

**ETHNIC RETAILING AND THE ROLE OF MUNICIPAL PLANNING:  
FOUR CASE STUDIES IN THE GREATER TORONTO AREA**

by

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## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION FOR ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF A THESIS**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## Abstract

The recent waves of immigration have dramatically changed the urban landscape of Canada's metropolitan regions. One of the significant markers of this change are ethnic retail activities that manifest in ethnic shopping strips and centres. The dynamics of ethnic retailing pose various challenges for municipalities; yet, our knowledge of its complexities is limited, especially in terms of its relationship with and implications for city planning. Current literature on multicultural planning advocates for cultural sensitivity in planning practice based on a limited number of empirical studies. It generally overlooks planners' professional mandate and the constraints inherent in the planning system that hinder planners' capacity to be proactive, and is regularly disregarded in practice.

This research focuses on the phenomenon of ethnic retailing and provides empirical data to bridge the research gaps. Several research objectives were pursued in this thesis, including: the exploration of ethnic retail activities among different ethnic groups in different commercial settings, the examination of the ethnic retail development process and key players in the production of ethnic retail spaces, and the identification of the role of municipal planning in ethnic retailing. The study targets the Chinese, South Asian, and Italian business communities; four case studies were conducted, including three retail strips in the inner city of Toronto, namely East Chinatown, the Gerrard India Bazaar, and Corso Italia, and one suburban Asian theme mall, the Pacific Mall in the Town of Markham.

The four case studies demonstrate that planners play an inactive or a reactive role in the context of ethnic retail area development. The major reason for their limited role is that planners must abide by the legislative structure and the procedures of the planning system. They must, by the nature of their profession, focus on city-wide issues. The planning profession's mandate confines planners' capacity and flexibility in dealing with the multicultural challenges presented by local ethnic communities. Another major area this research explores is the nature of ethnic retailing. There are important inter-group and intra-group differences among the case studies. There are also significant differences

between the inner-city retail strips and the suburban shopping mall. The relationship of the dynamics of ethnic retailing and urban planning is explored, with particular focus on community building, the relationship between the City vision and local diversity, and ethnic expression. These findings demonstrate the dynamic, fluid, and complex nature of ethnic retailing that constantly changes and evolves.

Considering these dynamics, the findings indicate that there can be no templates in planning approaches to ethnic retailing. Planners must respect the local diversity and reject universal treatments of ethnic retail areas. Planners do not have authority to initiate ethnic retailing, nor is it possible for them to create a universal template to regulate the development of ethnic retail areas. Yet, there are other innovative ways for planners to balance city-wide and local interests, helping to recreate community focal points and serve the ultimate goal of “planning for all”.

This study provides several recommendations for municipal planning: First, planners must reinvent themselves by adopting a proactive and holistic planning approach. Planners must think beyond the technical dimensions of urban development and consider the social and cultural aspects, especially the ethno-cultural elements, of the community, and incorporate them in the planning process. Several conventional planning tools, including ethno-racial and business data collection at the neighbourhood level, Secondary Plans that recreate community focal points, and (multicultural) public participation can be effectively applied to ethnic retail development. Another important step is to establish a Multicultural Planning Office to deal with ethnic-oriented development projects and the consequent multicultural challenges.

Second, the study suggests developing strong and explicit policy statements in support of ethno-cultural diversity. Securing political backing from City councillors is as important in providing planners with the authority they need to contribute to ethnic retail development. Third, municipal planning requires interdepartmental collaboration. The two core municipal functions, the Planning Department and the Economic Development Office should set up a joint task force to work together in dealing with ethnic retail challenges. Finally, building community-based partnerships is an effective and efficient means to involve all stakeholders boarding the process. This includes outreach to the ethnic communities and alliance with community agencies.

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To: Haotian (昊天) & Tianyi(天一)

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

I begin this thesis with the following words of a participant in this research, words that encapsulate and illustrate the purpose of this research. The interviewee delineates cultural differences, the experiences of various ethnic groups, and the expressions of their identities. Within this context, I explore the manifestations of ethno-cultural diversity in urban retail spaces and the challenges they pose to the municipal planning system.

*It's a cultural experience.... Taking a potato [as an example]. You can boil it; you can grill it; you can put cheese,... I can cut it; I can mash it and make things. Each culture uses the same potato with different mixtures and spices, and makes it something different and unique. So when it can apply to food, and it can apply to your clothing and dressing, why can't it apply to the [ethnic retail] area, where creating physical appearance that conforms to cultural identity can be done. It should be done, because that's the attraction. Otherwise, we look all the same. There's nothing to experience.... We should definitely encourage that. (Community Agency Interviewee IA2, May 13, 2005)*

## 1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Over the past few decades, waves of immigration have dramatically changed the urban landscape of Canada's metropolitan regions. One of the significant markers of this change are ethnic retail activities that manifest in ethnic shopping strips and shopping centres in urban and suburban areas of major immigrant settlement.

On a macro-level, ethnic retail districts generally consist of concentrated co-ethnic businesses, with well-recognized names, such as Chinatown, Little Italy, and Little India. In addition, a newly emergent retail form, the Asian theme mall, is developing rapidly in the suburban parts of fast-growing metropolitan areas. Ethnic business clusters represent diverse and distinct images of various ethnic groups that physically differentiate them from their mainstream counterparts. These clusters are easily identified through store signs, store merchandize, exterior and interior decoration, and street furniture.

On a micro-level, ethnic retail areas have distinct dynamics. It takes years for them to come into being and they function in different ways. Ethnic retail areas can serve as ports of entry for new immigrants, neighbourhood centres providing for daily ethnic needs, regional ethnic centres, or tourist attractions. Their various spatial and physical manifestations point to diverse stages and processes of development and the possible involvement of different players in their establishment and evolution.

Overall, ethnic retailing generates significant benefits to urban economies, to

immigrant integration, and to the redevelopment of traditional neighbourhoods. First, the presence of ethnic retail areas not only promotes the creation of small businesses and hence employment, but also diversifies the urban retail environment and contributes to the local economy. Ethnic retail areas are an important addition to retailing and hospitality choices in the general market. Second, ethnic retailing contributes to the integration of immigrants, both socially and culturally. Ethnic retail areas serve as “little homelands” or social hubs for immigrants who have strong cultural attachments within these areas. For the community at large, ethnic retail areas that showcase diverse ethno-cultural heritages are often treated as symbols of Canada’s multiculturalism. Third, ethnic retailing has the potential to stabilize and sustain the economy of traditional retailing streets by providing local, small scale and easily accessible shopping options, helping them face competition from big box stores. In addition, it contributes to the identity of the neighbourhood. These physical and environmental dimensions of ethnic retailing contribute to the retrofit of traditional urban spaces and to community building.

However, one may argue that ethnic retailing also has divisive impacts on urban landscapes. The enclave setting of many of the ethnic retail districts and their preferential services to particular groups could be easily construed as cultural exclusivity and insularity. From a community-wide planning perspective, since ethnic retail precincts generally provide retail activities targeting specific groups, their relationships with surrounding neighbourhoods are arguably weak. There are also controversial issues related to land use, traffic flow, and parking allocation in extreme cases (Brouse, 2005; Chen, 2005; Hume, 2004; McGran, 2004; Preston & Lo, 2000; Qadeer, 1994, 1997, 1998; Wallace, 1999, 2000; Wang, 1999).

Both the positive and the negative impact of the ethnic retail phenomenon are worthy of further exploration. This phenomenon creates an immense and long-lasting physical imprint on our urban landscapes. City planners and the planning system are accountable for addressing these urban changes and consequent multicultural challenges. Through in-depth investigation and the creation of supportive and holistic programs, they can forward a more effective incorporation of ethnic retail districts within urban spaces, recreating them as community focal points, and promoting them as cultural and economic assets. The ultimate goal of this research is to generate an effective planning model to

better accommodate ethnic retail development, and thus contribute to urban planning theory and practice.

There are major gaps in our understanding of the dynamics and complexity of the ethnic retail phenomenon, especially with regards to its physical interactions with urban spaces. Canadian urban researchers, in the areas of ethnic entrepreneurship and ethnic economies, have begun to address issues related to the ethnic retail phenomenon only recently (see Hiebert, 1993a, 1993b; Lo et al., 2000; Lo, Teixeira & Truelove, 2002; Lo & Wang, 1997; Marger, 1989; Qadeer, 1999; Teixeira, 1998; Walton-Roberts & Hiebert, 1997). Major scholarship seldom touches upon the spatial and physical dimensions of this phenomenon.

Current knowledge about how ethnic retail space is produced and consumed, its consequent spatial (e.g., locations and relations) and physical (e.g., forms and functions) impacts on urban landscapes and municipal involvement is limited. Despite existing exploratory studies in this area (Buzzelli, 2001; Chen, 2005; Hackworth & Rekers, 2005; Lai, 1988; Preston & Lo, 2000; Qadeer, 1998; Wang, 1999), questions regarding locations, sizes, retail forms, development patterns, identity construction, and, most importantly, processes and mechanisms underlying visual changes remain largely unanswered.

From a municipal planning perspective, responses to ethnocultural diversity and its consequent impacts on urban space are scant. Proactive multicultural planning advocates have promoted cultural sensitivity in planning practice and have provided general principles for the planning system to follow in order to accommodate cultural differences among ethnic groups and meet their social and economic needs.<sup>1</sup> Yet, there is insufficient empirical evidence that this ethno-cultural awareness provides useful guidance in planning practice to address the physical outcomes of ethnic-oriented developments, such as retail, housing, places of worship, parks and leisure spaces, community facilities and services, etc. Most multicultural planning arguments have

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<sup>1</sup> Related research in Canada is limited, although there are a number of exploratory studies (Ameyaw, 2000; Lee, 2002; Mandres, 1993; Pfeifer, 1999; Qadeer, 1994, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003; Qadeer & Chaudhry, 2000; Wallace, 1999, 2000; Wallace & Frisken, 2000, 2004; Wallace & Milroy, 1999, 2001). Studies in other immigrant receiving countries, such as Britain, the US, and Australia are useful resources (Burayidi, 1997, 2000, 2003; Dunn, 2001; Madden, 1981; Neill & Schwedler, 2001; RTPI, 1983; Sandercock, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000; Sen & Bell, 2001; Thomas, 1992, 1995, 1997; Thomas & Krishnarayan, 1994; Watson & Gibson, 1995; Watson & McGillivray, 1995).



resulted in abstract adornments due to the lack of empirical data.

In addition, literature in this area provides little sense of the mandate of planning; this is reflected in contradictions between planning theory and practice. Multicultural planning advocates are driven mainly by good intentions to celebrate multiculturalism and promote a proactive role for planning practitioners regardless of the constraints inherent in the planning system. According to research, and as revealed in this study, planners continue to be reactive in relation to ethnic-sensitive land use issues, such as debates over “monster homes” and Asian theme malls (Ley, 2000; Li, 1994; Preston & Lo, 2000; Qadeer, 1994, 1998; Wang, 1999). The role of municipal planning in coping with ethno-cultural diversity is not clear. Critical questions—such as “Is there a role for municipal planning in dealing with ethnic retail districts?” and “How and under what circumstances can planning foster a healthy ethnic business environment that can benefit the community at large?”—remain unanswered. It is important to redefine municipal planners’ role in planning practice and to discuss the constraints they face and the reasons behind them.

In summary, current gaps in research affect our knowledge of the nature of ethnic retail activities and their impact on urban space, as well as urban planners’ capacity to address related issues and play a role in their resolution. Public policy at the municipal level on issues of economic development, land use, and transportation planning in relation to ethnic retail development has been relatively un-informed. There is urgent need to explore the processes underlying the spatial and physical changes of ethnic retail spaces so as to better accommodate ethnic businesses, facilitate the expression of ethnic identity in commercial landscape, and actualize and utilize the economic potential of immigrant entrepreneurs.

The discussions above raise two fundamental questions: 1. What is ethnic retail, and more specifically, how and why did retail areas such as these develop in different forms and through different processes? 2. Can municipal planning play a role helping ethnic retail districts sustain and grow, as they develop and evolve in urban settings? This study investigates these questions and bridges the gaps in research in this area. This research explores the dynamics and complexities of ethnic retail and its impact on urban spaces. Furthermore, it investigates the interactions and interventions of local municipal

planning authorities in ethnic retail developments. In order to document the various development patterns of ethnic retail districts, I chose four case studies, including three ethnic retail strips in the inner-city of Toronto targeting the Chinese, South Asian and Italian business communities, namely East Chinatown, Gerrard India Bazaar, and Corso Italia, and one suburban Asian theme mall, the Pacific Mall in the Town of Markham.<sup>2</sup> These four retail districts have undergone different stages of development and represent various forms and processes of development. In documenting the physical changes of these ethnic retail areas I reveal the major players in their production and consumption processes.

In this study I identify and examine three groups of actors as key players in ethnic retail development, namely ethnic entrepreneurs, city officials (city councillors, city planners, economic development officers), and community agencies. The research findings indicate that maximizing the economic contribution of ethnic businesses to the well-being of the community requires collective work. It requires a combination of bottom-up initiatives generated by ethnic entrepreneurs, and holistic and proactive planning strategies implemented by city officials. In addition, community agencies have an undeniable capacity to bridge or minimize the gap between grassroots organizations and city bureaucrats, and contribute to achieving the common goals of all stakeholders. The roles of these key players are described in more detail as follows:

**Ethnic entrepreneurs:** The dynamics of ethnic retail activities illustrate the complex nature of ethnic businesses. Several theoretical approaches to ethnic entrepreneurship explain various entrepreneurial behaviors and characteristics.<sup>3</sup> According to the mixed embeddedness model, embedded in the wider economic, political, and institutional structures, ethnic entrepreneurs from various ethno-cultural backgrounds are able to influence the spatial and physical manifestations of retail areas (Rath, 2007). Their impact is dependent on the business approaches and strategies they adopt, the degree of being institutionalized through formal organizations, and their ability to utilize political resources and mobilize social capital. Due to the complexity of ethnic

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 3 for case study selection.

<sup>3</sup> These theories include the cultural thesis, opportunity structure, the interactive model, and the mixed embeddedness model (Bonacich & Modell, 1980; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Light, 1972; Light & Bonacich, 1988; Light & Gold, 2000; Light & Rosenstein, 1995; Lo, et al., 2002; Rath, 2000, 2007; Rath & Kloosterman, 2000; Waldinger, Aldrich, Ward & Associates, 1990).

entrepreneurship and profound differences among ethnic groups, there is no clear-cut solution or template for the successful development of ethnic retail areas. However, if a formula for success were to exist, a pivotal part of it would be a bottom-up community-driven business approach. Ethnic entrepreneurs must make their voices heard in the decision making processes to ensure their goals are achieved. The entrepreneurs in East Chinatown and Corso Italia are examples of the importance of standing up and articulating the needs of the ethnic retail areas to maximize the potential of gaining resources and support from other parties.

**City officials:** There is no doubt that it is important for City officials to increase their cultural awareness and improve communication with ethnic groups, as multicultural planning advocates suggest. However, these measures are not sufficient in dealing with a reality that is far more complex. This reality calls for a more proactive role for city officials who stand at the forefront of municipal decision-making and business service delivery, such as City councillors, City planners, and economic development officers. First, it is crucial that these officials and regulators adopt a holistic planning approach to long-term community building. This approach takes all aspects of community life into consideration, so that ethnic retail spaces are not treated as isolated patches, but as an organic part of the neighbourhood, connected with all other functions of the community, such as housing, places of worship, and parks and leisure spaces. Within this holistic approach, many issues related to ethnic retail, such as streetscape improvement, business sustainability, tourism development, traffic and parking, and neighbourhood relations, can be managed strategically; City officials can plan ahead with other community stakeholders and intervene more effectively before problems arise.

