

Toronto's Golden Mile Urban Redevelopment Project: Intensifying Social Exclusions or
Increasing Opportunity?

By

Sam Pickersgill

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Department of Geography
McGill University
Montreal (Québec) Canada

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Abstract

The Golden Mile, a historically light industrial neighbourhood on Toronto's eastern outskirts is poised to undergo a significant neighbourhood-level redevelopment. 15 private developers have successfully proposed a series of 76 new mid-rise buildings, expected to attract 45,000 new residents over the next 20 years. To date, private developer discourse and promotional material has marketed the redevelopment as an opportunity for neighbourhood-wide economic rejuvenation. However, existing community members, especially more vulnerable low-income residents with families are skeptical. Fears of rental appreciation, discrimination, the burden of construction, as well as the potential loss in community networks and clientele amongst local businesses and social sector agencies has amplified concern. Armed with this stakeholder insight, interventions can be made before it's too late. By prioritizing community equity ownership and job participation in the development's construction, as well as the thoughtful use of government policy, such as vacancy and affordable housing bylaws and tax incentives to incent affordable units, inclusive local economic opportunity can be fostered with the neighbourhood's transition.

CHAPTER 1 – Introduction

The Golden Mile, a historically working-class, light industrial neighbourhood on the eastern edge of Toronto, is poised to undergo a dramatic once-in-a-generation transformation, characterized by significant new housing developments and commercial expansion. With three major transit projects, all currently in the construction phase, set to connect the Golden Mile to downtown Toronto and other parts of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), private developers have wasted no time capitalizing on the allure of the neighbourhood's prospective proximity to public transportation. Beginning with the partnership of Daniels Corp. and Choice Properties REIT in the redevelopment of the Golden Mile Plaza in 2021, properties in the neighbourhood have been bought up by a collection of 15 commercial real estate firms, who have successfully proposed 76 new mid-rise buildings, which are expected to house well over 45,000 new residents (UWGT, 2022). Consequently, this low-income former light industrial neighbourhood is set to become the new downtown of Scarborough, the easternmost district of Toronto.

1.1 – Contextualizing the Golden Mile's Redevelopment

As the largest and most populous city in Canada, Toronto has experienced rapid and significant population growth over the last several decades. As of 2024, the population of the GTA is approximately 7 million, up from 5 million 20 years ago, a growth rate of more than 100,000 per year (Muller, 2023). In the future, the GTA's population is expected to grow at an even faster rate, with projections of 8 million by 2030 (Potter, 2020). Migration is expected to account for over 80% of this growth (Potter, 2020). Within the city of Toronto itself, the population of approximately 3 million is forecasted to grow to 3.5 million by 2030 (Muller, 2023). Today, Toronto is the fastest growing city in North America (Velasco, 2023). To accommodate this substantial growth in housing demand, the city is densifying at an unprecedented rate. As a result, Toronto is currently home to the largest number of major construction projects in North America (Velasco, 2023).

Today, Toronto's construction landscape is characterized by large-scale publicly driven transit development, as well as a privately backed post-industrial urban redevelopment. Given the significant population growth occurring within the city's metropolitan area and along its

outskirts, the development of connective transportation infrastructure has been deemed critical by the municipal government. Consequently, public resources have been disproportionately allocated towards public transportation. Notable projects include the Finch West light-rail transit line (LRT), Ontario Subway Line, Eglinton Crosstown LRT, Scarborough Subway Extension, Hurontario LRT and Dundas Bus Rapid Transit initiative. Future private infrastructure developments on the other hand are largely based in the revitalization of underused former light industrial lands by a variety of Canadian private real estate developers. These projects are largely constructed in less dense areas of the city, primarily along its outskirts and within the metropolitan area. “Experts say mixed-use developments in and around existing malls are taking off in the Greater Toronto Area” (CBC News, 2022). Master-planned mixed-use community private developments such as the redevelopment of Malvern Town Centre, Pickering City Centre and the Golden Mile Plaza are examples of this trend.

Other GTA regions witnessing growth in private construction include the Downsview neighbourhood, particularly the Downsview Airport’s redevelopment, as well as the Toronto waterfront. Despite the city’s vast waterfront access on Lake Ontario, revitalization has only begun in the last 15 years, with the aspiration to turn this region into a critical point of cultural significance, housing, social identity, and commerce, as seen in other global cities. Through large-scale waterfront construction projects, such as the Portlands, East Harbour and Humber Bay Shores Development, post-industrial urban redevelopment is a trend present not only along Toronto’s outskirts, but also within the downtown core. Historically, Toronto-based public housing projects have been smaller in scale, based in the provision of housing complex specific social housing (Robinson, 2017). However, over the last 20 years the municipal government has increasingly shifted its focus towards the development of affordable mixed-use communities. While public transit remains a clear priority for the municipal government, the Regent Park, Alexandra Park and Lawrence Heights’ revitalizations point to an emerging trend of the integration of social housing into mixed use communities by public actors, not just private developers.

Against the backdrop of rapid urban growth, investment and construction, the Golden Mile neighbourhood’s redevelopment will be the largest in the GTA by a significant margin. Historically, farmland settled by Scottish immigrants, the area’s abundance of inexpensive land and low property tax rates drove an industrial boom beginning in the 1940s (Brown, 2021)

(Clarke, 2016). This was spearheaded by the construction of the General Engineering Company of Ontario (GECO) in 1941, a large munitions plant during the Second World War spanning 172 buildings (Clarke, 2016) (Dickinson, 2017). Throughout the war, GECO was responsible for over 256 million units of ammunition for the Canadian Government (Dickinson, 2017). However, following the War, GECO immediately closed (Heritage Toronto, 2024). In turn, the Canadian Government sold some of these building to the township, later used for municipal offices, a library and further industrial activity (Dickinson, 2017). With this purchase, Oliver Crockford, the Reeve of Scarborough named the area “The Golden Mile” after an industrial area in England (Heritage Toronto, 2024). Attracted by the promises of cheap land, large manufacturing businesses including General Motors, Frigidaire, Volkswagen, Thermos and Svenska Kullagerfabriken moved into the area (Heritage Toronto, 2024). The following decade was characterized by the evolution of Scarborough into a vibrant industrial region. By the early 1950s, the working class families of Scarborough already numbered around 100,000 (Heritage Toronto, 2024). With such a rapid and significant surge in the workforce, Mayor Crockford announced the further construction of 10,000 homes to house workers in 1953 (Heritage Toronto, 2024). As a result, the 1950s saw Scarborough’s population grow by 296%, as well as the construction of the Golden Mile Plaza, the largest shopping center in Canada, at the time (Heritage Toronto, 2024).

Following the 1950s, the Golden Mile began a steady decline in prosperity to today, where it is again poised for a wave of investment. By the 1960s deindustrialization began to occur in Toronto, whereby the manufacturing plants and reliable jobs that kick-started this initial wave of development shifted away from the city towards smaller peripheral cities such as Hamilton, as well as internationally towards lower-economically developed nations with cheaper labour. As a result, the Golden Mile’s manufacturing sector began to decline, which saw the neighbourhood gradually transition from industrial to residential use, with light industry interspersed, leaving behind scattered remnants of industry and a resulting decline in prosperity of this neighbourhood compared to the rest of the GTA (Clarke, 2016). Today, this low-density, unwalkable neighbourhood is an immigrant enclave. Composed primarily of strip malls, all of the former industrial plants have been replaced by commercial plazas with vast parking lots (Clarke, 2016).

While the Golden Mile is not officially recognized as one of Toronto's 158 neighbourhoods, the 19.1 km² area referred to as the Greater Golden Mile is intersected by seven of Toronto's official neighbourhoods, five of which have been deemed by the City as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, as seen outlined by pink in Figure 1. In area, the Greater Golden Mile is covered 84% by Neighbourhood Improvement Areas. Of Toronto's 158 neighbourhoods, 33 are neighbourhood improvement areas, or neighbourhoods with a low neighbourhood equity score, characterized by a high degree of crime and poverty, poor infrastructure, and limited access to adequate public services and employment opportunities. In 2020, the neighbourhood's median household income was \$64,990, in contrast to an average of \$74,000 for the City of Toronto (CMHC, 2020). As an immigrant enclave, the Golden Mile neighbourhood hosts newcomers from a diverse array of cultural backgrounds, with notably large South Asian and Caribbean communities. 60% of Golden Mile residents were born outside of Canada and over 75% of residents identify as visible minorities (UWGT, 2022).

The impending transformation of the Golden Mile's socioeconomic landscape presents a unique combination of community-level economic need, yet opportunity, in terms of improved neighbourhood amenities, better access to public transit, the provision of housing, as well as job opportunities for immigrant communities. If carried out in a manner that benefits all stakeholders, rather than displacing lower income residents and small business owners, the redevelopment of the neighbourhood offers an opportunity to establish a high benchmark for Canadian post-industrial landscape transformation.

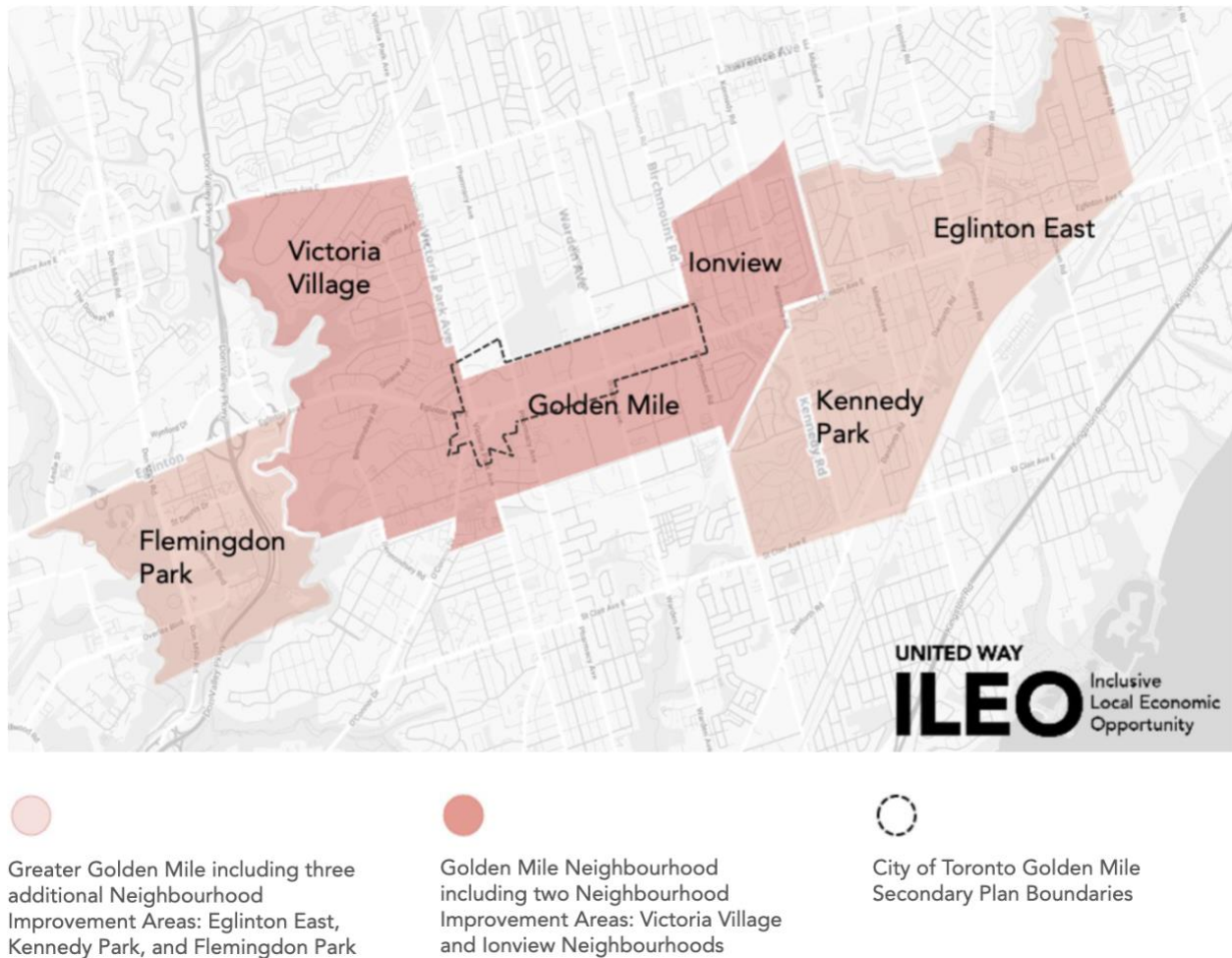


Figure 1-1 - Map of the Golden Mile Neighbourhood (Source: United Way of Greater Toronto)

