Bijlmermeer district project outlines the importance of community engagement, a mix of housing types and uses, along with transit connections. The Baltimore County revitalization initiatives demonstrate the role of housing and commercial renewal, and of regional planning. Finally, the Arlington example demonstrates the need for local government involvement in regional planning decisions, along with the importance of densification, transit-oriented design and enhancing walkability. These best practices point to the importance of a regional planning strategy, the need for careful revitalization and infill, and a consistent commitment to equity. At a smaller scale, providing opportunities for entrepreneurs, enhancing local services and land use diversification as well as growing transit coverage are important to address suburban decline and to guide the development of vibrant and healthy communities in the overlooked inner suburbs.

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