Second, City planners can play a more proactive role in integrating immigrants with the host society. They can contribute to balancing ethnic communities' cultural needs at the local level within their city-wide visions, provided that planners are trained appropriately and are given sharper planning tools (e.g., ethno-racial data, secondary plans with mixed land uses, and effective multicultural public participation). The planning system can be modified, adding new institutional structures, such as a Multicultural Planning Office to better accommodate immigrant communities and their needs in urban spaces.

Third, successful planning practice in response to multicultural challenges also requires policy and political backing, as well as interdepartmental collaboration. Collaboration between the City Planning Department and the Economic Development Office can produce flexible policies and tailor-made programs that respond to diverse business community-based initiatives; it can provide guidance and education for grassroots community engagement. Internal collaboration requires City Council support to ensure genuine involvement when programs are being implemented and services delivered. Finally, City officials can be more creative in including not only ethnic entrepreneurs, but also community agencies boarding the planning process. External partnerships can help synergize municipal involvement in community-based, ethnic business activities and initiatives.

**Community agencies:** Community agencies play an important role in linking ethnic entrepreneurs and the municipal government. The benefits of building such partnerships should not be overlooked. Community agencies often provide research, consultation, outreach, assistance and mediation to both city officials and the business communities. They serve as conduits for circulating and exchanging data and information from both parties, and at times as advocates for grassroots' initiatives. The findings in this study also indicate that community agencies are underutilized due to funding restrictions, raising concerns about their overall stability and capacity. Funding limitations appear in service delivery for immigrant settlement and society at large as well (Community and Neighbourhood Services, 2004; Wallace & Frisken, 2004). The development of efficient and strong partnerships with community agencies has posed a challenge to municipal governments.

This study provides a new perspective on the dynamics of ethnic retail activities and their stakeholders; it compares the experiences of various groups of ethnic entrepreneurs, as well as their interactions with urban spaces and surrounding neighbourhoods. The investigation of how these ethnic retail districts have evolved contributes to theoretical frameworks of ethnic economies and urban retailing. In addition, it broadens the spectrum of knowledge about municipal planning for multicultural communities. This research will inform municipalities on the planning and long-term management of ethnic retail districts; it advocates for the implementation of

community services to accommodate the growing immigrant population, facilitate their retail activities, and enhance the community as a whole.

## **1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This study investigates the phenomenon of ethnic retail through the lens of municipal planning. The thesis addresses the following research questions and research objectives.

### **Research Questions:**

1. What is ethnic retail? How have ethnic retail areas developed over time? (e.g., What are their business profiles? How are they organized and institutionalized? What are the spatial needs of ethnic entrepreneurs and how are these needs addressed in the development process? How does ethnicity physically manifest in the urban retail landscape?)
2. How do ethnic groups differ from each other in terms of their business approaches and the physical manifestations of their retail activities? Are there similarities among them? What are the major factors that contribute to these differences and/or similarities (e.g., ethnic resources, group characteristics, social capital, immigration history, etc.)?
3. Who are the key players involved in the production of ethnic retail spaces and influence their spatial and physical manifestations? How do the inner city cases differ from the suburban case? Can a proactive approach improve the status quo of the retail areas in this study? What works and what does not work?
4. What have municipal decision makers, namely politicians, city planners, and economic development officers done or should have done to maximize the social and economic contribution of ethnic retail? What are the implications of this study for municipal planning in relation to ethnic retail development?

### **Research Objectives:**

1. I trace the evolution of ethnic retail landscapes in four ethnic commercial areas. Specifically, to document business changes, development and growth patterns, identity (re)construction, and spatial and physical developments.

2. I compare retail activities among different ethnic groups and examine the reasons for the differences among them.
3. I explore the processes and mechanisms underlying visual changes in ethnic retail landscapes, and identify the key players behind the production of these retail spaces.
4. I identify the role of municipal planning in maximizing the social and economic contribution of ethnic retail, and in community building.

### **1.3 DEFINITIONS OF ETHNIC RETAIL**

We all have an ethnic identity and share common cultural, national, religious, linguistic, or tribal traits with a group of people. The term “ethnic” is commonly used in reference to a specific cultural group. In this thesis, “ethnic” refers to a minority or subordinate group that is different from the politically dominant majority. Note that an ethnic minority group does not necessarily imply its being a numerical minority.

The term “ethnic retail” used throughout this thesis is derived from a combined consideration of the theoretical concepts of ethnic economy and urban retail. Notions of ethnic business, ethnic enterprise, and ethnic commercial activity in the literature offer various meanings, from retailing and services to manufacturing; however, it is difficult to find a standard definition for these terms, because these definitions depend on the type of economy in which a business exists.<sup>4</sup> The participation of ethnic businesses in the general urban economy generates a series of subset economies, namely the ethnic economy, the ethnic enclave economy, and the mixed economy.<sup>5</sup> Urban retail literature does not

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<sup>4</sup> There are a number of studies on “ethnic businesses” (Barrett, Jones, & McEvoy, 1996; Bates, 1993; Chan & Cheung, 1985; James & Clark, 1987; Kwon, 1990; Waldinger, 1989), “ethnic enterprise” (Li, 1992; Light, 1984; Portes & Jensen, 1989; Razin & Langlois, 1996; Walton-Roberts & Hiebert, 1997), and “ethnic commercial activity” (Wang, 1999; Yeates, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Derived from the theory of middleman minorities, an ethnic economy consists of self-employed and co-ethnic employees (Bonacich & Modell, 1980; Light, Sabagh, Bozorgmehr & Der-Martirosian, 1994; Light & Gold, 2000). An ethnic enclave economy is a specific case of ethnic economy. Derived from dual labour market literature, it refers to spatially clustered businesses with co-ethnic owners, employees, and clientele (Light et al., 1994; Light & Gold, 2000; Portes & Bach, 1985; Portes & Manning, 1986; Wilson & Portes, 1980). The most significant difference between the two is that the ethnic enclave stresses spatial clustering and co-ethnic clients. As Light, et al. (1994, p. 73) indicate, “every immigrant group or ethnic minority has an ethnic economy, but only a few have an ethnic enclave economy”. A mixed economy reflects both ethnic and non-ethnic business components, and “their markets are spatially and ethnically unbounded” (Lo

classify retail activities as “ethnic”, except for the notions of “ethnic strip” and “ethnic centre” in the typology of the urban retail system and structure (Jones, 2000).

This research examines three ethnic strips and one ethnic centre that are mainly clustered and target both co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic markets. The cultural or national background of business owners, operators, and clientele may vary and they are ethnically unbounded. Based on these considerations, the term “ethnic retail” in this study refers to a mixture of retail and service businesses that are clustered spatially and physically in the form of a strip or a centre, and represent certain ethno-cultural characteristics in their goods, services, or the physical features of their storefronts or streetscapes. Business owners, operators, and clientele may or may not be co-ethnic, but the three subset ethnic economies (ethnic, ethnic enclave, and mixed) are represented in the majority of businesses in these retail districts.

## **1.4 THESIS OUTLINE**

This thesis is presented in nine chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the major literature on immigration and links it to urban dynamics. Key theoretical approaches to ethnic entrepreneurship, urban retail, ethnic landscapes and ethnic expression are discussed; planning theory and practice in their responses to multicultural challenges are considered. The conceptual framework of this study links the literature to the research questions.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology of the thesis. It explains the research design and the case study approach employed in this study. Multiple data collection methods are presented including documentation, archival research, unobtrusive observations, participant observations, informal information interviews, key-informant, semi-structured interviews, and a consumer intercept survey. The qualitative and quantitative data analysis process is also outlined.

Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 follow a similar format in the presentation of the case studies: a community social and business profile is followed by a focus on major developments in the area, and the key players involved. Chapter 4 describes revitalization efforts in the East Chinatown retail strip in the inner-city of Toronto. It illustrates how local businesses followed a grassroots approach to improve the struggle-to-survive status

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et al., 2000, p. 12). All these types of ethnic-based business activities coexist within the general urban economy.

quo of the area by mobilizing the community's social capital and utilizing political resources. It also highlights the synergy between other key players in its development.

Chapter 5 documents the accidental nature of the development of the Gerrard India Bazaar in the inner-city of Toronto. It examines how the South Asian business community runs the area in partnership with the city by joining the Business Improvement Area program. Reasons why the area continues to stand at a crossroads in terms of its future development are explored.

Chapter 6 focuses on the ethnic succession of the residential population and commercial identity in Corso Italia as well as the consequent landscape transformation in this inner-city area of Toronto. It discusses a streetcar right-of-way dispute between local merchants and the City, and examines how the community fought for the fate of the area and different players were embroiled in the conflict.

Chapter 7 examines the suburban case of Pacific Mall that has been the centre of public controversy over land use and neighbourhood relations. Despite arguments that it is a victim of its success, the Pacific Mall is a typical example of this rapidly expanding, new retail form. A different set of players, compared to the inter city cases, were involved in the suburban milieu.

Chapter 8 compares and discusses the four case studies. It illustrates the dynamic nature of ethnic retail in both urban and suburban settings. It explores the implications of the complexity of ethnic retail for municipal planning and discusses the role of municipal planning in facilitating and managing the spatial and physical impacts of ethnic retail activities. A list of recommendations for municipal policy and practice are offered.

Chapter 9 summarizes the research findings and highlights their contribution to municipal planning theory and practice. Several suggestions for future research are provided.

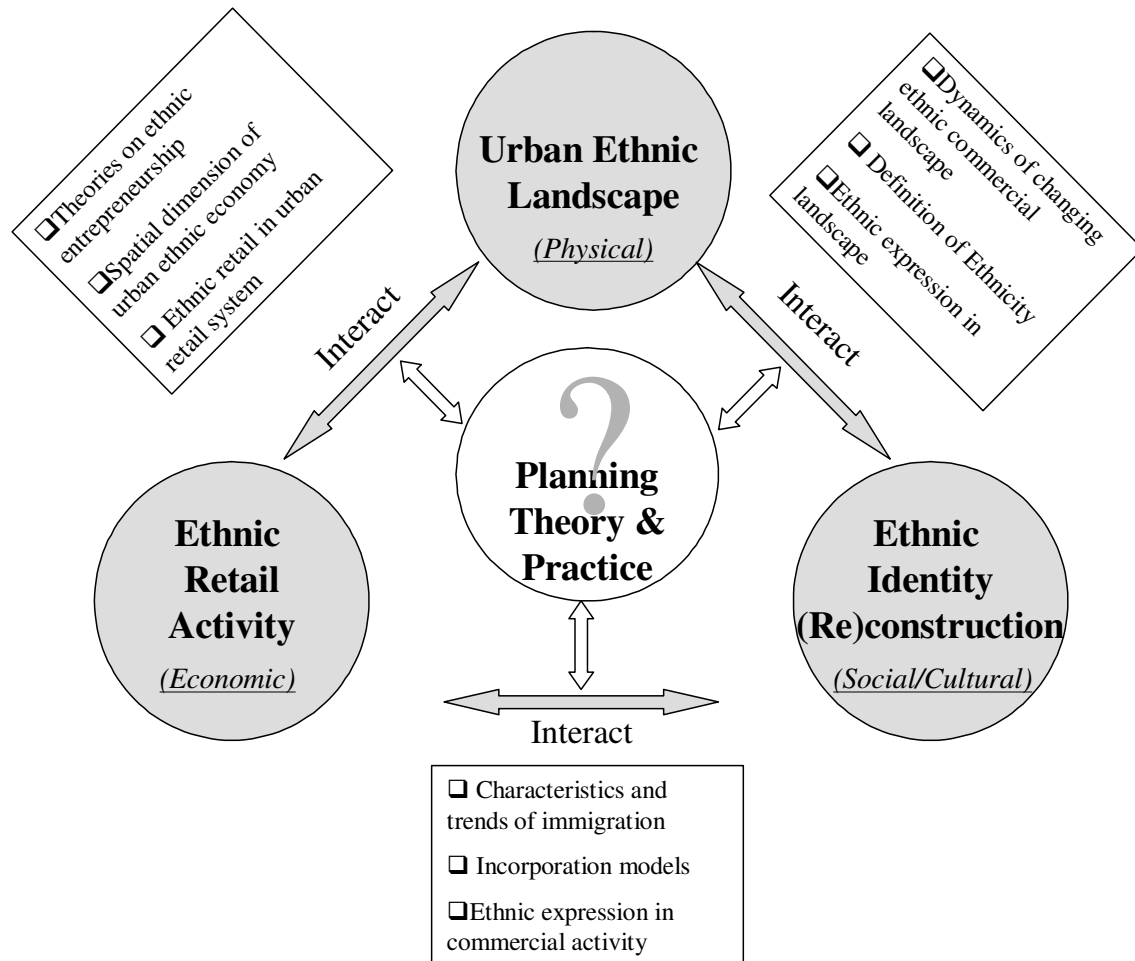


# Chapter 2 Literature Review

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The following literature review is based on the conceptual framework of the thesis (see Figure 2-1). The theoretical framework conceptualizes the interaction between three major subject areas, namely ethnic retail activities, urban ethnic landscapes, and ethnic identity re(construction); these topics represent the economic, physical, and social/cultural domains of ethnic retailing, respectively. Planning is situated at the centre of these interactions and activities and interplays with the major three subject areas; it attempts to respond to the ethnocultural dynamics beyond its constraints in theory and practice. These related topics have not been linked previously in this manner.

Figure 2-1: The Conceptual Framework



## **2.2 IMMIGRATION AND URBAN DYNAMICS**

### **2.2.1 New Trends of Immigration**

Immigration has long been a key factor in Canadian population growth, a major contributor to its economic success, as well as the reason for social change and policy concern (Bourne & Flowers, 1999; Bourne & Rose, 2001; Ley & Hiebert, 2001; Reitz, 1998b). In the past two decades, waves of immigration have dramatically changed the urban landscape of the Canada's metropolitan regions. New immigrants possess more human and economic capital than their predecessors, and choose multifarious trajectories across domestic and transnational space.

Before the 1960s, Canada's immigration policy not only played a role in the restriction of immigration quotas, but also in the exclusion of people outside the "favoured nation" list, assessing immigrants on the basis of race and national origin. During the 1960s, a new Immigration Act was introduced. For the first time in Canadian immigration history, the Act removed racial discrimination and recognized education and skills as major immigrant selection criteria. A universally adopted and non-discriminatory point system was established in 1967, whereby potential applicants received points based on their age, education, work experience, language skills, secured employment, and adaptability, regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, or sex (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1999). This was a watershed event for "new" immigration to Canada, which drew a sharp increase in the number of skilled workers with non-European background entering the country. In 1978, "in order to strengthen the economic component of immigration" (Reitz, 1998a, p. 79), a new category called "business class immigrant" was introduced, with the sub-groups of Entrepreneur, Investor, and Self-Employed. Applicants of each group had to meet different sets of requirements in terms of personal net worth, business operational experience, job creation ability, and potential contribution to the cultural or artistic life of Canada.

In addition to the benefits of population growth and economic vitality, cultural diversity is another major contribution of immigration over the past several decades (Reitz, 1998b). Before the 1960s, the major sources of immigration to Canada were European nations, such as the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, as well as the United

States. Following the changes in immigration policy, there has been an increasing influx of non-European immigrants, especially from Asia. According to the 2001 Canadian Census, of the 1.8 million immigrants who arrived between 1991 and 2001, 58% were from Asia, 20% from Europe; 11% from the Caribbean, and Central and South America; 8% from Africa; and 3% from the United States. There has been a three-fold increase in the visible minority population since 1981, and more than 200 different countries of origin were reported (Statistics Canada, 2003a). This cultural mosaic has drawn immense academic attention in the past 40 years. Immigration studies have focused on intergroup and intragroup variations in the labour market, political and economic experiences, social adaptation, and cultural integration processes (Lian & Matthews, 1998; Lo et al., 2002; Mercer & England, 2000; Murdie & Teixeira, 2000; Olson & Kobayashi, 1993; Preston & Lo, 2000; Wallace, 1999).