The Golden Mile’s planned redevelopment was catalyzed in part by the three major transit projects that are set to intersect the neighbourhood: the east-west Eglinton Cross town LRT, which is expected to open in late 2024 and significantly improve the connection of residents to the City’s core subway lines; the second is the 15.6 km Ontario subway line, set to open in 2031, which will connect Toronto’s east end to the downtown core; and finally the Scarborough subway extension, which is expected to open in 2029. The Golden Mile community will see a Crosstown LRT station located directly in the heart of the neighbourhood at Warden Avenue and Eglinton Avenue East, as well as four other stations (O’Connor, Pharmacy, Hakimi Lebovic and Birchmount) within the Greater Golden Mile area, as seen in Figure 2. These three transit projects represent a dramatic improvement in access.



Figure 1-2 - Eglinton Crosstown LRT Transit Plans (Source: Metrolinx)

Construction within the Golden Mile is set to primarily occur along Eglinton Avenue East, a street characterized by wide and busy roads and limited walkability. The densification of the Golden Mile will be unprecedented in the neighbourhood, in which there are currently no building above 10 stories in height. While the majority of lots along Eglinton Avenue East are set to be replaced with mid-rise apartment complexes, some of the strip malls and parking lots will remain, particularly towards the southeast of the neighbourhood, as seen in Figures 3 and 4.

As of December 2023, ground has not yet broken on this complex project that involves multiple developers. Despite being a privately led large-scale redevelopment, there is no concrete timeline for the project due to its various development actors, but construction is expected to begin in 2024 with estimates that it will take over 20 years (UWGT, 2022). As of early 2024, all land for the redevelopment has been bought up and plans are definitively set, as seen in Figure 5. These developers are primarily large-scale Canadian-based real estate firms. The Golden Mile's redevelopment is unique in the presence of a variety of private development actors.

Traditionally, larger-scale master planned projects within Toronto have had only one primary private development actor. For example, CentreCourt Developments in Pickering City Centre and IBI group in Malvern Town Centre essentially have exclusive reign over their respective

redevelopments. The presence of a variety of private development actors in the context of the Golden Mile introduces greater opacity and diversity in development timelines, as well as developer discourse and goals.

One of the first projects to break ground will be at the site of the Golden Mile Plaza, once Canada's largest shopping center in the 1950s and 60s, located at the northeastern corner of Eglinton Avenue East and Victoria Park. Now a run-down plaza with excessive parking space, this 19 acre site will be transformed by developers Choice Properties REIT and The Daniels Corporation, two of the largest real estate development firms in Canada, into retail, office space and 3,500 residential units spread over several buildings ranging up to 48 storeys high (UWGT, 2022). Similarly, across the street, KingSett Capital has successfully proposed over 3,600 residential units across several buildings, as well as a new public park on the land currently home to the Eglinton Square Mall (UWGT, 2022). Other notable planned developments include RioCan and Dream's 4,950 and 3,200 residential unit developments on the northern side of Eglinton Avenue East and Birchmount Avenue (UWGT, 2022). These projects both intend to build primarily on parking lots, as seen in Figure 6. Each are also set to introduce new public streets and green spaces. The large-scale nature of the Golden Mile's planned redevelopment will change how the surrounding community accesses and navigates local services and amenities both during construction, as well as after the redevelopment is complete.

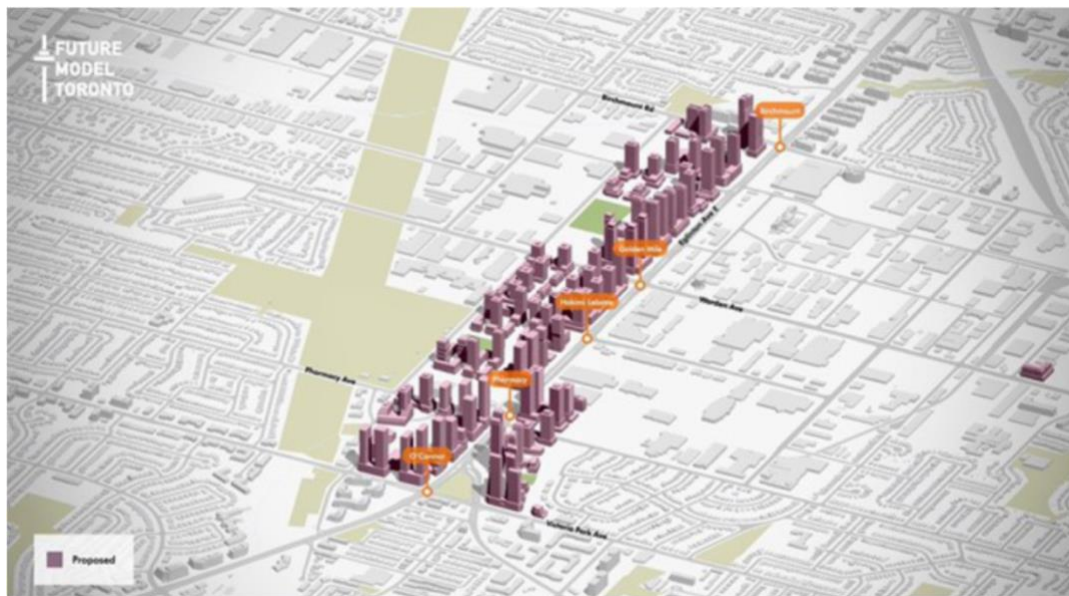


Figure 1-3 - Current Golden Mile redevelopment plans (Source: United Way of Greater Toronto)



Figure 1-4 - Current Golden Mile redevelopment plans (Source: United Way of Greater Toronto)

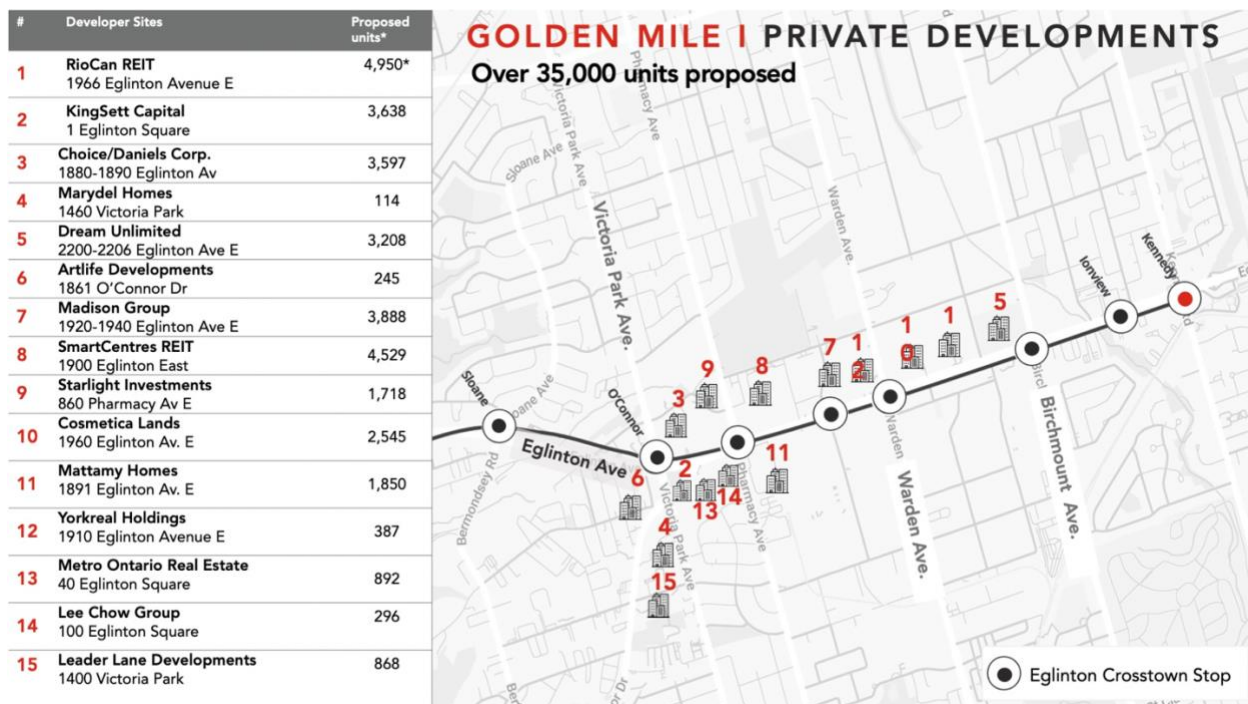


Figure 1-5 - Golden Mile Private Development Plan (Source: United Way of Greater Toronto)



Figure 1-6 – Current site on the north side of Eglinton Ave. East and Birchmount Ave. (Source: United Way of Greater Toronto)

1.2 – Research Aim and Thesis Structure

This thesis examines the plans for the Golden Mile’s redevelopment and community perceptions of the redevelopment. As with any large-scale community transformation I expect the Golden Mile project to prompt a wide range of perspectives, ranging from optimism and enthusiasm to controversy and skepticism. My thesis asks the following:

What do plans for Golden Mile’s redevelopment seek to achieve? What are the competing perspectives and narratives over the Golden Mile’s impending transformation? What are the factors that influence one’s perspective of the Golden Mile urban redevelopment project?

The overarching goal of my research questions is to better understand the diverse range of community perspectives regarding a large anticipated urban redevelopment project, the Golden Mile in Toronto, in an effort to drive more inclusive urban planning policy, as this project unfolds in the coming years. The significance of this research lies in the analysis of the Golden Mile’s stated objectives, as well as the provision of a framework of Golden Mile

stakeholder perceptions and criteria that impacts these perceptions, in order to aid planners in their understanding of the project's potential impact including an understanding of who risks being left behind. This thesis looks to highlight a pathway for maximum inclusive opportunity for Golden Mile community members, and to potentially help inform an approach for similar urban development and renewal projects in other neighbourhoods.