Another notable phenomenon of international migration is the transnational diaspora. Basch, Schiller, and Blanc (1994, p. 7) provide a general definition of “transnationalism” as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement”. Transnationalism is not new, however, current transnational movements feature multiple, circular, and return migrations, rather than the single journeys, from one space to another, characteristic of past migration movements (Foner, 1997). This new trend raises the question how transnationalism affects immigrants and the communities in which they live (Foner, 1997; Glick-Schiller, 1999; Hiebert, 2000b; Hyndman & Walton Roberts, 1999; Lie, 1995). Goldberg (in Hyndman & Walton-Roberts, 1999, p. 6) argues that immigrant communities are “dense fields consisting of people, money, goods, and information that are constituted and maintained by migrants over time, across space and through circuitry which repeatedly cross borders”. Associated with today’s transnational movement is a focus on the extent transnational ties impact the (re)construction of ethnic identities as they manifest in the Canadian urban landscape. Conventional accounts of ethnicity rely on the link between identity and place, but few mention homeland ties and resistance to national cultural hegemony as factors in ethnic group identity (Winland, 1998).

From the perspective of geographical settlement distribution, immigration has been unevenly distributed across the country. According to the 2001 Canadian Census,

94% of immigrants who arrived during the 1990s were living in Canada's census metropolitan areas, compared with 64% of the total population living in these areas. Nearly three-quarters of immigrants (73%) lived in just three "gateway cities", namely Toronto, Vancouver, and Montréal. Toronto attracted the largest share of immigrants, around 43%. In contrast, just over one-third of Canada's total population lived in these three areas (Statistics Canada, 2003a). These data show that the contemporary immigrants tend to settle in these large urban regions, rather than in smaller urban centers or rural areas as their predecessors had in the past.

The extreme concentration of recent immigrant settlement has implications for the Canadian urban system, especially in increasing differences between the large cities and small to medium sized cities. The large cities have become more heterogeneous with a growing diversity; while small and medium sized cities remain distinctly homogeneous in terms of their ethno-cultural composition. Overall, recent immigration trends have had a strong impact on the creation of a dichotomous Canadian urban system (Bourne & Rose, 2001).

### **2.2.2 Social/Spatial Settlement Process**

It is a difficult task to depict today's immigrants' settlement experiences accurately. Immigrants may follow multifarious paths and undergo unpredictable transformations in their social and economic lives. In this section I consider three major schools of thought on immigrant settlement, namely assimilation, pluralism, and heterolocalism.

The concept of assimilation was first developed in the 1920s and was defined by the Chicago school sociologists as "a process of interpenetration and fusion, in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life." (Park & Burgess, 1921, p. 735). Gordon (1964) depicts the process of assimilation in seven stages, beginning with cultural assimilation, moving through structural and marital assimilation, to the final stage of identificational assimilation, the embrace of an unhyphenated, adopted identity. The concept of assimilation was portrayed as a linear, one-path, and inevitable and irreversible process. Its homogeneity implies that in order to succeed in the host American society, immigrants across generations need to

learn how to “be American” and shed their ethnic identity (Alba & Nee, 1997; Rumbaut, 1997).

The pluralism model has prevailed since immigration shifted from Europeans to predominantly Asian and other visible minority groups in the post-1960s. An opposing ideology to the assimilationist “melting-pot” image, the major theme of the pluralist ethos is “ethnic revival”. Pluralism believes that ethnic groups have the right to maintain their cultural uniqueness and preserve their traditional heritage, instead of assimilating to the dominant culture. The “multicultural mosaic” or “cultural pluralism” is a prevalent ideal in both the social and political domains in Canada (Clairmont & Wien, 1976; Darroch, 1985; Kobayashi, 1993; Li, 1999a, 1999b; Weinfeld, 1985); however, ethnic stratification exists as is reflected in the challenging concepts of the “vertical mosaic” and the “colour mosaic”.<sup>1</sup> Canada further promoted diversity by establishing multiculturalism as a federal policy in 1971, and later implementing the Multiculturalism Act in 1988.

The Canadian version of pluralism, multiculturalism (Li, 1999b), deserves additional attention. Research evidence shows that there is a divide between ethnic individual assimilation and the contrasting image of ethnic group pluralism, which may imply there is only a symbolic importance to multiculturalism (Weinfeld, 1985). On the other hand, ethnic minority individuals may have cultural practices and maintain their distinctiveness in their private life, but when participating in public life, they must conform to the norms and practices defined by the dominant groups (Henry & Tator, 1999; Li, 1999b). Similar is what Hage (1998, p. 18) calls a “White nation” fantasy in Australia, “a fantasy of White supremacy”, “in the form of a White multiculturalism or in the form of a White racism”. If multiculturalism promotes only a sense of cultural equality, despite “inequality in the economic and political sectors”, it is “a version of assimilation” (Li, 1999b, p. 168). “Can a society maintain ethnic diversity *and* social harmony simultaneously” (Bienvenue & Goldstein, 1985, n.p.)?

Moreover, in terms of its spatial application, the concept of pluralism cannot offer

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of the “vertical mosaic” presented by Porter (1965) indicates the unequal distribution of power and privilege between the “charter groups” (the British and French) and other ethnic groups at the “entrance status”. Later scholars question whether ethnic affiliations block immigrants’ socio-economic mobility (Darroch, 1985; Lautard & Guppy, 1999). Although research findings show that inequalities are not as severe as Porter described, ethnic stratification does persist as the “colour mosaic” indicates, and visible minorities have not fared well (Lian & Matthews, 1998).

much explanation; it takes the form of racial segregation or ethnic enclaves. Pluralism's lack of actual application makes it a lofty ideal rather than a reality (Li, 1999b; Zelinsky & Lee, 1998). It is also criticized for its over-emphasis on the maintenance of ethnic distinctiveness. This ethnocentric approach may have negative effect on the relations between ethnic groups (Li, 1999b).

Zelinsky and Lee (1998) first introduced the concept of heterolocalism to better describe the socio-spatial behaviour of immigrant ethnic communities. They argue that the assimilation and pluralist models cannot provide a satisfactory explanation for the socio-spatial dynamics of recent new immigration. The term "heterolocalism" indicates that immigrant communities are not only located in a dispersed manner on a metropolitan, regional, national, or even transnational scale, they also maintain strong ethnic community ties.<sup>2</sup> This model provides an alternative explanation of the complexity and the dynamics of recent immigrants' settlement patterns and their ethnic maintenance.

Table 2-1 outlines a comparison among the three settlement models, in terms of spatial settlement patterns, location settings, ethnic ties, and typical ideology. Heterolocalism requires further specification and clarification on issues such as how ethnic "communities without propinquity" (Webber, 1964, in Zelinsky & Lee, 1998, p. 288) can maintain their ethnic ties, and how ethnically mixed communities interact; however, I agree that the heterolocalist model does allow for a better analysis of emerging immigration trends, and, in particular, can provide a spatial view of the manner in which immigrants integrate in the host society and retain their ethnic identity at the same time. Canadian research provides the groundwork for inquiry into the related issues of the role of social and spatial factors in immigrants' daily lives (Hiebert, 1993b, 2000a, 2000b; Kobayashi, 1993; Ley, 1999; Ley & Hiebert, 2001; Li, P., 1993; Lo & Wang, 1997; Mandres, 1998; Murdie & Teixeira, 2000; Ray, Halseth, & Johnson, 1997). However, no solid theoretical foundation has been formulated in this area. While the heterolocalist model is based on the studies conducted in the US, its concepts can be applied to the Canadian context, and certainly deserve more attention.

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<sup>2</sup> As the authors note, the term *heterolocal* is rooted in the Greek "heteros", meaning "other" or "different", and the Latin "locus", meaning "place". This term is intended to convey the possibility that an ethnic community can exist without significant clustering (Zelinsky & Lee, 1998, p. 285).

Table 2-1: Comparison of Immigrant Socio-spatial Settlement Models.  
 Source: Burgess, 1925; Gordon, 1964; Li, 1999b; Porter, 1965; Zelinsky & Lee, 1998.

Settlement Models	Spatial Pattern	Location Setting	Ethnic Ties	Typical Ideology
<b>Assimilation</b>	Dispersed, ecological succession along concentric zones	Metropolitan (e.g., suburban areas)	Weak	Conformity to the norms of the dominant group; diminishing ethnic distinctiveness (e.g., melting-pot)
<b>Pluralism</b>	Concentrated, racial segregation, ethnic enclaves	Metropolitan (e.g., traditional inner- center or suburban clusters)	Strong	group, collective ethnic identity maintenance (e.g., mosaic)
<b>Heterolocalism</b>	Dispersed/concentrated residences, workplaces, shopping districts and sites of social activities	Metropolitan or non-metropolitan (e.g., regional, national, or transnational)	Strong	Self-consciousness of ethnic identity; multi-ethnic intermixing

### 2.2.3 Residential Settlement Patterns

Traditionally, the inner city played an important role in immigrant settlement, as a “port of entry” and reception area for immigrants. Ethnic concentration was viewed as a way of attaining and maintaining mutual support from co-ethnic people and avoiding potential discrimination from the dominant group. Today, the inner-city is no longer a typical trajectory for immigrants, who bypass the inner city and directly settle in suburban areas; they settle either in a dispersed pattern or remain concentrated in ethnic clusters or “ethnoburbs”, a term coined by Li (1998a, 1998b). Varying degrees of concentration or segregation among groups are observed in large metropolitan regions as well (Hiebert, 2000a; Murdie & Teixeira, 2000; Qadeer, 2003; Ray et al., 1997; Ray, 1998). Furthermore, empirical studies share the notable conclusion that residential concentration or segregation is not necessarily related to social deprivation or exclusion, as previously assumed. Rather, settlement patterns are shaped by local housing markets, public policy, the degree of institutional completeness of an ethnic group, their location preference, and economic mobility (Borjas, 1997; Qadeer, 2003).<sup>3</sup>

It is obvious that current ethnic suburban dispersion is not a homogeneous process as is conceptualized by the three classic spatial models of urban form, namely the Concentric Zone Model, the Sectoral Model and the Multiple Nuclei Model; while they

<sup>3</sup> A term coined by Breton (1964), “institutional completeness” refers to the number, size, and variety of institutions that an ethnic community has developed. These institutions may include formal “organizations of various sorts: religious, educational, political, recreational, national, and even professional. ... Institutional completeness would be at its extreme whenever the ethnic community could perform all the services required by its members (p. 194).

provide a large spectrum of immigrants' settlement patterns, they do not account for the complexities and dynamics of the adaptation processes different ethnocultural groups experience. There is no sophisticated model to depict immigrants' settlement patterns, or answer "why some groups concentrate in specific areas of the city while others are widely dispersed" (Kobayashi, 1993, p. 145). In addition, ethnic groups are not internally homogeneous. Ethnic sub-groups have internal differences, such as Chinese from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the rest of the world. Their heterogeneous regional backgrounds, varying economic classes, and other factors may affect the convergence or divergence of their settlement (Lo & Wang, 1997). The inter-group and intra-group differences, in terms of settlement preferences and mobility require further exploration. Furthermore, how does residential settlement relate to ethnic entrepreneurship? Do the business locations follow residential concentration or dispersion, or vice versa? These issues are discussed further in Section 2.3.

#### **2.2.4 Debates on Immigration and Related Urban Issues**

Debates whether immigration has positive or negative effects persist. On the positive side, one can argue immigration has tremendously contributed to the population growth, attracted human capital and increased the Canadian economic capacity and social vitality. The following are some facts and figures: An annual average of approximately 170,000 immigrants arrived in Canada between 1967 and 2002, contributing a total of 6 million immigrants, and accounting for more than half of Canada's population growth (Ley & Hiebert, 2001). In the 1990s, the business investor program accumulated \$2-3 billion dollars nationally, nearly one third of which in Ontario alone. In the Toronto area, the benefit of the "brain gain" is estimated to be worth \$1.044 billion (Simich, 2000).

Negative views of immigration maintain opposing positions, in terms of societal absorption capacity, economic benefits, and social problems related to immigration. One of the key concerns is whether or not large-scale immigration matches the economic and demographic needs of the country. Curtailing immigration is the position of right-wing thinkers (Collacott, 2002, 2003; Francis, 2002; Stoffman, 1993, 2002). Second, some argue that the economic costs of immigration outweigh its benefits. The major beneficiary of immigration, they argue, is the immigration industry (e.g., immigration



lawyers, lobby groups, and services organizations), and not Canadian society as a whole. To the contrary, it adds costs to tax payers, such as resettlement services and social welfare (Collacott, 2002, 2003; Stoffman, 1993, 2002). Third, to some extent, immigration is associated with social problems, such as poverty and unemployment/underemployment. Recent immigrants have the highest unemployment rate and lower income levels than the Canadian-born population (Statistics Canada, 2003b).

In summary, the opposing sides of the immigration debate employ different sets of evidence to answer the question of whether or not immigration benefits Canadian society. While there is no clear-cut conclusion, beyond these debates, the cost-benefit relationship is not static, and is transformed either way. For example, if we criticize the unemployment rate caused by immigrants, we may ignore the fact that immigrants tend to earn more than Canadian-born individuals once they are established, and more immigrants are self-employed and start up their own businesses. If we view the influx of unqualified family class immigrants as a burden on society, we may overlook the contributions of family support and social solidarity in ethnic economies. If we consider that mass immigration pushes Canadian cities to deal with an increasing need for housing, infrastructure, and services by generating adverse urban problems (such as congestion, pollution, and sprawl), then we neglect the fact that these people have restored social, cultural and economic vitality to declining urban areas (as exemplified in the role that ethnic businesses play in urban revitalization) (Buzzelli, 2001; Lo et al., 2000; Teixeira, 1998; Winnicki, 1969).

All in all, immigrants inevitably are involved in the various aspects of urban life, socially, economically, and culturally, and cities are rebuilt as a result. If we ignore the multifaceted nature of immigration and misinterpret its cost-benefit effects on cities, we may miss the opportunity to direct positive urban growth by promoting the potential benefits and minimizing the negative influences associated with immigration. Policy makers and professionals at the forefront of urban development, such as city planners, who are key players in the facilitation and promotion of the physical growth of cities, should acknowledge the complexity of today's immigration and incorporate this knowledge in their decision making and daily practices.

## **2.3 ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ETHNIC ECONOMY**

### **2.3.1 Labour Market Participation**

Immigrants participate in the labour market in three different ways: as salaried employees, as self-employed individuals, and as entrepreneurs employing others (Lo et al., 2000). The traditional labour market segmentation theory explains the persistence of inequality in employment. Groups that are at a higher risk of being disadvantaged, such as women and minorities may have undesirable occupations, with reduced income and less status, occupations that are not equivalent to their human capital (Averitt, 1968; Bonacich, 1972; Light et al., 1994). Canadian studies confirm that ethnic origin and gender continue to affect the differentiation between immigrants and non-immigrants in the labour market (Hiebert, 1997, 1999; Lo et al., 2000). The 2001 Canadian Census data are generally consistent with these findings. The following are four notable points:

First, immigrants have been a major source of labour in Canada. During the 1990s, they represented almost 70% of the total growth in the Canadian labour force (Statistics Canada, 2003b). Second, the gap in labour market conditions between recent immigrants and Canadian born workers continues to persist.<sup>4</sup> In 2001, only 65.8% of recent immigrants aged 25 to 44 were employed, compared with the rate of 81.8% among their Canadian born counterparts; their unemployment rate was twice that of the Canadian born in that age range (12.1% compared with 6.4%) (Statistics Canada, 2003b). Third, gender continues to be a factor in the labour market participation of immigrants. Female immigrants in the 1990s faced tougher labour market conditions than men; there was a larger gap in their employment rate compared to their Canadian born counterparts. In contrast, between 1991 and 2001 the gap between male, recent immigrants and the Canadian-born workers decreased. Fourth, in terms of occupations, the proportion of highly-skilled recent immigrants has increased dramatically, and immigrants are over-represented in a number of occupations, such as information technology, accounting, as well as engineering and the natural sciences.<sup>5</sup> However, the majority of immigrants continue to work in lower skilled occupations. In 2001, 24% of recent immigrants aged

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<sup>4</sup> According to Statistics Canada (2003b), “recent immigrants” refers to those who immigrated to Canada in the 5 years preceding the census, excluding the census year itself, e.g., recent immigrants in 1996 were those who immigrated from 1991 to 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Highly skilled occupations normally require a university education (Statistics Canada, 2003b).

25 to 44 were employed in highly skilled occupations, compared to 43% in low-skilled occupations (Statistics Canada, 2003b).<sup>6</sup>

Ethnic entrepreneurship is another analytic focus in the area of labour market participation. It has been demonstrated that immigrants have more of a propensity for self-employment and entrepreneurship than their non-immigrant counterparts (Lo et al., 2000, 2002; Qadeer, 1999; Razin & Langlois, 1996). Immigrant entrepreneurial behaviors are discussed next.

### **2.3.2 Theories on Ethnic Entrepreneurship**

Four theories of ethnic entrepreneurship can offer explanations of entrepreneurial behaviours and business strategies among different ethnic groups: 1.) the “cultural thesis” emphasizes the cultural characteristics and resources that promote immigrant success in business, referred to as ethnic resources (e.g., ethnic networks, group size and solidarity, family support, cultural values, etc.) and class resources (e.g., human capital, socio-economic status, income and assets, education, business skills, etc.) (Bonacich & Modell, 1980; Light, 1972; Light & Rosenstein, 1995a; Light & Gold, 2000; Waldinger et al., 1990). 2.) the notion of “opportunity structures” refers to both positive and negative factors that promote ethnic entrepreneurship. Protected market conditions and government policies create a positive environment for ethnic businesses; negative notions are attributed mainly to blocked social mobility and racial discrimination (Light, 1972; Light & Bonacich, 1988; Waldinger et al., 1990). 3.) the “interactive model” emphasizes the interaction between group characteristics and opportunity structures, resulting in the emergence of ethnic strategies. This model highlights the social embeddedness of ethnic entrepreneurship (Light & Rosenstein, 1995b; Waldinger et al., 1990). 4.) the most recent concept, “mixed embeddedness”, moves the discussion of ethnic entrepreneurship into the broader, political-institutional dimension; it emphasizes the influences of laws, regulatory practices, and public institutions (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Rath, 2000, 2007; Rath & Kloosterman, 2000).

Extensive empirical studies in the US reveal the multifarious dimensions of ethnic entrepreneurial behaviours among different ethnic groups and across various

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<sup>6</sup> Low-skilled occupations normally require a high school diploma or less (Statistics Canada, 2003b).

metropolitan areas, such as the multi-ethnic garment trade and other businesses in New York City (Waldinger, 1986, 1989), Cuban and Haitian ethnic economies in Miami (Portes & Bach, 1985; Portes & Stepick, 1993), Korean small businesses in Los Angeles and New York (Bates, 1993; Kwon, 1990; Lee, 1992, 1995; Light & Bonacich, 1988), the Chinatown enclave in New York City (Zhou & Logan, 1989; Zhou, 1992), Japanese business communities in the west coast (Bonacich & Modell, 1980), the Chinese ethnoburb in Los Angeles (Li, 1998a, 1998b), Chinese ethnic economies in New York and Los Angeles (Zhou, 1998a, 1998b), Iranian businesses in Los Angeles (Light, et al., 1994), Asian and Middle Eastern restaurant businesses in Milwaukee (Bratina, 2002a, 2002b), and Indochinese business expansion in Saint Paul (Kaplan, 1997).

In contrast, Canadian literature regarding ethnic entrepreneurship in metropolitan areas is scant, with the exception of a number of studies focusing on certain ethnic groups and market niches from a cross-cultural or cross-metropolitan perspective (Chan & Cheung, 1985; Cheung, 1999; Hiebert, 1993a, 1993b; Li, P., 1992, 1993; Li & Li, 1999; Lo et al., 2000, 2002; Marger, 1989; Marger & Hoffman, 1992; Preston & Lo, 2000; Qadeer, 1998, 1999; Razin & Langlois, 1996; Teixeira, 1998; Walton-Roberts & Hiebert, 1997; Wang, 1999). Research findings in both the US and Canada reveal the multifaceted nature of ethnic entrepreneurship.

It is evident that entrepreneurial behaviours and business success vary among different ethnic groups; these variations are dependent on the business strategies they adopt, the degree of community unity, group values, the general political and economic climate, and policies in the metropolitan area of settlement, as well as the degree of their involvement in the global economy. In addition, although it may be intangible, the expression of ethnicity is embedded and maintained in ethnic entrepreneurial behaviours, co-ethnic business networks, as well as in ethnic group solidarity (Bonacich, et al., 1980; Lee, 1995; Light et al., 1994; Portes, 1995; Waldinger, 1989).

### **2.3.3 Spatial Dimension of Ethnic Economy**

The participation of ethnic businesses in the general urban economy generates a series of subset economies, namely the ethnic economy, the ethnic enclave economy, and the mixed economy. According to the theory of middleman minorities, an “ethnic

economy” consists of self-employed and co-ethnic employees (Bonacich & Modell, 1980; Light et al., 1994; Light & Gold, 2000). An “ethnic enclave economy”—a concept derived from dual labor market literature—is a specific kind of ethnic economy; it refers to spatially clustered businesses with co-ethnic owners, employees, and clientele (Light et al., 1994; Light & Gold, 2000; Portes & Bach, 1985; Portes & Manning, 1986; Wilson & Portes, 1980). The most significant difference between an ethnic economy and an ethnic enclave economy is that the latter stresses spatial clustering and co-ethnic clients. As Light et al. (1994, p. 73) note, “every immigrant group or ethnic minority has an ethnic economy, but only a few have an ethnic enclave economy”. A “mixed economy” reflects both ethnic and non-ethnic business components, and “their markets are spatially and ethnically unbounded” (Lo et al., 2000, p. 12).<sup>7</sup> There has been insufficient consideration of the spatial dimension of the ethnic economy in the literature (Lo et al., 2000; Kaplan, 1998a, 1998b). In fact space and place are important factors in ethnic entrepreneurship and its related activities; business location choices are strongly related to the co-ethnic or non-ethnic population who generate market demands and supplies.

Portes’ theory of ethnic enclave economy stresses the importance of the physical concentration of co-ethnic entrepreneurs, employees, and clientele in a “territorially-clustered business core” (Light et al., 1994, p. 77). Portes espouses this type of economy as “concentrated networks of ethnic firms that offers economic advancements by creating jobs and opportunities for entrepreneurship” (Portes & Jensen, 1992, p. 419). Portes, along with a number of colleagues, illustrate this in a number of empirical studies of Cubans and Mexicans in Miami, Jews in Manhattan, Japanese on the West Coast, and Koreans in Los Angeles (Portes & Bach, 1985; Portes & Manning, 1986; Portes & Jensen, 1987, 1989, 1992; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990; Portes & Stepick, 1993). Others redefine ethnic enclaves and argue that they are associated with residences rather than workplaces, despite “the conceptual vagueness of its boundary” (Nee & Sanders, 1994, p. 850); moreover, there are higher returns for human capital outside the enclave economy—though the gender inequality continues to exist—which can lead to the growth of a mixed economy (Sanders & Nee, 1987, 1992; Nee & Sanders, 1994; Zhou & Logan,

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<sup>7</sup> From this point on I use the term “ethnic economy” to refer to these three types of subset economies, namely ethnic, ethnic enclave, and mixed economies, unless otherwise specified. .

1989).

From a geographical perspective, Kaplan (1998b, p. 494) illustrates four general ways in which spatial concentration can have a positive impact on ethnic businesses: 1.) Incubator effects: A protected market is created by the proximity of ethnic businesses to residential concentration. . 2.) Linkage effects: close proximity among ethnic businesses “facilitates linkages between coethnic suppliers and coethnic customers”. 3.) Agglomeration effects: Agglomeration economies facilitate opportunities for new ethnic businesses. 4.) Focus effects: a concentrated ethnic economy can act as a focal point serving a residentially dispersed ethnic community. Two of these forms refer to the relationship between a concentrated ethnic economy and the residential patterns (concentrated or dispersed) of an ethnic community.

Li (1998a, 1998b), based on her study of the Chinese community in Los Angeles, proposes a new model of ethnic settlement, the “ethnoburb”. The author describes the ethnoburbs as follows:

Ethnoburbs can be recognized as suburban clusters of residential areas and business districts in large metropolitan areas, especially in those “global cities”. Ethnoburbs are multiethnic communities, in which one ethnic minority group has a significant concentration, but does not necessarily comprise a majority.... The establishment of the ethnoburb overlaid an ethnic economy onto a local mainstream economy, which was then transformed into a global economic outpost and direct target for international capital investment, making the ethnoburb a vital area of economic activities and job opportunities. (Li, 1998b, p. 504)

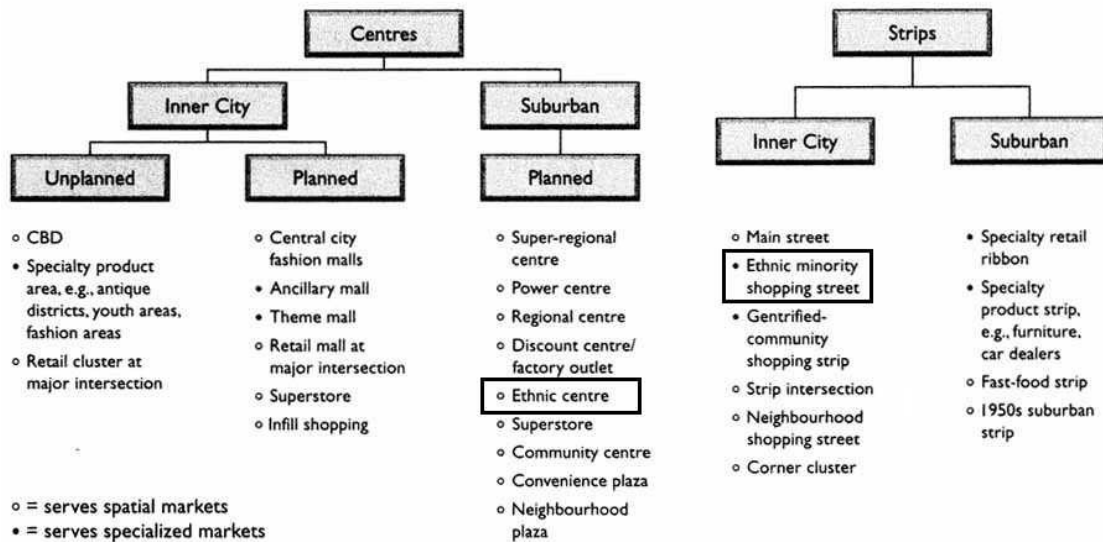
Although this model may not be generalizable to other ethnic groups or metropolitan areas, its potential for understanding how the ethnic economy channels the local or even global economies deserves further exploration, especially with the growing transnational movement of immigrants in society today (Basch et al., 1994; Foner, 1997; Glick-Schiller, 1999; Hiebert, 2000b; Hyndman & Walton-Roberts, 1999; Lie, 1995; Winland, 1998). In addition, this clustering settlement pattern once again points to the heterogeneous nature of the suburban dispersal of ethnic communities.

### **2.3.4 Ethnic Retail in the Urban Retail System**

Moving away from “ethnic” perspectives, how are ethnic commercial activities realized in the broader scope of the general market? Based on Toronto as an example, Yeates (2000) refers to ethnic commercial activities as sub-markets in the mainstream

commercial structure. What are the components of the urban retail system, and how do they reflect ethnic commercial activity? The following diagram (Figure 2-2) developed by Jones and Simmons (Jones, 2000; Jones & Simmons, 1993), clearly shows the genealogy of the urban retail system; it comprises “two distinct and competing retailing systems—the planned shopping center hierarchy and the remaining unplanned retail areas” (Jones, 2000, p. 404). Within this framework, ethnic retail takes place in the planned suburban ethnic centres and the ethnic shopping strips in inner cities.

Figure 2-2: A Typology of the Contemporary Urban Retail System  
Source: Jones, 2000, p. 417.



Note: In this classification the term 'planned' refers to a retail environment that is developed, designed, and managed as a unit and where the tenancy and common areas are under corporate control.

In terms of ethnic centres, a new suburban development pattern has emerged in Canada over the past two decades. Notably, the Chinese shopping centres are by far the most prominent and rapidly growing example of this pattern in the suburban metropolitan areas. Yet, no other ethnic groups have followed in these footsteps, despite the sizable populations of some groups, such as the Italian immigrants (Qadeer, 1998). This new type of ethnic development is attributed to sufficient capital as well as strong market demand and supply. With over one million people, the Chinese are the largest group of ethnic minorities in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003a). Having built a strong community with high degree of institutional completeness, Chinese entrepreneurs and consumers are able to sustain a more self-sufficient economy (Qadeer, 1997; Wang, 1999). In addition, a new type of Asian-based Chinese corporate investment and business class immigrants

both inject large amounts of surplus capital into the local Canadian market (Li, 1993).

Some of the features that distinguish these ethnic centres from mainstream shopping centre developments include: condominium ownership (vs. leasehold), the absence of conventional anchors, a catalytic development strategy<sup>8</sup>, variable store hours (vs. traditional norms and practices)<sup>9</sup>, and different site layout (e.g., smaller store size) (Preston & Lo, 2000; Qadeer, 1998; Wang, 1999). These distinctions from conventional retailing have caused a series of conflicts regarding land use in the planning system and public concern. Conventional retail planning policies tend to use a hierarchical system to classify shopping centres at the neighbourhood, community, and regional levels based on several criteria, such as floor areas, store numbers, market size and sales (Jones, 2000, 2005; Jones & Simmons, 1993; Yeates, 1998, 2000).<sup>10</sup> However, when planning ethnic malls, this hierarchical system is irrelevant in determining parking standards, retail sizes and uses, retail facilities (e.g., anchor stores), and retail forms. In summary, the realization and evolution of a new type of ethnic centre development depends on a number of important factors, such as national immigration policy, the population size of an ethnic group, the degree of institutional completeness, group capital accumulation, and how the planning system facilitates the new retail forms.

Another type of ethnic business is the ethnic retail strip. In general, ethnic strips have evolved through the following stages: first serving as entry points for new immigrants, then turning into neighbourhood centres serving daily ethnic needs, and finally, catering to an ethnic population throughout the metropolitan area or even becoming tourist attractions (Jones, 2000; Jones & Simmons, 1993). In a study of retail strips conducted in the former Metropolitan Toronto, now the City of Toronto, among a total of 170 retail strips, with 15,400 stores, around 19% were reported to be ethnic-oriented (Sinopoli, 1996). The largest ethnic orientation was Chinese (5.4%), followed by Italian (4.9%); others were much smaller. Considering the high ratio of the ethnic component, ethnic strips play an important role in a society that is much more diverse

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<sup>8</sup> Catalytic development strategy is a development sequence in which a major regional shopping centre predates residential development and may serve as a community focal point. A catalytic strategy was employed for shopping centre development in North American cities in the 1970s (Jones, 2000; Jones & Simmons, 1993). Now it is adopted in Chinese ethnic centre development.