This introductory chapter has presented the Golden Mile urban redevelopment project and situated it in the context of Toronto's housing landscape. Chapter Two, Theoretical Framework, outlines current post-industrial urban redevelopment trends, as well as frames the Golden Mile in relation to other cases in the city of Toronto. Additionally, this chapter provides a framework of positive and negative implications of gentrification. Chapter Three, highlights data collection and analysis methods. Chapter Four analyzes the redevelopment plans, examining what developers are seeking to achieve, their stated goals and promotional discourse. In Chapter Five I outline the variety of stakeholder perceptions towards the redevelopment project, as well as dissect the criteria that influences one's perception of the Golden Mile's redevelopment. Finally, Chapter Six concludes the paper, offers policy recommendations to drive more inclusive growth, and presents directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 – Trends in Post-Industrial Urban Redevelopment

Throughout the first half of 20th Century, consumption and production habits began to change in North American and western European societies. This rise of the service and knowledge economy culminated in the first major wave of deindustrialization in the late 1970s and a resulting dramatic downturn of manufacturing in cities (Doussard, 2015). The industrial economy's departure from city centers occurred due to a shift in manufacturing towards the suburban fringes of cities and smaller towns, as well as with the internationalization of manufacturing activities, in favour of cost-efficiency in lower-economically developed nations. As a result, former industrial nodes of cities in North America and Western Europe became increasingly abandoned and underused (Doussard, 2015). Today, these areas are often associated with economic disadvantage, social distress, and environmental degradation (Loures, 2015). For instance, impoverished or marginalized communities disproportionately inhabit former industrial spaces due to affordable rents and housing, their former proximity to low-skilled industrial jobs, or as a result of imposed siting of industrial factories on these lower-income neighbourhoods.

Post-industrial urban redevelopment is typically associated with the revitalization of former industrial spaces that are in various states of disuse, abandonment, or disrepair (Loures 2015). Former industrial landscapes are repeatedly chosen as sites for redevelopment for two key reasons. First, these landscapes constitute an undervalued asset towards sustainable urban development that need to be returned to productive uses and reintegrated into the surrounding community (Loures, 2015). Second, due to their location in otherwise dense urban fabrics, post-industrial landscapes are often some of the only lands available to redevelop. Consequently, post-industrial land transformation has become globally ubiquitous, although primarily concentrated in post-industrial societies. Despite the widespread nature of these projects, the existing body of scholarship and research disproportionately concerns North American and Western European contexts. This growing body of literature concerns the materialization, evolution and various approach and priorities of post-industrial landscape redevelopment projects. The most notable trend in post-industrial urban redevelopment is the development of mixed-use communities. The integration of residential, commercial, and recreational spaces into

a single environment has emerged as the most common form of post-industrial redevelopment by both public and private developers globally (Stanek, 2011). The growing desire for a community that offers a proximate live-work-play lifestyle is a significant driving factor behind this trend. The prioritization of sustainability and green space has also emerged as a growing trend in post-industrial urban redevelopment. The preservation and introduction of new green space, such as parks, gardens and green roofs, as well as energy efficient buildings, sustainable construction materials and renewable energy sources have emerged as key priorities of developers in the context of post-industrial urban redevelopment. Additionally, the incorporation of these projects into existing public transportation networks and plans has emerged as a significant trend, with the goal of fostering sustainable and accessible community-level transportation. Given widespread claims of sustainable growth, climate neutrality and overall emphasis on the green nature and low carbon footprint of these projects by developers, post-industrial urban redevelopment scholarship has placed a profound focus on the sustainability of these projects. The six challenges of producing a sustainable built environment include addressing urban sprawl, redeveloping industrial sites, regenerating brownfield sites, the employment of sustainable construction methods, reinforcement and development of green spaces, and regenerating distressed neighbourhoods (Loures and Burley, 2012). Scholars such as Loures and Burley (2012), Ulanicka and Maciejewska (2019), and Armstrong and Kapp (2024) have examined post-industrial urban redevelopment projects, particularly in North America and Western Europe through the lens of these challenges to the production of a sustainable built environment, with particular emphasis on environmental sustainability. Given the overwhelming emphasis on environmental sustainability, equity and inclusion often goes overlooked in the existing scholarship on post-industrial urban redevelopment. This is problematic, as in any case of post-industrial land transformation there is a high degree of complexity in satisfying all stakeholders. However, as research within the context of Eastern Europe and East Asia has continues to expand, there has been greater and more unique theoretical contribution based in the social sustainability of policy-induced gentrification models. Scholars such as Sun and Chen (2021), Lee and Hwang (2018), Hu et al. (2019) and Martinat et al. (2018) have examined the level to which post-industrial urban redevelopment in Shanghai, Seoul, Taipei and Ostrava are inclusive and meet the diverse need of both existing and future residents. Based on this scholarship, existing trends point to a lack of local community involvement in decision making,

inadequate promotion of recreational and cultural amenities that impact the existing community and limited social mixing between existing community members and newcomers.

2.2 – Toronto’s Record in Post-Industrial Urban Redevelopment

In the decades leading up to the turn of the 21st century, rapid social and cultural change within Toronto was met with relatively stagnant urban redevelopment (Lehrer et al. 2010). However, by the early-2000s the tide began to turn, as former Toronto Mayor David Miller introduced an ambitious urban revitalization agenda in 2003 (Lehrer et al. 2010). This agenda helped give rise to two of Toronto’s most well-known post-industrial landscape transformations, Don Valley Brickworks and Quayside.

Located just northeast of Toronto’s downtown core, Don Valley Brickworks was the site of one of Canada’s most significant brick manufacturers for nearly a century. However, in 1989 brick production came to an end (Loures, Panagopolous and Burley 2016). Considering Brickworks’ optimal location and 14.9 hectare area in the heart of Toronto, coupled with clear potential for restoration, its future use was widely discussed. In 2010, Brickworks was reopened as an ecological public park, prioritizing leisure and recreational activities, the provision of green space and the protection of biodiversity and ecological restoration, notably the Don River. Moreover, Loures, Burley and Panagopolous (2016) highlight that the Brickworks has been preserved as a heritage site, symbolizing cultural continuity for the existing community. With over 500,000 visitors every year, this post-industrial urban redevelopment project has been considered by scholars to be an overwhelming success (Irvine, 2012). Scholarship in the context of Evergreen Brickworks is overwhelmingly based the analysis of its ecological sustainability, particularly through an examination of the amenities that the landscape provides.

In contrast, the redevelopment of the Quayside district of Toronto’s waterfront has widely been perceived as a techno-utopian failure (Bliss, 2018). Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, the 4.9-hectare area on the eastern portion of Toronto’s waterfront was an industrial shipping and transportation hub (Robison and Coutts, 2019). However, the decline of manufacturing and relocation of industrial facilities saw Quayside, along with the rest of the Toronto waterfront go largely abandoned and underused. In 2017 a public-private partnership between Waterfront Toronto and Sidewalk Labs was formed with the aim of revitalizing Quayside as a data-driven digitally-wired neighbourhood, with goals of reducing congestion,

emissions and pollution, as well as providing affordable housing and improving sustainability (Bliss, 2018). This was to be realized with the help of data-gathering sensors (Robison and Coutts, 2019). However, the project was cancelled just three years later due to mounting concerns over privacy, potential marginalization and displacement, and the lack of public consultation and trust over private economic motivations. Scholarship in the context of Quayside has largely been through the lens of these data privacy concerns, looking back on the failure of the project.

Based on Toronto's limited track record, it is clear that the city has had a mixed record in terms of post-industrial urban redevelopment, as evidenced by the success of Don Valley Brickworks and the failure of the Quayside redevelopment. These instances of post-industrial urban redevelopment in Toronto offer valuable insights into the elements that shape the perception of similar landscape changes, such as those observed in the Golden Mile. While scholarship concerning these cases of post-industrial urban redevelopment have largely been based in ecological sustainability and data privacy, rather than socio-economic impact and equity, it's important to consider how Toronto's record in post-industrial urban redevelopment may influence current perceptions towards the Golden Mile.

2.3 – Implications of Gentrification

Gentrification refers to neighbourhood change due to an influx of more affluent residents, who displace lower income residents (Lees et al. 2010). Gentrification is characterized by the amelioration of lower-income inner-city neighbourhoods in favor of middle-upper class residential and commercial land use (Smith 1987). In the Global North, gentrification results from almost all cases of post-industrial urban redevelopment, as the development and modernization of lower-income deindustrializing areas produces greater demand for residences in these neighbourhoods. With the injection of significant development capital, housing, and public transit, the Golden Mile is inevitably set to experience gentrification.

While there isn't any existing scholarship on the redevelopment of the Golden Mile, given that construction has not yet started, we can look to analogous cases of gentrification in assessing narratives and community perspective of redevelopment projects. There is a growing body of scholarship on the implications of post-industrial urban redevelopment and gentrification. Community perceptions are directly correlated with expected implications.

Triguero-Mas et al. (2022) note that the vast majority of North American gentrification is driven by private developers and investors, whereas gentrification in the rest of the Global North, notably in Europe and East Asia, is more often driven by state actors. Given the Golden Mile is mostly a privately developed plan, I largely looked at cases of gentrification within North America in my literature review. It is important to note that none of the scholarship on gentrification is explicitly polar. All notable scholars acknowledge the two-sidedness of gentrification, which carries both positive and negative implications.

Scholars such as Atkinson (2010) have highlighted the clear positives of gentrification and suggests that the rehabilitation of run-down housing and the overall development of the built-environment is an advancement of the standard of living and livability of a neighbourhood in and of itself. While less tangible, the modernization and beautification of a neighbourhood are clear benefits of gentrification. In Smith's (1987) commentary on gentrification's relationship with housing market dynamics, he argues that landowners within a gentrifying neighbourhood benefit greatly. With the modernization and development of lower-income neighbourhoods, and the subsequent increase in demand for housing, property values skyrocket in gentrifying areas. Atkinson (2010) suggests gentrification also leads to a reduction in neighbourhood-level crime and violence as social disorganization associated with lower-income neighbourhoods shifts away from the neighbourhood. Moreover, Atkinson (2010) indicates that existing businesses tend to benefit from gentrification through an expanded and more affluent customer bases. With more housing, decreased vacancy rates and more affluent community members these businesses receive more clientele, that can purchase more. However, at the same time, gentrification often results in the introduction of more mainstream higher-end businesses into the neighbourhood, increasing competition for local businesses (Atkinson 2000). Consumers within the community are clear benefactors from this competition with competitive business driving down prices.

While much of the scholarship on the positive implications of gentrification have become consensus amongst urban development scholars, the negative ramifications are largely unclear, often due to their disguised nature. In their analysis of gentrification and displacement in 1990s New York City, Freeman and Braconi (2004) point to gentrification as exclusive growth, whereby the existing community is not brought up along with the development of the neighbourhood. Freeman and Braconi (2004: p.48) go as far as to say "displacement is the principal mechanism through which gentrification changes the socioeconomic character of a

neighbourhood.” The argument here is that displacement of long-term residents is problematically a prerequisite for the socioeconomic upward mobility of a neighbourhood. The most commonly cited drivers of displacement are housing unaffordability, largely in terms of rent appreciation, as well as the dismissal and subsequent unemployment of those with precarious employment statuses (Atkinson 2000). Smith (1987) refers to this surge in rent prices as the rent gap. The rent gap is only further perpetuated by real-estate investors and speculators exacerbating the potential for displacement (Smith 1987).

In discussing the negative implications of displacement, Wellman and Leighton (1979) note the potential for loss of community culture, character, mutual aid networks and untraded interdependencies. This loss of culture is especially problematic when we consider Fischer’s subcultural theory of urbanism, in which distinct subcultures heavily based on shared values become ingrained within neighbourhoods (Fischer 1995). With the displacement and dispersal of community-members, these subcultural activities, of which community members depend on, are lost. An example of the dispossession of a subcultural activity is the studentification taking place in the Parc Extension neighbourhood in Montreal (Jolivet 2022). The Parc Extension’s large South Asian community tends to congregate around the sport of cricket (Karnick 2022). Through cricket, social networks are fostered, and the league has even provided some members of the community with jobs. With the displacement of community members this subcultural activity is beginning to die out, along with the jobs it has provided to many long-term residents. This loss of culture is exacerbated due to the low-income nature of gentrifying areas, such as the Parc Extension, of which many residents do not own cars, enduring transportation and commuting challenges (Jolivet 2022).

Through their analysis of New York City in the 1990s, Freeman and Braconi (2004) also observed ethnic marginalization as a result of gentrification. The authors note that local constituents in low-income gentrifying neighbourhoods are often ethnic minorities. With displacement, these minorities are forced to seek out housing in even lower-income neighbourhoods. With fewer and fewer low-income options, as neighbourhoods continue to be gentrified, ethnic minorities are often forced to congregate together in certain communities. Consequently, these communities experience marginalization and in many cases become segregated from the rest of society. With high crime and violence rates associated with poverty, as well as limited external investment, these segregated communities experience a self-

reinforcing feedback loop, driving escalating income disparities and the ethnic homogenization of urban space.

Even when large-scale displacement does not occur, Atkinson (2010) notes that social polarization can threaten community dynamics. Atkinson (2010) argues that the exacerbation of income inequalities with an influx of more affluent residents tends to lead to a significant decline in neighbourhood unity, largely due to a sentiment of perceived injustice and exclusion. Similarly, gentrification tends to promote an ‘us versus them’ mentality amongst existing community members, in which newcomers to the neighbourhood are antagonized by existing residents who fear community change and see newcomers as a threat to their livelihoods (Doering, 2020). This ‘us versus them’ complex goes both ways whereby existing community members see newcomers as a threat to community identity, solidarity and affordability and newcomers see existing community members as inferior, particularly in terms of prejudices towards economic resources, migration status and local culture and traditions (Doering, 2020). Doering (2020) argues that because of this ‘us versus’ them complex, crime and social disorganization has actually increased in gentrifying neighbourhoods. For example, in Chicago’s Uptown 46th Ward, anti-gentrification activists were met by newcomers in favor of existing community displacement perpetuating conflict (Doering, 2020).

While the scholarship on gentrification extensively examines its implications, my research fills a gap in the literature. This is the first research that will examine the Golden Mile’s redevelopment, its stated goals and what it looks to achieve, as well as the perspectives and competing narratives of urban redevelopment before the development takes place. All of the scholarship I have reviewed explores gentrification post-construction, looking back on redevelopment after it has already happened. My thesis looks to explore the perspectives on urban redevelopment prior to construction in an effort to inform about the project’s potential implications. In doing so, this paper will add to gentrification scholarship in terms of evaluating the criteria that impacts one’s perspective before there is tangible change in the built environment that can shape perceptions. My research also examines drivers of residents’ perceptions, moving beyond ethnic, geospatial, and socioeconomic differences to how residents perceive they might participate in the economic opportunities that could come from the planned urban redevelopment. Finally, this thesis will analyze developer-community partnerships and joint ventures as a unique and emerging solution to gentrification.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

My examination of post-industrial urban redevelopment in the Golden Mile neighbourhood of Toronto focuses on the redevelopment's landscape and goals, the variety of community perceptions towards the project, as well as the factors that influence these perspectives. This thesis will outline the landscape of the redevelopment, its stated goals and developer promotional discourse through secondary media discourse analysis. The primary objective of this project, to examine competing narratives, requires a methodological approach that engages a wide variety of stakeholder perceptions, while simultaneously catering to the unique thoughts and expectations of each participant. As a result, this research is based on a qualitative analysis of the perceptions of six distinct Golden Mile stakeholders, including residents, local businesses, local agencies, government, private developers, and urban issues experts. Data collection consists of both primary field research, as well as secondary media discourse analysis.

3.1 – Field Research and Data Collection

In order to get a sense of local resident, business, and agency perceptions of the Golden Mile's redevelopment, I administered a series of informal interviews and focus groups. In terms of local agency members, I was fortunate enough to help coordinate the United Way of Greater Toronto's (UWGT) Centre for Inclusive Economic Opportunity (CIEO) Greater Golden Mile Agency Collaboration Event. This focus group was conducted with the goal of shaping a robust and collaborative response to the Golden Mile's redevelopment. Here, I was able to informally hear from 40 participants across 25 social sector agencies in the Greater Golden Mile area. Participants took turns answering the following discussion questions.

- 1. What are the barriers that affect Golden Mile residents? What changes do you anticipate with the redevelopment of the neighbourhood?*
- 2. Are any of your organizations existing services at threat with the Golden Mile's redevelopment?*
- 3. What do you hope will come true for Golden Mile residents in 10 years time?*

4. *What can we collectively offer to the community to support local action and participation?*

These questions were chosen with the goal of gaining insight into local agency members' outlooks on the expected implications of the redevelopment project. As experts on the challenges faced by the Golden Mile community, I feel these local agency members bring valuable viewpoints that are representative of large segments of the community, in terms of how livelihoods will change and evolve with the development. This is particularly achieved through questions 1 and 3. Additionally, through questions 2 and 4, local agency members reflected on how they expect the Golden Mile's redevelopment to impact their own organizations, services and programs.

Similarly for local residents, I administered a series of two focus groups in collaboration with the United Way of Greater Toronto and University of Toronto Professor Laura Tozer. These groups took place on Monday, October 23rd and Tuesday October 24th. Both focus groups took place at the Working Women Victoria Park Community Hub in the Golden Mile neighbourhood. The first focus group hosted seven participants, while the second group hosted twelve. All participants in the focus groups were renters in the neighbourhood. 11 of the 19 participants had been renting a 1-2 bedroom unit in the neighbourhood for over 5 years, whereas 8 of 19 participants had been renting a 1-2 bedroom unit in the neighbourhood for under 5 years. 11 of 19 participants stated they have a household income of \$50,000-\$70,000 CAD, while 8 of 19 participants' household income was outside of this range. It was immediately clear that residents had limited knowledge of the Golden Mile's redevelopment. Zero residents had an understanding of the full extent of the project, and the majority of participants knew nothing of the project at all. Thus, the first 15 minutes of each focus group was used to inform residents of the redevelopment project. Questions were largely based around residents' experience in the neighbourhood and concerns for the Golden Mile's future.

Finally, in terms of local businesses I administered a series of interviews via phone call. Local businesses were chosen from the United Way of Greater Toronto's Greater Golden Mile Business, Restaurant and Artist List, simply based on responsiveness. I chose businesses from three distinct broad industry categories – Restaurants, Catering and Food/Drink Preparation; Construction, Hardware, Building Management and Storage; and Transportation Equipment and

Automotive Services. These three industries were chosen, as they are the three most abundant in the Golden Mile neighbourhood. In order to get a sense of local business perceptions of the redevelopment, the following questions were asked.

1. *Do you support the redevelopment of the Golden Mile?*
2. *How do you expect it to impact you?*
3. *How do you expect it to impact the Golden Mile community holistically? What do you think the impact will be on housing? On jobs?*
4. *Who will benefit from these opportunities in the community and who risks being left behind? Can you be specific on some of the populations and segments you expect to be impacted?*
5. *What could be done to make this project more inclusive?*

In terms of exploring the criteria that impacts one's perception of the Golden Mile's gentrification, my goal was to effectively explain the variation in stakeholder perspectives. Essentially, to explain why people feel the way they do. For each of my focus groups and interviews with local residents, businesses and agencies, participants were asked to verbally fill out a background information questionnaire.

1. How long have you been in the Golden Mile Neighbourhood
2. Do you rent or own your home/business?
3. What is your household income?
4. What is your employment status?
5. What is your family status?

The answers to these criteria-based questions paired with respondents' perspectives on the Golden Mile's redevelopment provide valuable insight into the factors that shape one's perspective. For example, will respondents who own their home vs rent their home be more likely to support gentrification?

3.2 – Approaches for Data Analysis

Through these expert interviews, my goal is to display and categorize variation in the unique narratives and perspectives of the Golden Mile's urban redevelopment. Rather than simply support and opposition, these interviews provide a more nuanced, less distinctly binary look into the variety of perspectives on the Golden Mile's transition. In analyzing interview transcripts, I intend to categorize perspectives along a spectrum of level of support.

Moreover, through an analysis of participants background information coupled with their perceptions of the Golden Mile's redevelopment, this paper determines the average criteria that impacts one's perception of the redevelopment. Taking it one step further, this paper determines which factors, including employment status, family status, household income, home ownership, community ties are the most deterministic in terms of one's perception of the Golden Mile's redevelopment.

3.3 – Secondary Source Discourse Analysis

The second method used in this thesis is media discourse analysis. Through the analysis of developers' plans and promotional material (website, social media, news articles and press conferences), I outline what the redevelopment seeks to achieve. Moreover, through the examination of news articles and social media posts I examine government, private developer, and urban issues experts' perceptions of the Golden Mile's redevelopment. Urban issues experts can be defined as community influencers, or respected voices in the urban issues space, including urban studies scholars, academics, journalists, community leaders, and affordable housing experts. Urban issues experts' discourse is largely sourced from social media, primarily X (formerly Twitter). Considering their expertise, urban issues experts provide valuable insights into the expected implications and general sentiment towards the Golden Mile's redevelopment. In contrast, government and private developer discourse is largely based in local press conferences, news articles, and reports.

CHAPTER 4: The Golden Mile's Redevelopment Landscape and Goals

72 of the 76 mid-rise buildings successfully proposed in the Golden Mile will be located on Eglinton Avenue East or O'Connor Drive, a street that merges into Eglinton Avenue East from the southwest. Redevelopment plans seek to achieve a complete overhaul of the existing built environment along this seven-block stretch of Eglinton Avenue East. As the busiest street in the Golden Mile, which cuts directly through the center of the neighbourhood, this section of Eglinton Avenue East is set to see unprecedented densification. With 15 commercial real firms planning to build on the street, there is a high degree of opacity and diversity in development timelines, discourse and goals. Private developer discourse is heavily based in access to public transportation. With the Eglinton Crosstown LRT set to open as soon as late 2024, private developers are heavily marketing this proximate access to public transportation and “compelling transit connectivity” (Kassam, 2023). This will connect the neighbourhood, previously characterized by some of the least accessible public transportation in the city, to downtown Toronto. For example, Gavin Cheung, Managing Partner and President of CentreCourt Developments, a private real estate developer who signed a joint venture with Dream Unlimited for the construction of 32 and 48 story towers at the intersection of Eglinton Avenue East and Thermos Road, stated that “Over the next 10 years, we believe the new transit infrastructure in this area is going to be a major catalyst – one that drives significant growth” (Kassam, 2023). The potential for neighbourhood-wide economic rejuvenation, as well as the revitalization, modernization and beautification of the Golden Mile are also used as key selling points of the project. Developers have repeatedly emphasized that the redevelopment will economically stimulate the neighbourhood, noting the community is expected to eventually add 1,380 new jobs (Kassam, 2023). Moreover, the prioritization of green space and walkability have been emphasized by many developers. In the face of criticisms of inaccessibility and the level of walkability, Dream Unlimited has proposed two new public streets, including a 27-meter east-west street and a 20 meter north-south street through their development site at 2200 Eglinton Avenue East. Additionally, promotional content on the websites of Choice Properties, Dream Unlimited and RioCan all explicitly and clearly highlight their incorporation of walkability and public parks into their plans, as seen in Figures 7, 8, 9 and 10. Promotional images display disjointed towers, but with such large sites built on the lots of existing commercial plazas and

parking lots, there is significant space allotted to public parks and walkways between many of the building, generally on the side facing away from Eglinton Avenue East, as seen in Figures 11 and 12. Developer discourse emphasize that this will be the development of a progressive mixed-use community. The goal of developers appears to be one that cultivates a new commercial hub of Scarborough and avoids the creation of an expensive commuter suburb. Once development is completed, the Golden Mile has the potential to be the new downtown for Scarborough, which is one of the fastest growing districts in Toronto. With the addition of 45,000 new housing units, improved transit access, and modernized amenities, the Golden Mile development has the potential to significantly improve the quality of life for local residents. That said, it is likely to also become attractive to nearby residents in Scarborough, which hosts some of the fastest-rising property values in Toronto, and risks crowding out today's Golden Mile constituents. Just a 15-minute drive away, residents of Scarborough Village and Guildwood have seen a 72.5% five-year increase in home prices from 2018 to 2023. Priced out, many will look to the addition of more dense, potentially lower cost housing in the Golden Mile as an attractive proposition.