<sup>9</sup> Traditionally, stores close on Sundays and for a half-day during the week (Yeates, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> In planning, the hierarchy was applied effectively to regulate “the spatial arrangement and growth of the suburban shopping centre network that evolved in major Canadian cities between 1960 and 1980” (Jones, 2005, p. 73).



compared to two decades ago.

## **2.4 CHANGING ETHNIC RETAIL LANDSCAPES**

In Groth's interpretation of cultural landscape studies, the term "landscape" depicts "more than a pleasing view of scenery. It denotes the interaction of people and place" (Groth, 1997, p. 1). In a multicultural society, this interaction between people and place has a profound imprint on the urban fabric, in the diverse ethnocultural practices that occur everyday. The formation and (re)construction of the landscape reflect the needs, the values, the cultural identities, the social norms and the interactions of ethnic people with the environment. By tracing the changing urban landscape, both spatially and physically, we can gain a better understanding of how and why it has come into being. For planning agencies, it is important to gain knowledge regarding the nature of the multicultural mosaic, in order to better accommodate difference and diversity.

### **2.4.1 The Ethnic Urban Landscapes**

The study of urban, ethnic, commercial landscapes in North America is limited, and the need for a comprehensive understanding continues to be neglected (Buzzelli, 2001; Groth, 1997; Hayden, 1991; Noble, 1992; Upton, 1986). Pre-WWII ethnic communities and their residential settlement, as well as vernacular architecture in semi-rural settings have received much attention (Noble, 1992; Upton, 1986; Yip, 1997). However, the imprint of new waves of immigration upon urban landscapes has yet to be explored extensively. One of the major reasons for this gap in the literature is the dominant assimilationist assumption that immigrants adopt the norms and practices of the dominant group soon after their settlement, while their ethnic distinctiveness is minimized through the assimilation process (Buzzelli, 2001). Zelinsky (1991), who questioned the authenticity of ethnic landscapes, describes them as "exotic tidbits", and pseudo "visual fakery" (p. 34-35). His insistence on a uniform assimilated landscape was highlighted in his notion of "one national culture" (Zelinsky, 1992).<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to this view of uniformity, other scholars explore the diversity of ethnic landscapes. Hayden (1991) defines four elements of ethnic urban landscapes,

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<sup>11</sup> However, six years later, Zelinsky's concept of "heterolocalism", indicates he has changed his views on immigration, and has moved beyond the two models of assimilation and pluralism (see Zelinsky & Lee, 1998).

including vernacular buildings, ethnic spatial patterns, ethnic vernacular arts traditions, and territorial histories. She promotes the use of urban public history to gain a better understanding of minorities' social lives and their imprints on urban landscapes (Hayden, 1995, 1997).

Another noteworthy point in the discussion of ethnic landscapes is ethnic succession. The earlier immigrant groups from the British Isles and France (the “founding nations”) created dominant forms and buildings structures long before the “new” immigrants arrived. Later when newcomers inherited the existing neighbourhoods, hybrid forms emerged; these forms normally blend ethnic distinctiveness in the existing landscape and create new ones, such as the transformation of Little Britain into Little Italy in Toronto (Buzzelli, 2001) and the east-meets-west style of Chinatowns across North America (Lai, 1988, 1997). Although there may not be many changes in the structure, form, and material of the building per se, rich ethnic identity can transform and be expressed through occupancy, spatial use patterns, aesthetics, decorations, and the meaning attached to even minor changes (Conzen, 1990). Of course, succession may “involve both pride and tension” (Buzzelli, 2001, p. 573; Lo et al., 2000).

Ethnic successions and the changes of ethnic landscapes contribute to the revitalization of urban areas. The examples of Italian, Portuguese, and Chinese community experiences in Toronto demonstrate that although these groups of people “invaded” different neighbourhoods, the new ethnic businesses and communities continue to sustain the economic vitality of these areas and redefine the characters of the neighbourhoods (Buzzelli, 2001; Lo et al., 2000; Teixeira, 1998; Winnicki, 1969). Previous strategies of downtown revitalization have given little thought to the potential role of immigrant businesses and communities. They are an untapped resource for the revitalization and identity reformulation of declining urban areas.

## **2.4.2 Major Changes**

### **2.4.2.1 Spatial locus**

The earlier immigrants, who arrived before the suburbanization movement in the 1960s, tended to concentrate with co-ethnic people within the spatially defined inner-city boundaries. Mixed neighbourhoods, where one ethnic group was adjacent to another, were also very common in the early stages of immigration, as is exemplified in the

diversity described in Chicago till the late 1950s (Royko in Birdsall & Florin, 1992)<sup>12</sup>, in Toronto (Harney, 1985) and in Cleveland (Noble, 1992, p. 21)<sup>13</sup>, though different groups may have had varying degrees of segregation. These neighbourhoods were normally a place of work, residence, worship, and leisure for co-ethnic people, like the Ward and the Kensington Market in Toronto, and Little Tokyo in Los Angeles (Harney, 1985; Hayden, 1995; Hiebert, 1993a, 1993b; Wallace, 1999).

Later, the suburbanization process in the 1960s began to dominate immigrant settlement patterns. Earlier immigrants tended to move away from inner city, and new immigrants landed directly in suburban areas, by-passing the inner city. In light of the transition from a “multiple clusters model” to the emerging “ethnoburb”, Li (1993, 1998a, 1998b) proposes a new model of concentrated settlement. Some ethnic groups have higher degrees of spatial proximity between their businesses and residences, such as Jews and Chinese (Hiebert, 1993b; Kobayashi, 1993; Lo et al., 2000; Marger & Hoffman, 1992; Thompson, 1989). The Chinese settled in the “depressed but quiet bedroom community in the 1970s” and transformed it into “a bustling ethnic business centre today” (Zhou, 1998a, p. 235). Jews moved their institutions with them when they relocated in the suburbs (Thraves, in Olson & Kobayashi, 1993). For other groups, their businesses continue to maintain a traditional core that serves a spatially dispersed co-ethnic population, like Koreatown in Los Angeles (Lee, 1995), and Little Portugal in Toronto (Teixeira, 1998).

#### **2.4.2.2 Function and form**

The traditional immigrant focal points in the inner city played an important role as ports of entry, reception centres, or Little Homelands at the very beginning. The ethnic businesses mainly served the neighbourhood’s basic needs of daily life (Gale, 1972; Jones, 2000; Jones & Simmons, 1993), such as laundry and groceries. With the growth of the ethnic community and consequent increases in its demands, the functions of these ethnic businesses became more diversified and expanded into various retail and service sectors, such as specialty retailing, food and beverage services, personal and household

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<sup>12</sup> “The neighbourhood-towns were part of larger ethnic states. To the north of the Loop was Germany. To the northwest Poland. To the west were Italy and Israel. To the southwest were Bohemia and Lithuanina. And to the south was Ireland”. (Royko in Birdsall & Florin, 1992, p. 153)

<sup>13</sup> A map of ethnic neighbourhoods in Cleveland in 1960 shows the concentration of at least ten ethnic groups in the inner city area, including Black, Italian, Czech, Polish, Chicano, and Hungarian communities.

services, recreational services, production services, and business services. Some of the business focal points have become tourist attractions (Jones, 2000; Jones & Simmons, 1993), such as Chinatown, Kensington Market, Little Italy, and Greektown in Toronto; these areas have more specialized functions in relation to the tourist industry, and are more ethnically oriented. Some of the uses and designs of the open space in these areas are consistent with ethnic themes, including street furniture (e.g., map-of-Italy shaped street lamps in Little Italy in Toronto, or lantern shaped lamps in Chinatown), sidewalk stalls, and festival space. Overall, changes in business type and function inevitably impact store facades, window displays, signage, decoration treatments, as well as the atmosphere of the neighbourhood. Thus the commercial landscape is diversified and fluid.

The suburban ethnic commercial activities tend to manifest in the form of ethnic centres or shopping malls. They normally have a community or regional appeal for customers. In terms of their forms, they are mainly “modernist boxy buildings” (Qadeer, 1998, p3), and lack significant traditional design; these retail forms are barely distinguishable as “ethnic” based on the form and style of the building exterior, except for signage, window displays, or interior decorations.

#### **2.4.3 (Re)construction and Expression of Ethnicity**

There have been numerous studies of ethnicity in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and psychology, since 1960s (Barth, 1969; Eriksen, 1993; Geertz, 1973; Inglis, 2000; Jenkins, 1996; Phinney, 2000; Phinney et al., 2001). From an anthropological perspective, the most enduring debate in this area is between the constructionist instrumental model and the essentialist primordial model. Barth (1969, p. 13) defines ethnicity as the “social organization of culture difference”, implying not only the changing nature of cultural differences, but also the boundaries that differentiate “us” and “them”. Geertz (1973) argues that ethnicity is a primordial, essentially unchanging personal identity that is ratified socially and collectively. Set apart from this debate, in this thesis I follow Jenkins’ (1996, p. 810-811) interpretation and understand “ethnicity” as a social identity of cultural differentiation constructed in social interaction; it is “both collective and individual, externalized in social interaction and internalized in personal

self-awareness”. Thus, it is neither fixed nor unchanging.

Contemporary studies have expanded their focus beyond the definition of ethnicity to the relationships between ethnicity and city culture, culture and economy, local economy and globalization, among others. Specific research topics vary from cuisine to fashion, from consumption behaviors to marketing strategies, from Disneyfication to symbolism, from city culture to commercialized expression, and from tourism to global economy (Abizadeh & Ghalam, 1994; Conzen, 1990; Cook, Crang & Thorpe, 1999; Dwyer & Crang, 2002; Halter, 2000; Jackson, 2002; Koc & Welsh, 2002; Zelinsky, 1985; Zukin, 1995). A review of some of the terms used in the titles of these studies, including “fashioning ethnicities”, “shopping for identity: the marketing of ethnicity”, “ethnicity on the land”, “practising identities”, reveals a strong message that ethnicity has become fashionable—“ethnic chic” (Jackson, 2002), and marketable because diversity “sells” (Dwyer & Crang, 2002).

The reasons for these findings are twofold. First, with the dramatic social changes of the latter half of previous century, such as the civil rights movement, human rights legislation, increased international travel and consumption, racial discrimination has decreased and ethnic goods “have become a part of daily fare for the mainstream public” (Qadeer, 1999, p. 4). As the international cultural goods giant Hallmark promotes and labels it, this era is the “Age of Multiculturalism” (Halter, 2000, p. 65). Second, based on this awareness and sensitivity to multi-culture, ethnicity has become associated with commodity and economy. “Culture” and “Commerce” are no longer seen as dualistic objects, but as an encompassing “commercial culture” that commodifies difference (Jackson, 2002). As Zukin (1995, p. 180) argues, cultural production has become the “symbolic economy” of the city.

What are the implications of above discussion to the ethnic commercial landscape, which contains more tangible and symbolic meanings of ethnicity, and has more direct relations to commerce and economy? Before the studies of ethnicity flourished, the earlier ethnic landscape was deeply marked with racial scars. Anderson (1988, 1991) describes Vancouver’s Chinatown as an expression of racial discourse. Other studies share similar accounts, such as the devastated fate of Little Tokyo in Vancouver and Los Angeles in 1940s (Hayden, 1997; Olson & Kobayashi, 1993), and

Chinatown in Toronto in 1960s (Cho & Leigh, 1972; Thompson, 1989; Winnicki, 1969). These communities were treated as sacrifices to political oppression or urban renewal.

In contrast, cultural pluralism evokes the revival of ethnic expression in today's ethnic commercial landscapes. In a way, the symbolism expressed in the ethnic businesses strengthens and reinforces ethnicity and demonstrates the notion of "ethnic revival". Meanwhile, ethnicity also sells as a commodity because of the "ethnic chic", which has become attractive to the cultural ideology of the mainstream public. Ethnicities manifested in urban retail landscapes are multiple and fluid, and are constructed both internally and externally.

## **2.5 THE PLANNING RESPONSE: THEORY AND PRACTICE**

Planning for a multicultural society is not new, however, great challenges remain and there are several outstanding questions. How can planning accommodate immigrant settlement and integration and address the needs of ethnic minorities, while balancing city-wide interests? In particular, how can planning operate in a way that is more responsive to local ethnic retail development while maintaining a planning vision for the community at large? Is there a planning template for ethnic retail? To what extent can the pursuit of economic growth, reflected in planning approaches, also maximize social benefits for ethnic communities? Planning literature has yet to address these critical issues sufficiently. In the following sections I explore existing literature on planning theory and practice, and highlight the major gaps this thesis addresses.

### **2.5.1 Planning Theories and Planning Models**

Planning theory covers a variety of disciplines with no clear boundaries, thus it is hard to define and generalize (Campbell & Fainstein, 1996; Hudson, 1979). Friedmann (1987) categorizes planning approaches into four traditions, social reform, social mobilization, social learning and policy analysis. Due to internal contradictions within these traditions, Friedmann suggests a link between knowledge and action, a radical practice. Campbell and Fainstein (1996, p. 11) argue that public interest is the dominant theme of planning theory, because it determines "when, why and how planners should intervene, and the constraints they face in the process".

Although there are few planning theories directly linked to immigration

settlement, there are several planning models worth noting, namely the advocacy, the transactive, and the communicative planning models. In general, these models are theoretical reformulations of the predominant rational comprehensive model of the 1950s, which has been criticized as being simplistic, technocratic, unrealistic, and that it disregards different values and interests (Hudson, 1979). This rational model views planners as experts who can solve social problems with new technological skills and scientific and rational analyses.

The advocacy planning model acknowledges that there is no single public interest, but a plural society. This model addresses the needs of marginalized groups, like the poor. It suggests that planners should act as public defenders on behalf of special interest groups and pursue social justice (Davidoff, 1965). As Davidoff advocates there should be “a shift from land-use to social-economic planning”, and a shift in the planner’s identity “from the objective technocrat...to the engaged, social advocate” (Campbell & Fainstein, 1996, p. 263).

The transactive planning model focuses on public participation that is realized in face-to-face transactional discussions between planners and community members. It is believed that public participation can help achieve the goal of “good planning” (Friedmann, 1981; Hudson, 1979). According to this model, interpersonal dialogues instead of quantitative surveys and scientific data analyses ensure the effectiveness of mutual learning and the planning process.

The communicative planning model acknowledges that communication is at the center of planning and strives to make planning decisions as unbiased as possible (Forester, 1989). This positions planners as mediators rather than technocrats or experts. The communication process creates an open ground for public input, and also plays a role in influencing public action. This model requires planners to use a set of communication skills to obtain first-hand information and to correct distortions.

These three models have raised alternative voices in terms of ways to obtain data and information, redefining planners’ roles, encouraging public participation, and channeling the theory into practice. The usefulness of these models can be determined in relation to the why and how planners recognize immigrants’ needs and serve their communities.

Since the 1980s, another major theoretical debate has dominated planning discourse concerning postmodernism (Beauregard, 1989, 1990; Cooke, 1988; Harvey, 1989; Milroy, 1990; Sandercock, 1997; Yiftachel, 1995; Zukin, 1988). According to a postmodern view, today's society reflects "the realities of a post-Fordist political economy and postmodern cultural sensibilities", and is far beyond "the modernist quest for control" (Beauregard, 1989, p. 386-387). Postmodernism flourishes in various areas such as the arts, architecture, literature, and social theory. It addresses the interpretation of meaning in these fields and in social life in general (Cooke, 1988; Harvey, 1989; Jencks, 1991; Klotz, 1985; Knox, 1994; Zukin, 1988). In planning, postmodernism refers to the rejection of universal standards, homogeneous cultural values, top-down political economy control, and unitary urban form. It pursues pluralism, diversity, difference, flexibility, contextual meaning, complexity, and contradiction. In this light, postmodernism provides theoretical support for the discussion of multiculturalism (Campbell & Fainstein, 1996; Qadeer, 1994).