Figure 4-1 - RioCan Promotional Image on Public Park at 1966-2050 Eglinton Avenue East (Source: United Way of Greater Toronto)



Figure 4-2 - Choice Properties Promotional Material (Source: Choice Properties REIT)



Figure 4-3 - Choice Properties Promotional Material (Source: Choice Properties REIT)



Figure 4-4 - Choice Properties Promotional Material (Source: Choice Properties REIT)



Figure 4-5 - Dream Unlimited Promotional Material for the Redevelopment of 2200 Eglinton Avenue East (Source: storeys.com)



Figure 4-6 - Dream Unlimited Promotional Material for the Redevelopment of 2200 Eglinton Avenue East (Source: storeys.com)

Language in promotional material generally depicts the Golden Mile’s redevelopment as a significant transition for the community, but accommodating to existing community members with the presence of green space and other social and cultural amenities. Clearly private developers are drawn to attractive economic returns associated with the densification of this post-industrial land. That said, local community inclusion in the redevelopment is a significant point of discourse amongst private developers. In historic and analogous cases of urban redevelopment and gentrification, this often hasn’t been the case. Michael Cooper, founder of Dream Unlimited stated that “our priority is to make decisions that contribute to the community's success and foster a cohesive neighbourhood for residents” (Kassam, 2023). Notably, developers, such as Daniels Corp. and Choice Properties have uniquely emphasized how they are working hand in hand with community partners and organizations. For example, in the Daniels

Corp. news release in March 2021 highlighting their partnership between Choice Properties REIT, the need to foster a collaborative approach to inclusive growth is repeatedly emphasized.

I have always believed that businesses have an opportunity, and responsibility to create positive change in the communities they serve. That is exactly what we are aspiring to do as we partner with The Daniels Corporation on this transformational development. (Galen G. Weston, Chairman and CEO, George Weston Limited, 2021)

We have long recognized the importance of the Golden Mile as an opportunity to make a significant impact, not just within our 19-acres, but on the much broader aspiration to positively influence the entire area for generations today and tomorrow. The future redevelopment of these lands and the Golden Mile neighbourhood as a whole is about building a complete community. (Rael Diamond, Choice Properties REIT, 2021)

Our partnership with Choice Properties, and this collaboration with residents, Local Councillor, community organizations and post-secondary and financial institutions will catalyze the transformation of the entire area. Working together, we believe that Scarborough will re-emerge as an inclusive and powerful engine of prosperity, where a spirit of collaboration and community shines brightly, and where everyone has an opportunity to live, work, learn, shop, grow and thrive. (Mitchell Cohen, President and CEO of The Daniels Corporation, 2021)

While developers repeatedly reiterate the importance of fostering inclusive economic growth, so as to avoid neglecting the existing Golden Mile community in its redevelopment, there is modest evidence of local community communication, consultation, or engagement in the decision-making process to date. For example, almost no private developer discourse or promotional material is readily available on the topic of housing affordability. While highlighting the need to promote inclusive growth is an encouraging and critical first step, subsequent steps must be taken with the developer community to identify solutions to bridge the affordability gap and build stronger neighbourhoods. Fortunately, through the Inclusive Local Economic Opportunity (ILEO) Initiative steps are beginning to be taken to drive inclusive growth in the neighbourhood. The ILEO project is public-private-community partnership tasked with channeling the economic opportunities created from the redevelopment of the Golden Mile neighbourhood towards existing community members. Through the involvement of key private development actors, such as Daniels Corp., RioCan and Choice Properties, as well as the City of Toronto, and local community agencies, ILEO is working to achieve a more aspirational 15%

affordable housing on this ~40,000 unit project, as well as supporting local businesses, procurement, and jobs, such that existing community members are included in the opportunities stemming from the development. ILEO is committed to solutions that do not rely only on charity and good intentions but make economic sense to all parties. Through the ILEO initiative RioCan, Choice Properties and Daniels Corp. are making tangible efforts to ensure the existing community is economically included and brought up with the redevelopment of the Golden Mile.

CHAPTER 5: Stakeholder Perceptions of the Golden Mile's Redevelopment

This chapter examines the variety of perspectives towards the redevelopment of the Golden Mile neighbourhood. Through a series of interviews, as well as secondary source discourse analysis, this chapter lays out the perceptions of community members amongst the following five groups of stakeholders: residents, local businesses, local agencies, private developers, and the government. Pairing community needs and expected implications of the Golden Mile's redevelopment with an examination of the on-ground reality and official plans for the development project, provides a sense of its level and spectrum of inclusivity. Understanding community-level perspectives is critical to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Golden Mile's redevelopment (Martinat et al., 2018) As local stakeholders tangibly engage with the neighbourhood on a day-to-day basis, they provide valuable insight into the intricacies of the local neighbourhood, as well as community needs (Hu et al., 2019). In turn, this perspective allows decision-makers to more effectively foster inclusive growth and ensure an ethical neighbourhood revitalization.

5.1 – Local Residents

To begin each focus group, participants were asked about their previous knowledge of the forthcoming redevelopment of the Golden Mile. While a few participants shared that they knew of a couple of buildings that were set to be knocked down and replaced with high-rises in the neighbourhood, none knew of the true extent of the project, including an expected ~45,000 incoming residents. Consequently, it was difficult to come by specific resident perspectives tailored to the nature of the redevelopment project. Instead, in these focus groups we chose to emphasize resident's needs, desires, and expectations for the rapidly transforming Golden Mile neighbourhood. Pairing these hopes for the future of the Golden Mile with the project's official planning and on-the-ground reality provided a sense of where local residents tended to stand in terms of level of economic inclusion, as well as the characteristics that define who risks being left behind.

Throughout our discussion on current living circumstances and experiences in the Golden Mile, the theme of unaffordable rent was repeatedly mentioned, with many fearing that they will no longer be able to afford to live in the neighbourhood that they are used to and comfortable in. One long-time Golden Mile resident expressed that their rent had tripled over the last ten years, implying that their income hadn't grown nearly in that proportion. With the revitalization of the neighbourhood, already skyrocketing rent is expected to appreciate at unprecedented rate. As one of the few remaining low-income points of arrival to Toronto for immigrants, this recent upsurge in rent risks making living in Toronto completely unattainable for the majority of newcomers. In turn, newcomers lose many of the opportunities and amenities which make migrating to a large city desirable, including job opportunities, access to services, cultural diversity and community support. For example, a recent immigrant from South Asia mentioned 'I live in a 1-bedroom apartment with three kids.' She justified this by saying that she needs to stay in the Golden Mile for her children's future, particularly on account of educational opportunities. She argued that Toronto's educational institutions are superior to that of the surrounding Toronto area for newcomers. This is partly due to Toronto's extensive and highly prevalent language support system in schools, notably the 'English as a second language' (ESL) program. Many other focus group members agreed that Toronto's cultural diversity has helped foster an easier transition for international migrants, through a more effective and mature ESL educational system. This recent immigrant from South Asia also noted the importance of proximity to family for assistance in raising her children. As a single mother, she expressed that being located near her extended family in the Golden Mile has been crucial in allowing her greater flexibility in childcare, such as providing her the opportunity to work longer hours by having her parents pick up her children from school. As rent in the Golden Mile continues to skyrocket, resident needs, including proximity to family and Toronto's unique educational support are threatened.

Another long-time Golden Mile resident noted "I have 2 kids, but can't afford enough space... In 2015 I paid \$900 for a 1-bedroom in the Golden Mile, now I pay \$2300 for a 2-Bedroom" If rent continues to increase in the Golden Mile, this resident and his family will be forced to relocate outside of the GTA. Without car ownership, this family relies heavily upon public transportation. Both parents currently take the bus to and from work every day. The forthcoming Eglinton Crosstown LRT would make commuting by public transportation even easier for this family, amongst thousands of others in the Golden Mile. However, if forced

outside of the GTA due to housing unaffordability, this family will lose access to the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), resulting in diminished job opportunities, extreme commute times or the costly purchase of a car. Both Interviewees of these residents elicit a tricky dilemma inherent to gentrification. As soon as a community need, such as public transportation is addressed, the local community is pushed out by other more affluent citizens who also desire this new amenity, driving up rents, and ultimately seeing these existing residents fail to benefit. It's become apparent that while public transportation was a key need for the Golden Mile, its introduction is actually being perceived as a detriment to the community, in terms of expected rental appreciation.

Another key theme touched on by the focus group participants was fear of losing their sense of community in the Golden Mile. There was a clear sentiment amongst these local residents that this is the community that they know, are used to and comfortable in. Golden Mile residents were quick to note how the high degree of multiculturalism in the neighbourhood has fostered community culture, character, mutual aid networks and untraded interdependencies. Residents balanced the idea that the diversity of the Golden Mile allows one to meet people from all walks of life, yet at the same time foster distinct subcultures based on shared values and cultural backgrounds (Wellman and Leighton, 1979). As a culturally diverse and tolerant community, there's no real concern over the expected mass influx of new residents, but rather stress amongst current residents over the potential of being expelled from the neighbourhood that they know. This is already beginning to be seen, as a long-term resident noted I "have been living in my building for 43 years, and was hoping to live there forever, but it's now likely going to be torn down for a high-rise." With rental appreciation and construction expected to pick up at an unprecedented rate, it's sensible that residents are worried.

Residents highlighted their attachment to the Golden Mile's unique physical positionality in ways similar to the sense of community described above. The neighbourhood provides walkable access to greenery and parks for children to play, a variety of places of worship, including churches and mosques, and is set to be only 15 minutes from downtown Toronto with the introduction of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. However, with the Golden Mile's impending transformation, community and social amenities, such as park and community spaces are beginning to deteriorate. Residents noted that the neighbourhood is visibly becoming less community friendly. Community spaces and meeting places are becoming harder and harder to

come by. Even the Working Women Victoria Park Community Hub, the site of our focus groups and a heavily relied upon community-center and service provider, notably based in women-focused settlement support to newcomers, is set to be torn down in the coming years, replaced by the new Golden Mile Plaza. One small business owner theorized that this was the government's way of slowly pushing the existing community out, having community members lose attachment to the neighbourhood, rather than feel they were forced out. The gradual deterioration of neighbourhood amenities and supporting services reinforces this concern, as frustration amongst local residents grows.

Local residents have also noted a recent upward trend in unjust and discriminatory behavior by landlords. One resident theorized that landlords are doing this is with the goal of evicting existing tenants, as they expect to achieve higher rents with the introduction of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT and the Golden Mile's transformation. The most notable criticism amongst residents was the inconsistent implementation of rent control. Rent control was a considerable point of contention in the focus groups. Newcomers largely perceived it as an unjust barrier of entry into the neighbourhood. A recent South Asian immigrant disclosed that some residents have their rent kept low and never leave, yet in other buildings rent protection isn't enforced, and in some cases, rents are hiked as much as \$200 a month. For another Golden Mile resident who arrived to the neighbourhood less than five years ago, this has been the case. This resident stated "when I moved in rent was \$1400, 2 months later it's \$1800." Another resident noted that she's been lucky enough to live in a well maintained building, but has to pay double as much as what people who have been there 20+ years pay. On the other hand, for longer-term Golden Mile residents rent control has been extremely valuable. One focus group participant remarked "I've been living in my apartment for 24 years, a neighbor just moved in and pays \$900 more than me." While this long-term resident appreciates this discounted rent as a huge asset, at the same time he feels trapped in his current apartment, unable to move out because of how good of a deal his current unit is. Considering newly built condos in the Golden Mile will be exempt from rent control, existing residents will be placed in even more precarious housing circumstances.

Another grievance expressed by local residents was constant fear of unjust eviction, notably renovictions. Renovictions refer to renovations undertaken by a landlord, which force the tenant to temporarily move out. In many cases, by the time tenants are able to return, the landlord is

already looking for a new tenant. Often these landlords make upgrades to the building which don't even benefit the existing tenant, simply so that they can justify raising rent. While none of the focus group participants had directly experienced a renoviction, one participant noted that a couple of months ago their landlord forced them out of their apartment, claiming that they needed it for their son. In reality, the apartment was re-listed just a few months later.

Catalyzed by this discussion on rental discrimination, there was a general sentiment amongst many of the focus group participants that there is a need for a more comprehensive Rent to Buy program. Participants clearly felt as though working towards owning a home in the Golden Mile would avert many of their concerns with the impending redevelopment, with one participant contending "renting is just money down the drain." However, there was little discussion on the intricacies of the Rent to Buy program, and how it might be more effectively delivered.

Due to rental unaffordability, there is a relatively widespread fear amongst Golden Mile residents that they won't get to benefit from the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, yet will continue to face the burden of construction. Even in the case that local residents aren't pushed out of the neighbourhood, there are at a minimum 20 years of extensive construction on the neighbourhood's horizon. Almost every single member of each of the focus groups acknowledged the Eglinton Crosstown's construction over the last couple of years as "irritating, constant" and a significant inconvenience. An elderly long-term resident noted that construction is so loud near her apartment that she is almost always woken up in the middle of the night. Another elderly resident emphasized accessibility concerns associated with the Eglinton Crosstown's construction, including lack of support for motorized scooters and sidewalk disrepair. Moreover, bus stops and benches in the neighbourhood have also been removed with the construction. There is a general perception amongst local residents that this pain will only be amplified as these large-scale high-rises begin to be constructed.

Another point of contention amongst focus group participants was the redevelopment's expected implications on criminal activity in the neighbourhood. Some focus group participants naturally expected crime to decrease with the neighbourhood's revitalization, modernization, and beautification. There was an expectation amongst these participants that as the neighbourhood is cleaned up there will be less spaces to commit crime. Additionally, participants argued that with less poverty the neighbourhood would be subject to less "petty crime." On the other hand, other

residents felt as though high degrees of income inequality may in fact have the opposite effect, driving up crime with the arrival of more affluent residents.

While many residents are clearly skeptical of the Golden Mile's redevelopment, the project offers numerous aspects which drew appeal from the focus group participants. The most notable of which was the potential for a more well-maintained, inviting, and prosperous neighbourhood. Residents in the focus groups spoke of their currently poorly maintained units and unreliable landlords. The majority of residents described their units as old, dating back to the 1950s and 60s. Cockroaches, mice, noise and odors plague many of the Golden Mile's lower-income apartments. Moreover, many participants characterized building management as substandard, whereby complaints are rarely dealt with. One participant went as far as to say that every time she does laundry, she has to wait hours. Several noted that constant repairs are needed for necessities like water leakage, and fridge and burner breakdown, which often end up being very costly. One resident described these unexpected repairs as extremely problematic for Golden Mile community members that are living paycheck to paycheck, as when budgeting they are not accounted for. As a result, the modernization of the neighbourhood, as well as the rehabilitation of run-down housing, is seen as a big positive for Golden Mile residents. While there is a general expectation that new buildings will not be affordable, not intended for existing community members, but rather the upper-middle class, some residents have highlighted the trickle-down effect as a potential positive implication of the redevelopment, whereby the shift to higher-end housing leaves existing housing vacant, providing more housing options for lower-income individuals. There was a perception amongst some of these residents that despite a limited current rental stock, the redevelopment may in fact provide more housing, allowing the community to remain seamlessly. In reality, the trickle-down-affect very rarely applies to housing. This is primarily due to the rapidly growing nature of Toronto, in which demand for housing within the city is at an all-time high. Moreover, real-estate investment, specifically speculative investment in urban areas such as Toronto drives inflated housing prices, ensuring that housing prices are kept high and affordability problems are exacerbated. As a result, there is real concern over the vacancy of units. Twitter user 'simply_put7,' argued that "the units will be 30-60% empty like newer downtown properties."

5.2 – Local Businesses

In surveying local businesses perceptions of the Golden Mile's impending transformation, there was a collective sense of fear and uneasiness towards the redevelopment project. As opposed to a relatively high degree of contention and variability in perceptions amongst local residents, local business owners tended to be more one-sided and concurrent in their expectations for the community.

Amongst many of the local business owners spoken to, there was a general sentiment of vulnerability associated with the Golden Mile's redevelopment. Following the Covid-19 Pandemic, many small businesses in the Golden Mile neighbourhood are already in precarious positions, weakened by a drop in consumption and demand. The Golden Mile's transformation offers another significant threat to these local businesses. One twitter user, @MZAF25 argued that "because the rent values of the area go much higher due to the increased density, you don't get new businesses – only established brands." This is exactly why so many local business owners are worried about the neighbourhood's revitalization. Rent appreciation will inevitably have the most significant impact on local businesses situated on prime real estate along Eglinton Avenue East. As the highest rents in the neighbourhood, there is an expectation that they will appreciate the most. Not only is there fear amongst these local business owners that they will no longer be able to afford commercial rent in the neighbourhood, but there is also an expectation that the arrival of higher-end franchise establishments will increase business competition.

While there is an understanding that the Golden Mile's redevelopment will trigger a larger customer base for local businesses, which could potentially offset rental appreciation, there is a perception amongst many of the Golden Mile's local businesses that with a shifting customer-base this won't matter. One Golden Mile restaurant owner argued that community ties and solidarity are the most important determinants of success for local businesses. He continued by saying that "without a consistent customer-base of neighbourhood regulars, local businesses are nothing." Additionally, these local businesses play into the ethnically and culturally diverse nature of the Golden Mile, without their intended target audience of a specific subculture, many of these businesses may feel and be perceived as out of place.

The impact of local resident dispersion on local business prosperity is very much a reciprocal relationship. There's a perception amongst residents that the replacement of local businesses would have devastating impacts on community culture and solidarity. Local resident-

business and business-business informal ties and mutual aid networks have become so crucial to the prosperity of the Golden Mile community. For example, one local restaurant owner indicated the importance of knowledge and resource sharing, noting that he shares a paper order with the local print shop, including necessities such as toilet paper and napkins. With the potential displacement of local businesses, these heavily relied upon networks would be lost. Moreover, the loss of business diversity would have overwhelmingly negative implications on community-level cultural enrichment, social cohesion, tolerance and harmony, as well as creativity and innovation. Local businesses are critical to the cultural foundation and social fabric of neighbourhoods, and their loss would have devastating ramifications on the Golden Mile community.

The impending mass re-construction of the Golden Mile neighbourhood is likely to have devastating impacts on local businesses during this extensive building period. With a high degree of construction in the neighbourhood, the Golden Mile will become even less walkable. With storefronts blocked off, local businesses are bound to take a hit in terms of local consumption. The Eglinton Crosstown's construction has shown how devastating these impacts can be. Further east along Eglinton Avenue, in Midtown Toronto, the Crosstown's construction blocked off a series of storefronts for over a year in 2019, as seen in Figure 13. While the government subsidized many of these businesses, limited access had significant negative implications on customer traffic. Following construction, the reputation of many of these businesses couldn't recover, with a high degree of business turnover to date. With an even larger-scale construction project set to hit the Golden Mile, business owners are justifiably worried about the impact of construction on local consumption.

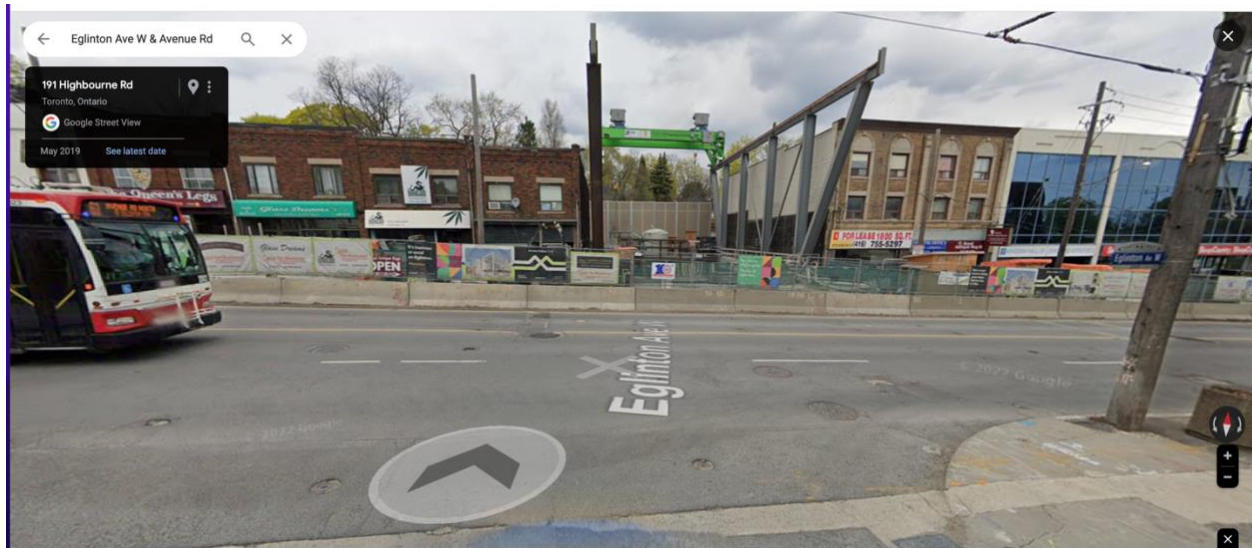


Figure 5-1 - Local Businesses Blocked off by the Eglinton Crosstown's Construction in Midtown Toronto

5.3 – Local Agencies

In terms of local social sector agency perceptions of the Golden Mile's redevelopment, participants in the CIEO Greater Golden Mile Agency Collaboration Event clearly had a stronger understanding of the extent of the redevelopment than that of local residents and businesses.

Through their interaction with a wide variety of community members, social sector agency members provide valuable insight into how they expect the Golden Mile's redevelopment to impact the neighbourhood holistically. The most frequently cited challenge agency members pointed to was Toronto's housing crisis. As the neighbourhood becomes more desirable with the redevelopment project, there is an expectation that more affluent residents will move in and drive up rent. Many of these local social sector agency members have noted that they repeatedly see newcomers arrive to the Golden Mile with high hopes, but with unaffordable rent, they are quickly forced out of the city to Toronto's outskirts. There is a general expectation that this phenomenon will only be amplified with this master-planned project.