Despite the prevalence of postmodern discourse, planning practice continues to be influenced, to a large extent, by the modernist tradition. As a result, it is suspended "between modernity and postmodernity" (Beauregard, 1989, p. 382). How can planning practice respond to multicultural challenges with this ambiguity? The following figure (Figure 2-3) compares the modernist tradition and postmodern planning practice, and illustrates existing modernist influences that impact the intersection of planning practice with multicultural issues.

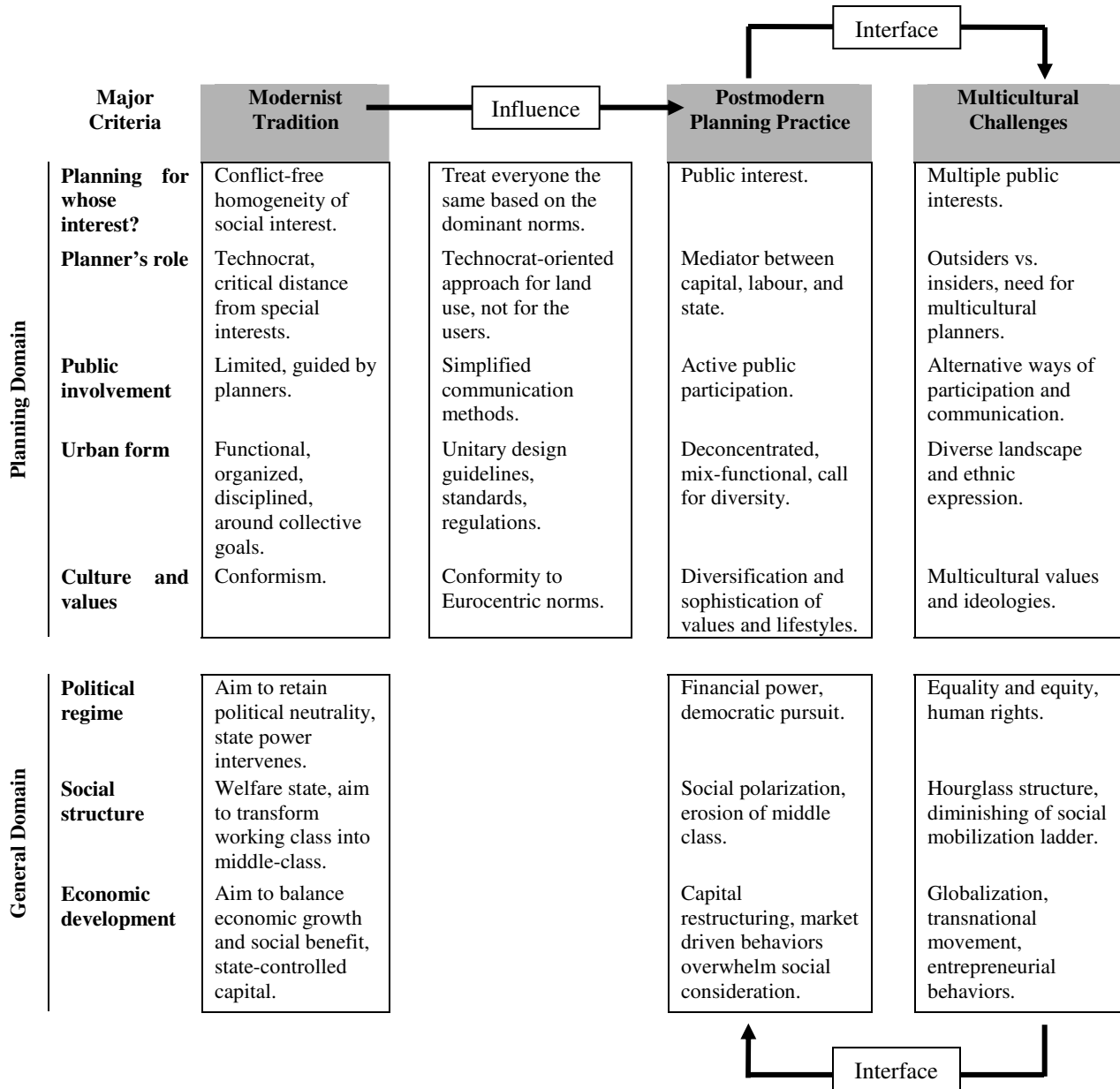
### **2.5.2 Planning Practice in a Postmodern Multicultural Society**

Immigration has long been involved in city building and planning practice. The example of Montréal from 1851 to 1986 vividly demonstrates this in that the amount of building permits issued in the city corresponds with the ebb and flow of immigration waves (Kobayashi, 1993). In western Canada, the earlier Ukrainian homesteads were deeply affected by the regulations of the Dominion Lands Act that divided their old world social networks in a dispersed geographical setting. The "crossroads community" came into being as a result, "where four settlers located their farms where their quarter-sections met at the junction of four sections" (Lehr, 1990, p. 270). The increasing diversity of today's immigrants has provided a more complex setting for planning through



interwoven social, cultural, economic, and political frameworks.

Figure 2-3: Modernist Tradition and Postmodern Reality: Planning Practice and Multicultural Challenges  
 Source: Beauregard, 1989; Campbell and Fainstein, 1996; Davidoff, 1965; Fillion, 1998; Friedmann, 1987; Harvey, 1989; Hudson, 1979; Sandercock, 1997.



### 2.5.2.1 The practitioners' response

As Figure 2-3 shows, contemporary planning practice is influenced by the modernist traditions on the one hand, and challenged by the multicultural reality on the other. How can the planning system accommodate the cultural differences expressed in urban spaces and meet the diverse social and economic needs of immigrants? Is the

planning profession sufficiently prepared for an increasingly diverse and complex society? Related research in Canada is limited, with the exception of a number of exploratory studies by scholars and university graduates (Ameyaw, 2000; Edgington & Hutton, 2001; Germain & Gagnon, 2003; Hoernig, 2006; Lee, 2002; Mandres, 1993; Pfeifer, 1999; Qadeer, 1994, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2003, 2005; Wallace, 1999, 2000; Wallace & Frisken, 2000; 2004; Wallace & Milroy, 1999, 2001; Yap, 2007). Studies conducted in other immigrant receiving countries, such as Britain, the US, and Australia also provide useful insights (Burayidi, 2000, 2003; Dunn, 2001; Madden, 1981; Neill & Schwedler, 2001; RTPI, 1983; Sandercock, 1996, 1997, 2000; Sen & Bell, 2001; Thomas, 1992, 1995, 1997; Thomas & Krishnarayan, 1994; Thompson, 2003; Watson & Gibson, 1995; Watson & McGillivray, 1995). Based on these research findings, planning practitioners' typical responses to multicultural challenges can be divided into three types, excluding discrimination as a conscious factor. Their approaches demonstrate varying degrees of ignorance or insensitivity to ethnocultural diversity in their practice.

First is the technocrat-oriented approach. This modernist planning norm is still present among some planners, who view their role as technicians dealing with land use but not land users, planning for buildings but not for people (Gans, 1968; RTPI, 1983; Sandercock, 1996, 2000; Thomas, 1995). Ethnicity and cultural practices are not taken into account in their everyday practice. As Wallace (2000, p. 20) points out, "most planners see immigration as standing outside their area of responsibility, and consider their work to be technical, not cultural". This attitude of cultural insensitivity reflects the deep influence of the modernist rational planning approach.

Second, is the widespread misconceived approach of uniform treatment for ethnic minorities. The most common argument among planners is that "I want to treat everyone in the same way, regardless of race and ethnicity, from the neutral and fair position of a planner". However, this treatment is likely to be "unequal and may well be unlawful discrimination" (RTPI, 1983, p. 15). Discrimination occurs "either in *different* treatment in *similar* situations, or in *similar* treatment in *different* situations" (Jacque, 1985, in Fenster, 1996, p. 414). Similarly, Wallace and Milroy's (1999, p. 56) work shows that "equity can necessitate different treatment of individuals or groups". Every ethnic group has various cultural practices and needs. One standard cannot fit all. The policies that are

currently employed should “vary according to differential impact” (RTPI, 1983, p. 15). There is a need for flexibility and adaptability in policy making.

Third, even when planners acknowledge the ethnocultural diversity in their practice, they express uncertainty or reluctance to deal with it. The reasons for this may be threefold.

1.) Planning legislation lacks explicit guidelines on planning for multiculturalism. Wallace and Milroy (1999, p. 67) indicate that Ontario’s Planning Act uses “generic and undifferentiated” language to describe people or the public. Accordingly, it demonstrates “who is disadvantaged and why by undifferentiated planning processes”. The authors further examined the Code of Professional Conduct employed by the Canadian Institute of Planners and found only “occasional modest excursions into conceptualizing diversity in planning contexts” (Wallace & Milroy, 1999, p. 67). Without professional legislations, it is difficult for planners to integrate immigrants and incorporate multicultural issues in the planning process.

2.) The planning profession per se has little legitimate power and authority compared to elected politicians who make the final decisions. As a result, “despite the planning ideal of a holistic, proactive vision, planners are frequently restricted to playing frustratingly reactive, regulatory roles” (Campbell & Fainstein, 1996, p. 8). However, planners are major actors involved in the decision-making process. If planners take a proactive stance, they could greatly influence politicians’ final decisions.

3.) There is no comprehensive planning model for planning practitioners to follow. Cases vary in relation to the complexity of cultural diversity. In addition, since immigration is a federal policy in Canada, “the responses of municipal governments to immigrant settlement vary not only in content and comprehensiveness, but also in the amount of initiative shown by municipal officials in putting the responses in place” (Wallace & Frisken, 2000, p. 1). Although academics or practitioners have made some recommendations, they remain on a case-by-case basis (Qadeer, 1994). It will definitely take a long time and great effort for planners to accommodate this diversity.

#### **2.5.2.2 Empirical studies**

In this section I draw on a number of typical examples from the empirical literature that reflect the impacts of immigrant settlement on urban spaces and the

planning responses to them. These studies focus mainly on the following aspects of land use: commercial activity, housing, places of worship, and design control. Subsequently, a summary of the steps that should be taken through planning practice receives attention.

1.) Land use conflicts: One typical example is the construction of Asian theme malls. The traditional shopping centre planning hierarchy has become irrelevant to these specialty shopping areas that target certain groups of people. In addition, the condominium nature of these developments results in smaller store sizes, various and longer store hours, and, most of all, higher demand for parking and traffic levels, which may not conform to zoning requirements (Preston & Lo, 2000; Qadeer, 1994, 1998; Wang, 1999). These malls have raised local community concern and at times even triggered racist reactions. Another example is the non-conformist change of zoning uses, such as the conversion of a suburban house to a Buddhist temple (Sandercock, 2000). This institution had once been assigned to industrial-zoned land in the periphery, and was inaccessible to the Buddhist community.

2.) Commercial activity: Aside from the shopping mall conflict mentioned above, the prohibition of sidewalk business, street vending, and hot food takeaway establishments also reflect the inappropriate application of the dominant regulations to minorities' diverse commercial behaviors and customs (Sandercock, 1996, 1997; Thomas & Krishnarayan, 1994).

3.) Housing issues: Housing needs and preferences vary from group to group. The currently dominant single-family housing models are not suitable for some ethnic groups. Their specific needs may include praying space, rooms for multigenerational families, layout in accordance with Fengshui principles, and separate spaces for women (Adair, 2003; Fenster, 1996; Fincher, 2003). Some developers and homebuilders have sensed the great demand and potential of the ethnic market, and are promoting new home designs (Adair, 2003).<sup>14</sup> The “monster home” battle in Vancouver between affluent Hong Kong homebuyers and the established local community indicates that a dispute over cultural taste could lead to racial debates in the broader political and economic realms

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<sup>14</sup> The newspaper report (Adair, 2003) introduces several leading designs in the Toronto real estate market, which greatly appeal to Chinese and South Asian homebuyers. These include Feng Shui principles to let positive energy (chi) in (e.g., southeast layout, no T-junction end-of-street location, staircase position, etc.), a dual master bedroom design for multigenerational families, the conversion of bathrooms or walk-in closets into a prayer rooms, and even the use of street numbers in the numerology of different groups.

(Lee, 2002; Ley, 2000; Li, 1994; Qadeer, 1997; Wallace, 2000).

4.) Places of worship: Immigrants are from different backgrounds and have various religious practices and cultural preferences, which often are not compatible with the dominant cultural norms and the standards of planning policies. For example, orthodox Jews walk to the synagogues on Saturday and holidays. As a result, they require a convenient location for the institution, and parking is not required (Bennett, 1998). Some adjustments have been made, such as height restrictions on Mosque minarets and domes, parking requirements based on floor areas or pray areas, instead of the amounts of pew seats (Qadeer, 1994; Qadeer & Chaudhry, 2000; Wallace & Milroy, 2001). However, “urban plans seldom have systematic policies for places of worship” (Qadeer & Chaudhry, 2000, p. 17). For example, as Sandercock notes, “the ‘new religions’ (Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism) have been allocated space in the light industrial zone, separated from the residential area and not connected by public transport” (Sandercock, 2000, p. 20).

5.) Design control: As previously mentioned different ethnic groups have various styles, esthetics and expressions. Planning regulations and design guidelines play a very important role in controlling whether these expressions can be actualized (Qadeer, 1994). The current design guidelines are not flexible and not sufficiently clear when applied to diverse situations. For example, a mosque was approved conditionally as a “clock tower” or a “church bell” (Qadeer & Chaudhry, 2000; Yap, 2007); not to mention the difficulties planners may face with applications, such as roofing styles, architectural features, colour schemes, façade designs, signage styles, specific architectural components, and decoration details (RTPI, 1983).

Considering the dynamics of ethnic landscapes, a number of studies provide a critical review of the planning process. The findings call for a diversity-oriented planning approach.

First, policymaking requires all-round data collection and analyses, with a focus on various immigrant statuses and their specific needs (Qadeer, 1994, 1997; Ratcliffe, 1998; RTPI, 1983; Wallace & Milroy, 2001). The data should include not only a basic census population portfolio, but also ethno-racial data; neighbourhood profiles should be

developed (Wallace & Milroy, 2001).<sup>15</sup> However, gathering information from the ethnic groups themselves may not be achieved through traditional means, such as opinion surveys or focus groups, but through storytelling or narration (Burayidi, 2000).

Second, ethnic minorities should be involved in the policy making process (Burayidi, 2000; Lee, 2002; Qadeer, 1994, 1997; RTPI, 1983; Wallace & Milroy, 2001). Their input should directly influence the development of policies. The key for their involvement would be the encouragement of public participation and communication. Given the different means of communication of certain immigrant groups, particular set of skills and methods are strongly suggested, such as outreach workers, use of ethnic media and language translation on leaflets, in focus groups, and on surveys, official documents, and advertisements (Au, 2000; Lee, 2002; RTPI, 1983). Moreover, the placement of liaison officers or the recruitment of co-ethnic planners may be effective in improving communication with the minority communities (RTPI, 1983).

Third, the planning policy development should be consistent throughout the three-tier governments, and planning legitimacy should be enforced (Qadeer, 1994, 1997; RTPI, 1983; Wallace & Milroy, 2001). Since immigration is a federal policy, upper-tiered policies should be sufficiently explicit to enable the lower-tiers to conform to them. In addition, federal policy must require “all planning regulations, approaches, and standards to conform to provisions of the Human Rights Act and making cultural and racial discrimination valid grounds to appeal a planning decision” (Qadeer, 1994, p. 197).