As opposed to the general consensus amongst the local residents in the focus groups, social sector agency members tended to have an assumption that crime would increase with the Golden Mile's redevelopment. With the expected influx of 45,000 people to Scarborough associated with the redevelopment project, there was some fear of crime rising particularly in areas with large proportions of affordable housing units. One staff member of Woodgreen

Community Services proposed the expectation that due to stark income inequality crime would actually rise with the arrival of more affluent residents. Empirically in many cases, proximate relative deprivation drives a sense of injustice and in turn crime. Essentially, ‘an us versus them’ complex is fostered through a clear divide between haves and have nots. Similarly, this sense of injustice would be perpetuated by rental unaffordability. This theoretically coincides with Robert Merton’s strain theory, whereby a disjunct between one’s goals and their means drives crime. As a result, agency members came to the consensus that there is a need to take pre-emptive steps to mitigate the rise of criminal activity in the neighbourhood. An employee of the Afghan Women’s Organization highlighted the need for designated senior living, to ensure that seniors are moved away from criminal and antisocial behavior. She argued that by sectioning off a couple of floors of buildings, similar to the way that affordable housing may be stimulated, groups vulnerable to criminal activity such as seniors and families with small children could be more sheltered in a neighbourhood expected to see more crime. Moreover, an employee of the Working Women Community Centre emphasized the need for more social support in the neighbourhood, particularly for individuals with substance abuse and mental health challenges. As the Golden Mile is modernized, and there is the arrival of more affluent residents, this antisocial behavior must be addressed to ensure community safety, but also the social cohesion and harmonious convergence of existing residents and newcomers. He argued that this could be addressed through special support systems, such as housing for these individuals with mental health and substance abuse challenges. This participant noted that special support systems could also be extended to newcomers and low-income community-members through a co-op housing approach, whereby with Government support, housing is tied to 30% of one’s household income. When working, these struggling individuals pay full price, but when laid-off, they are able to pay a discounted rate to ensure housing security, and limit homelessness and criminal activity in the neighbourhood. The ultimate goal for many of these local agency members is to ensure that there isn’t tension between the old and new community of the Golden Mile. Through the implementation of special support systems, inclusive growth can be fostered, so as to avert an ‘us versus them’ complex amongst Golden Mile community-members.

While local social sector agencies provide a unique outlook on the community’s needs and expectations for the neighbourhood, within the CIEO Agency Collaboration Event, many local agency members took the time to reflect on how the Golden Mile’s redevelopment may

impact their services as well. The threat of the departure of the Golden Mile's existing community leaves many of the neighbourhood's social sector agencies vulnerable and at-risk of being out of work. The low-income and diverse nature of the existing Golden Mile community provides a unique social fabric that is hoisted up by an array of community-level social sector agencies. For example, the Afghan Women's Organization provides settlement and employment support, as well as youth programs to the Golden Mile's sizable Afghani newcomer community. However, if the Golden Mile's Afghan community is forcibly dispersed due to unaffordable rent, they will no longer be able to receive these sorts of supports. While many Golden Mile community members rely heavily on these agencies, at the same time these agencies require a community of clients, in order to effectively carry out their service. If lower-income residents in need of social support are pushed out of the Golden Mile neighbourhood as a consequence of unaffordable rent, these social sector agencies will no longer have a clientele. There is a general perception amongst these agencies that resources and sustainable Government funding for these non-profits will then be cut and these agencies effectively dissolved.

It is also important to consider that the expected upsurge in rental prices has impacts beyond just local residents and businesses. With rent appreciation, many of these social sector agencies have already been forced to shift away from physical storefront service provision to online services. It has become clear that landlords do not want to rent to community services that are short on funding, or simply cannot afford rent and payroll to employees. If this trend continues, the diverse array of subcultural groups that can be found in the Greater Golden Mile, many of which require support from these sorts of community agencies, will no longer be able to receive the support that they require.

As one of the few remaining entry points to Toronto for newcomers, the Golden Mile has an extensive degree transfer support system. Today, lack of foreign credential recognition poses the most significant barrier to workforce entry in Canada. One Golden Mile resident disclosed that her husband was a doctor in Afghanistan, but considering the Canadian Government does not recognize his qualifications he is forced to be an uber driver in Toronto. This is the case for many newcomers to Canada. This problem is even more substantial for refugees. A work permit, even for an entry-level job can take up over six months for a Canadian refugee. Without the ability to work this challenge of affordability is only amplified. Thus, to ensure that newcomers without western education are able to get good long-term and sustainable jobs that align with

their skills, social sector agency support is crucial. This is exactly where Young Women's Christian Association comes in. YWCA provides a program to newcomers, in which they pay the employee's salary for 2-3 months on behalf of the employer. By ensuring that newcomers don't have to compete on the open-market, this program provides Canadian immigrants and refugees the chance to prove themselves, and bridge the gap to make up for a lack of Canadian education. A YWCA team-member provided the example of an engineer who as a newcomer to Canada was placed with the telecom operator Bell Canada in a job focused on wiring with the help of their program. Like many, he had the skills, but he just needed a chance to prove himself through a referral. If the Golden Mile's newcomer community is displaced and dispersed this extensive credential transfer support system will be dismantled. Not only will many of these newcomers lose a service that is heavily relied upon, but agencies such as the YWCA will lose a significant portion of their clientele.

To confront this expectation that access to social services will diminish with the Golden Mile's redevelopment, local social sector agency members pointed to a series of actions that can be taken. The most notable of which was bringing the community to the planning table along with agencies, the public sector and businesses. Members at the CIEO agency collaboration event overwhelmingly stressed the importance of meaningful consultations, so that funding is tailored to the direct needs of the community. However, while meaningful consultations are important, agency members also pointed to the need for the community to be involved and have a voice in the redevelopment planning process. Some degree of community-level decision-making is required to ensure that inclusive growth is prioritized in the Golden Mile's redevelopment. Reflecting on what agencies themselves could do in the face of the threat of gentrification, visibility was repeatedly emphasized. This would help ensure that all community members are able to capitalize on the provision of these services while they are available, but also to show the public sector how important these social sector agencies are to the community, and how heavily relied upon they are.

5.4 – Private Developers

While private developer discourse surrounding the Golden Mile's redevelopment is almost exclusively optimistic, detailing an extensive list of improvements to the neighbourhood, urban issues experts and critics see some caveats to this promotional material. Toronto's

Giannone Petricone Architects (GPAIA) is an urban design firm heavily involved in the Golden Mile's redevelopment, particularly through a partnership with The Daniels Corporation and Choice Properties REIT on the revitalization of the Golden Mile Plaza. Ralph Giannone, the firm's owner and principal has repeatedly emphasized the importance of the development of public green space in the Golden Mile. Giannone stated that his goal is to have each building in the Golden Mile project at least 20 meters from a new park. Giannone's ambition here is to "create a place that people would actually want to be." With green space, notably parks prefaced as a significant need for local residents, due to overcrowding and the expectation of unprecedented community-level population growth, the realization of Giannone's goal would be a significant win for the community.

While fostering a sense of place with construction is an admirable aspiration, Toronto-based urban architecture critic Alex Bozikovic argues that GPAIA fails to give sufficient consideration to some critical aspects of the neighbourhoods urban form (Bozikovic, 2023). Bozikovic (2023) acknowledges that with current plans Giannone's claim is true, that each of their new buildings in the neighbourhood will be 20 meters from a new park, however Bozikovic (2023) feels this claim is deceiving. Bozikovic (2023) notes that a planned park designed in collaboration with Bousfields and MBTW Group near the Golden Mile Plaza is set to be lined on three sides by streets. "The (Golden Mile Secondary Plan) design shows the streets with 8.5 metres of asphalt lined by boulevards of about 5.6 metres on each side. That means each building is at least 20 metres, or 65 feet, away from the new park" (Bozikovic, 2023). It is clear that while a local community need of public green space may be met, this green space will be surrounded by "a moat of big, fast-moving cars, and lots of semi-dead space in which people will not gather" (Bozikovic, 2023). Bozikovic (2023) argues that "none of this will ever feel like a city; nor will it feel pleasant" (Bozikovic, 2023). Bozikovic (2023) argues that emphasis should instead be placed on pedestrian comfort when designing public spaces, pointing to the need for "roads that are designed to slow cars, or push them out of the picture."

Similarly, GPAIA have heavily stressed the importance of prioritizing walkability in the Golden Mile. Pina Petricone of GPAIA emphasized the importance of "streetscapes as outdoor collective experiences" (Bozikovic, 2023). There is a perception at GPAIA, as well as amongst many other private developers in the Golden Mile that "public space must have a direct relationship with nearby buildings: Doors, storefronts and patios should connect directly to the

public space” (Bozikovic, 2023). However, Giannone and Petricone describe City of Toronto policies and transportation engineers as significant constraints to cultivating a walkable Golden Mile. Bozikovic (2023) argues that as a result, wide car-filled streets will create a “hostile and unpleasant public realm” in the Golden Mile (Bozikovic, 2023). Fortunately, the Golden Mile’s redevelopment is set to include a fully pedestrian street lined with shops through the neighbourhood core (Kassam, 2023). To avert wide car-ridden streets getting in the way of public life, these sorts of initiatives, such as public squares must continue to be prioritized on a more ubiquitous scale.

Another feature of the Golden Mile’s redevelopment frequently addressed by private developers is building identity and urban form. Ralph Giannone of GPAIA described his ambition to foster an uncontrived mercantile experience in the Golden Mile with its revitalization. However, a challenge to simulating the charming messiness of the mercantile experience is clearly evident in a “district where everything is constructed at once; owned by the same people; and where most of the stores are actually very big, not mom-and-pops” (Bozikovic, 2023). Bozikovic (2023) argues that the “GPAIA’s approach to this problem has not been convincing” (Bozikovic, 2023). “They surround each shopfront with “picture frames,” Petricone calls them – exaggerated rectangles, often of brightly coloured aluminum panels” (bozikovic, 2023). Bozikovic (2023) argues that to deliver a feeling of consistency and solidarity at the pedestrian level, smaller locally owned businesses and retailers must remain in the Golden Mile, with the employment of masonry architectural style.

In the face of mounting criticism particularly in terms of the economic exclusion of local community members, private developers are beginning to look towards unique pathways to achieve local community involvement and inclusion that also are economically viable. The establishment of developer-community partnerships that prioritize local economic development and job training programs is an emerging trend in the context of the Golden Mile, particularly amongst the developers that have signed onto the ILEO initiative. For example, Choice Properties and Daniels Corp. launched the Golden Mile Community Innovation District (Daniels Corp., 2021). Working hand-in-hand with community organizations, local councillors, financial and post-secondary educational institutions, the Community Innovation District will bring together the wisdom, expertise and best practices of all stakeholders (Daniels Corp., 2021).

Among the collaborators are the University of Toronto Scarborough (“UTSC”) and Centennial College (Daniels Corp., 2021).

Moreover, through the ILEO initiative, joint ventures have emerged as a direct solution to the negative implications of gentrification. For example, Aecon, an established construction firm, has developed a joint venture with the community, which ensures 51% of the local construction venture is owned by local residents (Aecon, 2024). Here, employment and growth opportunities are provided to local residents, who have the potential to have 20 year careers in the construction of the Golden Mile as it moves from site to site. Already, local community organizations are being formed to provide visibility for local residents as to the timing of future construction jobs by stage of development, with training and credentialing offered to match labour supply to demand for these future jobs. The Aecon joint venture is also a mechanism to ensure that some of the profits and capital accumulation associated from the construction firm are retained in the community for reinvestment over the coming years. The AECON-GM initiative is a highly encouraging example of how inclusive growth can be fostered within the redevelopment. These sorts of initiatives must continue to be developed on a more ubiquitous scale to ensure maximum inclusivity.

By prioritizing the involvement of the local community in the many jobs that will be needed to complete the development over the next 20 years, private developers and construction firms have the potential to help foster inclusive community growth. This could occur by providing residents visibility to future job needs, the stand-up of reskilling programs by community non-profits tied to the construction timeline, and incentives for the use of local businesses in any procurement associated with the project. All of this would ensure some of the economic gains of this project filter back to the existing community. Community equity ownership in construction projects, or a community fund that has some equity ownership in the development as a whole, would support economic inclusion, while at the same time private developers and construction companies would remain profitable, an economically rational solution to the economic exclusion of the existing Golden Mile community.