Fourth, monitoring and evaluation in the planning process must include feedback from immigrant groups and examine whether they have encountered discrimination or racism in their cases and if their needs have been met (Qadeer, 1997; RTPI, 1983).

Finally, planner recruitment and planning education are two influential aspects in the long run (RTPI, 1983; Sen, 2000). Increasing the number of planners from minority groups, potentially can minimize the gap between outsiders and insiders. As well, a long term goal for the planning profession should be to incorporate multicultural issues in continuing education for planners and in the curriculum of planning schools.

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<sup>15</sup> Since 2003, the City of Toronto has compiled a set of profiles for 140 neighbourhoods including data on age, gender, immigration, ethnicity, and language (City of Toronto, 2003b).

## **2.6 GAPS IN THE PLANNING LITERATURE**

As mentioned above, multicultural planning advocates have good intentions to celebrate multiculturalism. Hence, they urge planners to gain more understanding of ethno-cultural diversity, and to be more culturally sensitive and inclusive. Yet, few multicultural advocates use empirical studies to examine actual planning practices in context. As a result, they generally ignore the constraints inherent in the planning system and provide little sense of what planners' mandate is. Other than suggesting several general guidelines, the multicultural planning approach offers few feasible measures that planning practitioners can adopt in their daily practice. Multicultural theory can easily become a mere lofty idea and an abstract adornment to planning discourse. The theoretical development of multicultural planning requires further empirical exploration of the practical challenges planners face.

In reality, the planning system continues to rely on universal standards and regulations to govern city-wide developments, which generally lack specific tailor-made programs or approaches that cater to local needs, and the needs of immigrant communities, in particular, within this multicultural context. Planners must follow their professional mandate, which sets its goal to serve the community at large for the public good; however it provides no guidelines regarding how to integrate immigrants and incorporate ethno-cultural issues into the planning process. Planners are in a difficult position when addressing development challenges relating to cultural differences and immigrant settlement; they lack policy backing, legitimate authority, effective planning tools, and, possibly, interdepartmental support. With the barriers inherent in the planning system, it is not easy to change planners' mindset towards a multicultural approach.

In light of the above, there is urgent need to investigate the relationship between planning and immigrant settlement, to provide a more solid empirical basis and to reveal the complexity of planning amidst diversity. One of the windows into this phenomenon is ethnic retailing. Ethnic retailing is not only essential to immigrant community life, but also has become a distinct and increasingly important component of the urban retail system by supporting a growing sub-market driven by the large immigrant population. However, current literature on retail planning and multicultural planning seldom touch upon the field of ethnic retailing, notwithstanding a number of exploratory studies (Jones,

2000; Preston & Lo, 2000; Qadeer, 1997, 1998, 2005; Wallace, 1999; Wang, 1999; John Winter Associates, 1994; Yeates, 2000).

Our knowledge of the nature and dynamics of ethnic retailing is limited, especially in relation to its spatial and physical dimensions. What is ethnic retailing (e.g., its location, form, function, development patterns, process, etc.)? How did ethnic retail spaces come into being and how do they interact with surrounding urban spaces? What are the impacts of ethnic retail on community building? Who are the key players in ethnic retail space production and consumption? What are the differences between urban and suburban ethnic retail spaces? How can planning better accommodate ethnic retail activities that target specific groups, while balancing city-wide interests? These questions remain unanswered in existing literature. More importantly, how do planning practitioners exercise effective planning tools when their knowledge of the nature of ethnic retailing is insufficient? Examples in the literature are limited to a case-by-case analysis and lack system-wide generalizability.

The first step in bridging the gap in research in this area is the thorough investigation of the dynamics and complexities of ethnic retailing. Empirical studies will contribute to a better understanding of the reality of multicultural planning, how ethnic retail activities impact urban spaces, how the planning system responds to diversity, and whether there are effective planning programs, initiatives, or policies in place to deal with ethnic retailing. This research direction will contribute to discourse on the relationship between planning and immigration, providing a solid foundation for theoretical developments in multicultural planning.

It is important to use empirical data to demonstrate planners' role in multicultural planning, taking into consideration their constraints and the reasons behind them; these have often been overlooked in the literature. There may be no template for a planning approach to ethnic retailing because of its dynamic nature. However, it is crucial to understand planners' capacities in this regard and how they can be increased. Raising cultural awareness, as multicultural planning advocates suggest, is no doubt important; yet, it falls short in providing planning solutions for far more complicated realities.

The following approaches require empirical foundation. First, institutional changes to the planning system are needed, if planners are to engage in social advocacy



on behalf of special interest groups as the advocacy planning model suggests. One possibility is to establish a Multicultural Planning Office that can grant power and authority to planners who work with ethnic-focused developments. Within this structure, planners would need to be proactive in communicating with ethnic communities and educating them about the constraints in the planning system in relation to land use decisions. This model attempts to celebrate multiculturalism, while accounting for the constraints inherent in planning. Second, secondary planning could be a more effective planning tool at the local level. Implementing secondary plans with local ethnic communities would ensure that a multicultural perspective is applied to planning efforts. Third, planners cannot work alone to deal with multicultural challenges. There are additional internal and external players, stakeholders, and agencies involved in the immigrant settlement process. Planners must ally with politicians, internal municipal departments, and external agencies.

Overall, the gaps in the literature affect our understanding of the complexity of multicultural planning. This results in insufficient public policies to address issues of community planning, economic development, land use and transportation planning, relating to immigrant settlement. There is still a long way before academics and practitioners develop the capacity of a planning system that accommodates immigrants and better serves their needs. In order to bridge the research gaps, this research explores the nature of ethnic retailing and examines the role of municipal planning in it. Furthermore, it expands into a more general discussion of planning for multicultural communities.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I describe the methodology employed in this research. Specifically, I introduce the research design, data collection and analysis methods, and discuss the quality and limitations of the study. The methodological steps that contributed to knowledge building in this research are outlined.

### 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The aim of this research is to contribute to a better understanding of ethnic retail, and to investigate the role of municipal planning in the process of creating retail space. This research is exploratory in nature. Since existing literature provides little documentation of ethnic retailing and its connection to municipal planning, there is a need for exploratory empirical studies to examine salient retail patterns and characteristics, and to identify key players in shaping these retail areas. More importantly, a thorough investigation of the planning process in relation to ethnic retail developments is required.

Case study methods are often the recommended strategy in an exploratory research approach (Del Balso & Lewis, 2001; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Yin, 2003). Multiple case studies prove to be more appropriate when many actors are involved and the subject matter is complex. Choosing more than one case also increases the generalizability of the study results (Hakim, 2000; Yin, 2003). In pursuit of my research goal, I explored various types of ethnic retail with different attributes, such as a variety of forms (e.g., shopping strip and centre), different locations (e.g., inner city or suburb), various ethnicities (e.g., comparison of different groups), stages of development, growth patterns, and organizational structures, in order to capture a broader spectrum of the nature of ethnic retail.

I chose four case studies to carry out my research.<sup>1</sup> These include three ethnic

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<sup>1</sup> East Chinatown was first used as a pilot study due to its convenient access and geographical proximity to my downtown home office (Yin, 2003). Through the pilot study, I pretested the interview guides and established a case study protocol with procedural and substantive aspects. Some minor modifications were applied to the research design, such as editing question wordings, and adding community agencies and

retail strips in the inner city of Toronto, namely East Chinatown, Gerrard India Bazaar, and Corso Italia, and one suburban Asian theme mall, the Pacific Mall in the Town of Markham. The rationale behind the selection of these cases is based on my goal to examine the retail activities of various ethnic groups in different forms and settings (e.g., urban vs. suburban). As mentioned in earlier chapters, empirical research on the spatial and physical aspects of ethnic retail is scant, not to mention comparison studies of different ethnic groups. My research targets the Chinese, South Asian and Italian business communities, because they represent the influences of different immigration policies and histories and provides a variety of samples to achieve an exploratory study and possible comparisons between groups and/or within one group.<sup>2</sup>

With a policy-oriented focus in mind, the study identifies three groups of people as major players for in-depth investigation: ethnic entrepreneurs who own or operate businesses in the case study areas, city officials (city councillors, city planners, and economic development officers), and community agency representatives who are involved in the areas' development processes. Additional players, such as customers to those areas, were consulted briefly. In each case study, the relationships among the major groups of players were examined to address the research questions, "What is ethnic retail?" and "What is the role of municipal planning?". A case study protocol was developed following a "replication", not sampling, logic (Yin, 2003); it features a case template that outlines through every step of the research, from case overview, field procedures, interview questions, to the writing of the case report.

### **3.3 DATA COLLECTION**

In this research I employed multiple methods of data collection; the use of various sources of evidence "allowed case studies to present more rounded and complete

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consumers as two more targets for investigation. Since no major deficiencies were found in the pilot study, it was included as an actual case study as well.

<sup>2</sup> Italians were among the earliest immigrant groups that settled in Toronto and are one of the largest groups in Canada. The Italian immigrant population has substantially declined since the 1970s. Chinese also have a long immigration history in Canada. In contrast to the Italians, the post-1967 immigration waves favoured by the new immigration policy boosted the Chinese group as the largest visible minority group according to the 2001 Canadian Census. The "new" and "old" immigration patterns result in various retail forms, such as the old Chinatowns and the new Asian Theme Malls. South Asians have much shorter mass immigration history than the other two groups, but have grown very fast as the largest visible minority group according to the 2006 Canadian Census.

accounts of social issues and processes” (Hakim, 2000, p. 61). Yin (2003) delineates six sources of evidence in case study research. These include documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts. This research applies most of these methods; they are categorized in two groups of data, secondary and the primary data.

### **3.3.1 Secondary Data**

#### **3.3.1.1 Documentation**

In order to compile a historic record of development and to provide background and contextual information about each of the study areas, I first conducted an archival research of local newspapers, magazines, journal articles, internet, business association newsletters, municipal policies, planning documents (e.g., official plans, zoning by-laws, urban design guidelines, cultural plans, secondary plans, site plans, etc.), council minutes, staff reports, consultant reports, and community studies.

I used several channels to access these documents, including local libraries, City department offices, and the internet. Local libraries keep document files, such as community newspaper clippings, business association newsletters, and community studies, local history, development, and major events. The purpose of visiting City’s Planning and Economic Development Offices was to obtain specific planning documents, such as development proposals, incentive programs, capital studies, traffic studies, staff reports, and consultant reports. The internet was another effective tool to access relevant documents, especially for its efficiency in file retrieval. For example, both the City of Toronto and the Town of Markham provide online public access to council minutes dating back to 1998, which prevented time-consuming trips to clerk’s offices.

#### **3.3.1.2 Archival records**

I used two sets of quantitative data extensively to denote the community social and business profiles of each of the case studies. The first set of data was the ward profiles produced by the Policy and Research unit of the City of Toronto’s Planning Division, based on Statistic Canada’s data, as well as a series of neighbourhood profiles compiled by the Social Policy Analysis and Research Unit of the Social Development and Administration Division of the City of Toronto, with the assistance of Toronto Public

Health. The neighbourhoods were defined based on Statistics Canada census tracts and include several city blocks with an average of about 4,000 people. Each neighbourhood comprises at least two census tracts, and the minimum neighbourhood population is between 7,000 and 10,000. Looking at a smaller neighbourhood scale, the City of Toronto provides a more detailed socio-economic data for community agencies to deliver local services. The Town of Markham does not have a compatible community database. Hence, I used data from the 2001 Canadian Census to compile a social profile for that case study.

The second set of data I used was business survey data conducted by the Centre for the Study of Commercial Activity (CSCA) and undergraduate students in the Applied Geography program at Ryerson University. It includes annual surveys of commercial strips and major shopping nodes in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) since 1993. The business data collected served to monitor the business changes of each store by providing its store name, address, Standard Industrial Classification code (based on the SIC-E 1980 Canada classification), opening year, closing year, vacancy, ethnicity, and store size at annual intervals. This quantitative database was a valuable resource to examine the evolution of most of the businesses across the GTA; it offered an objective perspective that helped build a better understanding of the nature of the businesses.

### **3.3.2 Primary Data**

#### **3.3.2.1 Unobtrusive observations**

The first step of research in the field is conducting a “windshield survey”, that is driving or walking in the study area in order to become familiar with it (Andranovich, 1993). This provides the opportunity for an initial assessment of the appropriateness of the research topic. I conducted numerous field visits to each of the study areas, either on foot, by streetcar, or by car. Attention was given to visiting the sites at different times, such as during the week, on weekends, early in the morning, or late at night. This helped obtain a better understanding of the various business operations in the different locales. For example, patrons in Corso Italia may show up at 7am at the local bakery for coffee or breakfast, while stores in the Gerrard India Bazaar do not open until noon, and in the summer, they experience peak hour, with the highest volume of customers late at night.

Since I entered the field as an outside observer, I also prepared a checklist to help orient my observations (see Andranovich, 1993). The checklist included: How do people access the site (e.g., transportation means)? What is my general first impression of the site? How is the space occupied by businesses (e.g., sidewalks)? What is the connection between businesses and the rest of the neighbourhood (e.g., residential areas and other facilities nearby)? These unobtrusive observations helped me become better acquainted with the areas and collect additional useful evidence about the areas being studied (see Yin, 2003). Taking photographs and keeping field journal also contributed to the observations and interpretations of information (see Babbie, 1998).

### **3.3.2.2 Participant observations**

It is also important to observe the sites from the perspective of an insider or participant (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2003). This demands immersion in the setting and firsthand involvement in the studied activities (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In order to become involved, I shopped and had meals in the local areas, while directly observing: Who are the customers? How do storekeepers run their businesses? How do they deal with customers? How do they use interior and exterior space? etc. When it was appropriate, I had casual conversations with storekeepers to learn how to communicate with them effectively and better understand their daily practices (see Andranovich, 1993; Del Balso & Lewis, 2001).

In addition, I participated in on-site events hosted by the business people in the study areas, such as a Canada Day celebration in East Chinatown, the Festival of South Asia in the Gerrard India Bazaar, the Fiesta in Corso Italia, and Chinese New Year celebrations in the Pacific Mall. I also attended a two-day court hearing of the St. Clair streetcar right-of-way dispute among supporters and opponents of the streetcar improvement plans. Being a participant observer at these events, I developed an intuitive understanding of the different cultures in these areas, which helped me to convey the meaning of the data (see Bernard, 2000).

### **3.3.2.3 Population and sampling**

In each case study, I chose three major groups of people as my research population for semi-structured interviews, namely the ethnic entrepreneurs, the city

officials (e.g., city councillors, city planners, and economic development officers), and the community agency representatives. In addition to these semi-structured interviews, I also conducted informal information interviews with local librarians and academics and consumer intercept surveys with shoppers (see Table 3-1). I elaborate on these three types of interviews in the following sections.

Table 3-1: Summary of Interviewees

		EC	GIB	CI	PM	Total
<b>Informal Information Interview</b>  (purposive sampling)	<b>Business Community</b>	* 2 Chamber of Commerce members	1 BIA coordinator	* 1 BIA chairperson	2 Property Managers	<b>19</b>
	<b>Local Librarians</b>	1	1	1	1	
	<b>Community Agency Reps.</b>	*1		N/A	N/A	
	<b>Academics</b>	N/A	1 Ryerson Planning faculty member who did research in GIB	1 Waterloo Architecture faculty member familiar with CI area	1 Ryerson Geography faculty member, 1 Queen's Planning faculty emeritus prof. specializing in Asian Malls	
		2 Ryerson Geography faculty members specializing in general urban retail				
<b>Planners</b>	2 (1 policy planner in general & 1 community planner of PM development)					
<b>Semi-Structured Interview</b>  (purposive, snowball & random sampling)	<b>Merchants</b>	7	7	8	12	<b>55</b>
	<b>City Councillors and Assistants</b>	3		3	1	
	<b>Planners</b>	1		3	2	
	<b>EDOs</b>	1	1	1	1	
	<b>Community Agency Reps.</b>	3		1	N/A	
<b>Consumer Intercept Survey</b> (convenience sampling)		8	10	10	12	<b>40</b>
<b>Total</b>						<b>114</b>

\* : These people participated in both informal interviews and semi-structured interviews.