5.5 – Government

Government discourse on the Golden Mile’s redevelopment has been optimistic, though vague and somewhat simplified. Considering the Golden Mile’s revitalization is privately-driven,

the government's role in the project has been limited. However, City of Toronto planners are still significantly involved in the project's regulations and zoning. For example, the City of Toronto City Planning Division has developed the Golden Mile Secondary Plan, which has clearly outlined a vision and comprehensive planning framework for the Golden Mile, particularly in terms of the development and alteration of roads, bus stops and other public resources and services. Emily Caldwell, senior planner with the Scarborough District City Planning Division at the City of Toronto argues that the Golden Mile's redevelopment provides an opportunity to create citylike density and activity in a low-density neighbourhood (Gismondi, 2024). Caldwell stated "There are also proposed retail uses, there are residential uses, there is this community agency space and there is also potentially...the term used by Choice and Daniels is 'communiversity,' which is community university" (Gismondi, 2024). Through the development of a multitude of land use and community services, there is a sentiment amongst government actors that the Golden Mile's redevelopment has the potential to drive unprecedented growth, as well as a high quality of life.

While there has been extensive discourse over the potential positive implications of the Golden Mile's redevelopment between private developers and the government, there is an understanding of the need foster inclusive growth with the redevelopment. Olivia Chow has repeatedly prefaced that "affordable housing is clearly (my) first priority when (I) become mayor" (CityNews, 2023) Additionally, the need to support a local community focused approach to building in the Golden Mile has been highlighted as a key point of concern. While it is admirable that Mayor Chow values and has put thought to driving inclusive growth in the Golden Mile through these noble ambitions, the municipal government has acknowledged no in-depth plan to achieve this inclusive growth. While Chow has applauded the development of public-private partnerships, the government has done little to support an inclusive transition of the Golden Mile.

Tangible initiative must be taken to drive increased affordable housing in the context of the Golden Mile. Despite the privately driven nature of the redevelopment, the government can still play a role in introducing regulations and incentives to support affordability. The implementation of a bylaw that obliges developers in the Golden Mile to incorporate affordable and social housing units into any newly constructed projects of a certain size would help address rental affordability concerns. In Montreal, a similar bylaw was introduced in 2021, which forced

developers to include social, family and in some cases affordable housing units into any new projects larger than 4,843 square feet anywhere in the city or pay a fine (Morris, 2023). However, problematically as of August 2023, every single developer opted to pay the fee instead of developing social housing (Morris, 2023). These fines have gone towards the Montreal social housing fund, amounting to \$24.5 million, not enough to finance a single social housing project (Morris, 2023). A clear solution is to raise the fee. The Golden Mile project requires a bylaw with a significant enough fee to seriously incentivize private developers to consider the implementation of social and affordable housing into their development and financial plans. Given zoning approvals are already underway in the Golden Mile, it may be deemed too late for the mandatory allocation of affordable housing units as a set-aside condition of development. If this is deemed the case, a significant tax incentive could be introduced for affordable units, whereby developer fees or even provincial sales taxes could be waived to incentivize affordability. Related ideas include the design of a rent to buy program that encourages residents to participate in the appreciation of real estate in the community that is expected during and following the redevelopment. The Canadian Government's rent-to-own program provides some inspiration for this concept, however as of 2022 this fund was only \$200 million (Brend, 2022).

In addition to taxes and other financial incentives for the building of affordable units, the implementation of a bylaw that prohibits vacancy and the use of Airbnb in these newly constructed buildings would help minimize rental appreciation associated with speculative investment. With unprecedented demand for housing in Toronto, it is critical that these units go used, rather than act as investment properties.

While bylaws and other incentives represent potential policy changes to drive more inclusive growth, these must be paired with community consultation and involvement in the decision-making process. Through transition engagement meetings, it is critical that community members are able to continue to express their concerns, as they engage with the neighbourhood on a day-to-day basis. Residents have expressed the need for changes to the provision of tenant meetings to combat unjust rental upsurges by private landlords. Currently, residents have noted that they are often at inconvenient times, requiring the expensive employment of a paralegal. Even when they are attended, only slight rental discounts are ever achieved.

Finally, there is a clear need amongst residents for job training and re-skilling programs to participate more directly in the benefits of the redevelopment project. As seen in the Golden

Mile's ILEO initiative, joint ventures such as the one sponsored by the construction firm Aecon provide an opportunity to engage the community via partial ownership of a new business venture, to create purchasing opportunities for local suppliers via procurement, and to provide employment of local residents. Local jobs can be facilitated through effective job training and re-skilling programs provided by the government and community-based non-profits and informed by major builders and construction firms who know where labour demand is needed, as the project progresses. In sum, tax incentives to encourage affordable housing and/or the implementation of bylaws that mandate affordable housing and prohibit vacancy, paired with more active engagement with the local community to identify win-win opportunities for local businesses and employment are all part of a comprehensive suite of interventions that have the potential to achieve greater community equity in the context of the Golden Mile's redevelopment.

5.6 – Factors that Impact One's Perception of the Golden Mile's Redevelopment

Where the previous section has outlined the discourse and variety of stakeholder perspectives towards the redevelopment of the Golden Mile, this section will examine the criteria that impacts these community perspectives. This chapter analyzes how interviewees personal characteristics and circumstances shape these perspectives. By examining how employment and household income, housing circumstances, family status and community ties impact and drive vulnerability in the context of the gentrification of the Golden Mile, this chapter aims to effectively identify which groups in the Golden Mile community are being left behind and economically excluded by the project. This may in turn highlight where and what policy-makers can address to drive more inclusive growth.

Of the resident focus group participants, 11 of 19 participants stated that they have a household income of \$50,000-\$70,000, while 8 of 19 participants' household income was outside of this range. 3 of 19 participants indicated that they were unemployed, living off of welfare. Based on their description of their employment and family status, indicators pointed to 3 of the 19 having a household income below \$50,000, and 2 of the 19 having a household income above \$70,000. The empirical results as to how household income impacted community perspectives towards the redevelopment were rather intuitive. There was clearly a greater level of skepticism towards the project in terms of affordability, particularly rental appreciation amongst

lower-income residents. There was also greater concern amongst lower income residents in terms of the threat to community networks, particularly mutual aid networks, of which the six residents with a household income below \$50,000 CAD prefaced as particularly important to their livelihoods. While other residents shared these concerns, they were made particularly clear by these lower income residents. Employment status had a similar impact on one's perspective towards the neighbourhood transformation. The three unemployed residents shared far more concern for unaffordability, but also community solidarity in terms of expectations of widening neighbourhood-level income inequalities.

In terms of housing, every focus group participant was a renter in the neighbourhood. While theoretically renters would be more skeptical towards the project than homeowners, as they are in more precarious housing circumstances and subject to rental appreciation, this could not be compared given the absence of homeowners. However, the length of time spent living in the neighbourhood was a significant determinant of one's perspective towards the redevelopment. 11 of 19 participants had been renting a 1-2 bedroom unit in the neighbourhood for over 5 years, whereas 8 of 19 participants had been renting a 1-2 bedroom unit in the neighbourhood for under 5 years. It was clear that participants who had been renting in the neighbourhood longer felt a greater sense of attachment to the Golden Mile's unique physical positionality, community ties and cultural and social amenities. Thus, longer-term residents were more apprehensive to neighbourhood change.

Finally, family and immigration status were key determinant of one's perspective towards the Golden Mile's redevelopment. Focus group participants with children, particularly newcomers with children were far more concerned about the neighbourhood's transformation. This concern was particularly based in fear of losing access to quality and proximate education, particularly ESL programs. For example, one longer-term resident's son attended the University of Toronto, and expressed real concern about affordability near campus, but also the risk that the entire family would be displaced as housing costs appreciated, in turn forcing an untenable commute for their son. In addition, the proximity of existing community and family ties was deemed critical by these focus group residents for support in childcare, adding further anxiety among the newcomer population about the potential disruption of services.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

With the neighbourhood expected to almost triple in size, private developer discourse and promotional material has marketed the Golden Mile's transformation as the cultivation of the new commercial hub of Scarborough, and an opportunity for neighbourhood wide economic rejuvenation. The Golden Mile's redevelopment is being presented as a progressive and inclusive megaproject by developers and even the municipal government, who highlight the compelling transit connectivity, provision of jobs, prioritization of accessibility and green space, as well as local community engagement and inclusion. In some instances, this engagement is real and creative, such as the ILEO project and Aecon construction joint venture. However, on the ground there is an increasingly high degree of skepticism amongst residents and local businesses towards the neighbourhood's transformation. This skepticism is most prevalent amongst lower-income residents with families exposed to greater vulnerabilities such as rental appreciation and relocation. Moreover, longer-term residents tended to be more concerned with neighbourhood transformation based in their attachment to the community, but at the same time newcomers also shared a high degree of concern, due to the perceived threat of reduced access to subcultural activities and ESL programs.

Community members are largely concerned with rental affordability and discrimination. There is a strong belief amongst these residents and local business owners that as the neighbourhood is revitalized and more affluent residents arrive, their rents will skyrocket, and they will no longer be able to afford to live in the neighbourhood. Consequently, there was a general sentiment of vulnerability amongst these groups, particularly in terms of losing their sense of community and the city-based amenities and support systems of which they rely upon. Even in the chance that residents and business owners are able to remain in the neighbourhood, there are expectations amongst some that construction will be an extreme burden to their lifestyles, and that crime will increase with the redevelopment due to proximate income inequality. In terms of local agencies, more affluence means less social support for their services will be required in the neighbourhood. This evidently isn't a bad thing, but it does mean that those community members that did rely upon these services will need to look elsewhere. Moreover, many local agencies expect to be put out of work, which would add temporary labour displacement.

While the Golden Mile's redevelopment does pose some significant challenges to the existing community, it is becoming clear that inclusive growth is beginning to become a real priority for both government actors and private developers. In the face of mounting criticism based in claims of exclusivity, some private developers have already initiated collaboration with local community agencies to ensure that the Golden Mile community, including existing residents, businesses and community agencies aren't neglected with the neighbourhood's revitalization, and instead are brought up with the community's redevelopment. Through partnerships and initiatives such as the Community Innovation District and the AECON-GM joint venture, private developers are beginning to take it upon themselves to drive greater community inclusion, and even equity ownership in the Golden Mile's reconstruction. The prioritization of local procurement, as well as ensuring a high degree of job visibility is crucial to ensuring inclusive local economic opportunity.

In terms of policy recommendations, the implementation of bylaws that mandate affordable housing, incent affordable units, encourage rent to buy and prohibit vacancy provide unique policy options to mitigate the impacts of rental unaffordability. At the same time, the provision of job training and reskilling programs by the government and non-profits are necessary to ensure that Golden Mile residents can capitalize on the influx of new jobs to the neighbourhood during the extensive building phase. Finally, community engagement and consultation are critical to understanding local needs and priorities, such as the need to combat rental discrimination through more effective administration of tenant meetings.

In terms of limitations, the most notable challenge of this paper is that there is no existing scholarship on the redevelopment of the Golden Mile to build on. As a result, this research relied on primary qualitative research which had some limitations. The most notable limitation of this research was having to rely upon inferences for the income ranges of 5 of the 19 residents in the focus groups. Moreover, a larger sample size of community perspectives within the various groups of stakeholders would have provided a more comprehensive understanding, as well as more unique outlooks at to the expected implications of the Golden Mile's redevelopment and the factors that impact these perspectives. With a larger sample size quantitative analysis could have been introduced into this study to establish more objectivity and generalizability. In terms of areas of future research, spatial autocorrelation could be used to determine how perspectives vary geographically within the neighbourhood. Additionally, primary research could be

introduced amongst private developers, rather than solely basing their discourse and stated goals off of promotional material. Finally, as the project continues to progress, by following the on-ground progress of the Golden Mile's redevelopment and tracking the impact on various community stakeholders, an understanding can be developed about how community perceptions and stated goals of a project shape up to real implications.

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