EC = East Chinatown; GIB = Gerrard India Bazaar; CI = Corso Italia; PM = Pacific Mall; BIA = Business Improvement Area; EDO = Economic Development Officer

Multiple sampling methods were adopted. I used purposive sampling to select all informal information interviewees, city officials and community agency representatives, assuming they have the knowledge or resources to provide contextual information, answer research questions, or refer me to other potential interviewees. I mainly used snowball and random sampling (roughly equal amounts in each case) to recruit business interviewees. Through the informal interviews, I obtained a list of further contacts from business leaders, a Business Improvement Area (BIA) coordinator and a chairperson, and

property managers.<sup>3</sup> These contacts are mainly board members or business association members, who tend to play an active role in public matters. I also included random samples of non-member merchants obtained through door-to-door visits. Lastly, convenience sampling was used for consumer intercept surveys.

#### **3.3.2.4 Field entry issues**

Field entry issues are often encountered when recruiting interviewees. The first issue in this particular study was how to build trust and negotiate with gatekeepers (see Marshall & Rossman, 1995). For example, some key informants were suspicious of my motives for wanting to interview them, others were afraid of disclosing their “business secrets” to a stranger. Therefore, explaining the research ethics, especially the rules regarding anonymity, was important to reassure informants that their personal privacy would be respected, and questions would not relate to sensitive business data, such as annual sales or profit.<sup>4</sup> In other situations, especially in the Pacific Mall case, many store owners were abroad or travelling transnationally, and store employees were the typical gatekeepers. In such cases, it was necessary to spend more time to find ways to approach the key informants.

The second issue in field entry were cultural differences (see Andranovich, 1993). An understanding of daily practice for various types of ethnic retail activities was needed, involving cultural elements, such as cultural cuisine, merchandise, spatial needs, or customer base. With the tremendous help of two friends of mine, one with a South Asian background and one with an Italian background, I gained more knowledge of these

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<sup>3</sup> A Business Improvement Area (BIA) is a voluntary association of local business people and property owners within a specified boundary (normally in the form of main streets), who work together in partnership with the city to improve and promote their business area. The Ontario Government passed legislation to establish BIAs in 1970. Currently, there are sixty BIAs across the City of Toronto under the supervision of the Economic Development Office. A BIA is run by a board of management which comprises elected volunteers, who are property owners and business operators, as well as at least one council member. The Economic Development Office of the City of Toronto also assigns Commercial Area Advisors for outreach and work with BIA members. The board prepares an annual budget for capital improvement projects which require the approval of members and City council. After its approval, the City collects a special tax levy based on the proportionate value of each property’s assessment within the boundaries of the BIA. The funds are returned to the BIA to manage during each year’s budget. Generally, the funds are used for streetscape improvement, event planning, marketing and promotional campaigns, etc. In addition, the City provides 50/50 matched capital funding for streetscape improvements, such as decorative pedestrian lighting, kiosks, banners and murals, BIA theme signage, landscaping, fountains, and street furniture. Businesses in the Gerrard India Bazaar and Corso Italia have joined this BIA program.

<sup>4</sup> In the extreme case of Corso Italia, due to the tension around the streetcar right-of-way dispute, some of the merchants feared that I would write a biased account and sell their stories to the mass media.



cultural groups as they engaged in retail activities; for example what and to whom they were selling products.<sup>5</sup> Another effective way to tackle cultural obstacles is to find “a local community person to introduce [me] around to allay fears” (Andranovich, 1993, p. 79).<sup>6</sup>

The third issue in field entry were language barriers. English is my second language. Being aware of this disadvantage, I employed the following strategies to minimize misunderstandings or inefficient communication. I gave interviewees a written information letter, in advance, to introduce myself and my research; I familiarized myself with my interview guide and prepared secondary probes; and I used tape recorder for most of the interviews with the interviewees’ consent. I also prepared the backup option of hiring Italian and South Asian translators, but most of the merchants in Corso Italia and the Gerrard India Bazaar, including those who declined my interview invitation, spoke English well, except for one merchant from India, who asked his son to translate for him. Other than English, I speak both Cantonese and Mandarin fluently, which I mostly used to interview merchants in East Chinatown and the Pacific Mall.

Additional challenges included how to manage City officials’ sensitivity regarding the ethnic-related subject matter. Due to municipal neutrality, sometimes it was a challenge to motivate City officials’ cooperation and generate discussions on ethnocultural issues from a political perspective. One interviewee was uncomfortable with the term “ethnic retail”, which she interpreted as discriminatory to other retail activities; she declined to answer some of the policy-related questions. One of her colleagues, who held the same beliefs, declined my interview invitation.

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<sup>5</sup> One of my friends is a PhD student at York University, who did in-depth research with ethnic entrepreneurs in Gerrard India Bazaar for her undergraduate thesis. She gave me a tour of the area. We walked around the street, had lunch at the local restaurant, and looked at stores and the local library. She told me stories of various businesses and introduced me to sources of information, such as the local librarian, key business informants, and her thesis. Another friend has been living in the Corso Italia area for a number of years. He told me about his immigrant family from Italy, translated some store names for me, and pre-tested my interview guide to ensure it was acceptable in “an Italian way”. We also participated together in the Fiesta event.

<sup>6</sup> For example, during an interview with a community agency representative serving the Gerrard India Bazaar area, I became acquainted with a South Asian business consultant, who has befriended many of the local merchants. He introduced me and my research topic to the co-ordinator of the BIA and a couple of store owners in multiple door-to-door visits. We also shopped and had tea together at local stores.

### **3.3.2.5 Informal information interviews**

The purpose of the informal information interviews was to gather contextual information from people who are very familiar with the case setting, have knowledge about its historical development, or have research expertise on related issues. I had 19 face-to-face interviews and one telephone interview with people from the business communities, local libraries, a community agency, as well as academics and city planners (Table 3-1). These participants were purposely selected, and the interviews were semi-structured and open-ended.

The interviewed business leaders, coordinator, and property managers shared business information, such as organizational structures, storekeeper profiles, area improvement interests, relationships with the rest of the community, etc. Local librarians introduced me to the local development history and relevant document files. One community agency representative described their supportive role in building partnerships with city departments and business communities.

Communications with members of planning, architecture, and geography faculties from various universities were very helpful in providing academic perspectives on the issues, referring to their research experience of specific cases. I also met with a policy planner of the City of Toronto and discussed municipal planning policies with regards to ethnocultural diversity and, specifically, ethnic retail activities. Another community planner of the Town of Markham, who was involved in the development of the Pacific Mall, was approached by telephone. In short, the informal information interviews were an important step in gaining an initial understanding of the field, and also helped me to develop the interview guides for the formal interviews.

### **3.3.2.6 Key informant semi-structured interviews**

I conducted 55 semi-structured interviews with three groups of key informants, namely merchants, city officials (city councillors or their assistants, city planners and economic development officers), and community agency representatives (Table 3-1). Forty-one of them were tape recorded with the interviewees' permission.

The first step in recruiting business participants was to drop off a recruitment letter at their stores and introduce myself and my research face-to-face. A mutually agreed upon time for the interview was then arranged. Interviews were normally

conducted in their stores or in nearby coffee shops or eateries, according to interviewees' preference. The interview guide includes four major categories of questions (see Appendix I): 1) business profile 2) location preference 3) design issues, and 4) needs assessment.

City officials and community agency representatives were generally easier to identify and were approached via telephone or e-mail. For each study area, I targeted the local City councillor or the councillor's assistant, the area or community planner, the transportation planner for specific projects, the designated commercial area advisor or economic development officer, and the local community agency that built partnership with the City and the businesses. I first approached the targeted informants via telephone, using a recruitment scrip to briefly introduce my research. When they showed interest or agreed to arrange an interview, I sent them an informed consent letter by e-mail right away. I conducted the interviews face-to-face in their offices, homes, or coffee shops, except for one interview I conducted on the telephone due to the informant's family emergency. The interview guide mainly addressed the following issues (see Appendix I): 1) (retail) development process 2) attitudes towards ethnic retail 3) physical expression of ethnicity 4) policy and vision statement or effective local economic development approach 5) collaboration with City departments (Economic Development Office or City planning).

### **3.3.2.7 Consumer intercept survey**

A consumer intercept survey is a widely used market research method (Bernard, 2000). Although it usually is used to gain a quick overview, it can produce reliable samples that can be generalized to a wider population. I used convenience sampling to survey 40 shoppers in the study sites. I asked them about the purpose of their shopping trips, their ethnic origins, how far they live from the area, how often they shop there, and what they like most about the area. The general feedback from shoppers was consistent with that of other interviewee groups, in terms of business profile and strategy, distribution of consumer base, and ethnic expression. The fast-tracked consumer insights helped me grasp the demand side of the ethnic market, and how this dimension of ethnic retailing helps shape the study areas.

### **3.4 ETHICS**

This study was approved by the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo (UW), consistent with UW's Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants, UW's Statement on Human Research, and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. The ethics review process is intended to ensure the ethical conduct of the researcher, that adequate protection is provided for participants' privacy and the confidentiality of information they provide, and to provide participants with an official informed consent.

Participation in this study was voluntary and took place in a mutually agreed upon location. Participants received an information letter about the research before the interviews, and gave their consent to participate in the study, to be audio-recorded during the interview, and to be anonymously quoted in the dissemination of the study findings. Participants could decline to answer any of the interview questions; they could withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences; and all information they provided is considered completely confidential. Interviewees' names do not appear in this thesis, and will not appear in any of the research reports, publications or presentations. The data, with identifying information removed, has been kept in a secure location and only the researcher and my supervisor have had access to the data. There were no known or anticipated risks to participants in this study.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **3.5.1 Qualitative Data Analysis**

The process of qualitative data analysis was based on data reduction and interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994), i.e., the mass of information in the raw data was condensed by clustering into manageable categories, and then given expressive meanings to illuminate the research questions or unveil the emergent conclusions. It was an iterative process of "playing with the data", identifying themes, grouping categories, developing coding, making intra-case and cross-case comparisons and contrasts, displaying information in matrixes, and cross-checking or verifying emergent conclusions (see Creswell, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003).

All audio-taped, semi-structured, interview data were transcribed using verbatim transcriptions. I translated all the Chinese transcriptions into English. I took notes during or immediately after other formal and informal interviews. I also kept field notes for observations. In order to reorganize the data, I sorted through interview transcriptions, field notes, documents and archival records and divided them into categories; I coded these categories openly, going back and forth, using descriptive, interpretive, and pattern coding (see Del Balso & Lewis, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

With the descriptive coding focusing on facts and the informants' substantive comments, I reorganized the data into topical areas, such as historical development of ethnic retail areas, ethnic business organizations, and spatial needs of ethnic retail activities. In addition, interpretive coding, based on my preconceptions and reflections, was adopted in order to understand and explain the roles of different actors and their interactions in ethnic retail developments, which often had more abstract and subtle meanings. Finally, the pattern coding captured the emergent themes, such as building partnerships among the three major informant groups (entrepreneurs, City officials, and community agencies), and enhancing interdepartmental collaboration. The coded categories showed interrelationships, and cross-category analysis revealed similarities, comparisons, and contrasts. Intra-case and cross-case analysis was conducted when new categories emerged.

After the exercise of data reduction, I displayed the data in matrixes, specifically in tables of tabular information showing the chronicle of the development histories of each case study area, the relationships among categories of major events, major players, and interpretations. The tables are presented systematically at the beginning of each chapter of the case reports (Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7). A cross-case data display is arranged in the discussion chapter (Chapter 8) to support the explanations of the cases and explore comparisons among them.

### **3.5.2 Quantitative Data Analysis**

The raw business data of the four case studies were first retrieved from the Centre for the Study of Commercial Activity (CSCA) at Ryerson University. They are the annual business survey data from 1993 to 2005, except for the Pacific Mall, which opened in

1997. Each of the cases has one database, containing a spreadsheet of business records that include categorized information of store name, address, the year of opening, closing and vacancy, Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code and description, ethnicity, and store size. The raw data was originally stored in Microsoft Excel files, and then transferred to Microsoft Access, a professional database management program for data analysis.

I mainly focused on the analysis of business composition, business turnover, and changes in ethnicity, the major components of the raw data. In Microsoft Access, data analysis was performed on “tables” and “queries”, two of the fundamental tools of Access. I created queries of each year by selecting attributes that required examination, such as store type (using the SIC codes), vacancy rate, and ethnicity. A pivot table was then created to display tabular analysis and summary. Final tabulations and line graphs of data summaries across years are presented as analysis results.

The quantitative data analysis plays an important role in indicating the historical development patterns and future trends of the study areas. Its objective perspectives supplemented the subjective interview and observation methods.

### **3.6 QUALITY AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The criteria for judging research quality include credibility, validity, and reliability through every step of the research process, namely the research design, data collection, data analysis, and research representation (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Yin, 2003).

First, credibility refers to the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study: How truthful are the research findings? Do they accurately reflect the subject being examined? Does the researcher develop a sufficiently operational set of measures and make objective judgement (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2003)? Second, the study must also address issues of internal and external validity. Internal validity concerns causal connections between data and findings (Yin, 2003). To ensure the internal links between the data and its analysis are valid, the researcher must examine rival explanations or alternative causes that could possibly account for the results and provide a detailed description of the investigation. The external validity of the study focuses on the transferability and generalizability of the

findings beyond the immediate case study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Theoretical replication logic is applied in testing the generalization of the findings to other situations. Third, reliability underlies the replication of the study. A solid framework of research design and methods can enhance the study's chances of being repeated in other settings (Creswell, 2003). In multi-case studies, a detailed data collection protocol is strongly recommended (Yin, 2003).

To ensure quality control, triangulation of data collection modes and data sources were key to demonstrating the value and logic of my study. I used multiple data sources and collection methods (e.g., various groups of informants, primary and secondary data collection, qualitative and quantitative data analysis) to help increase the rigour of the research logic. I was aware that as researcher I had to be not only honest, but also reflective throughout the data collection and analysis process to avoid bias or prejudice. I spent long periods of time at the sites and repeated site observations. I kept a research journal as part of my reflexive practice, and periodically asked my committee members to review my progress. I established a long-time working relationship with a colleague, a PhD student who was researching municipal planning issues with minority religious communities in places of worship development, to brainstorm, exchange thoughtful insights, and receive constructive criticism during all phases of the research process.

Despite every effort I have made to ensure the quality of this study, several limitations continue to exist throughout the stages of research design, data collection and analysis. First, the case study approach proves to be weak in its ability to provide generalizations (Yin, 2003). Although I used multiple case studies, it was still difficult to create a full picture of ethnic retailing based on the research findings. Furthermore, true to most qualitative research, objectivity remains an issue. Research bias is strongly influenced by the researcher's personal perspectives and interpretations. Since my study is an exploratory investigation, the case study approach proved to be the most suitable and feasible strategy for this research. To increase the validity of the study, I collected and analyzed quantitative business survey data in order to supplement the interpretation of the nature of ethnic retail activities.

The second limitation lies in the data sources. Although I have included ethnic entrepreneurs, City officials and community agency representatives as key informants,

two other groups of people, the consumers and the developers, require further investigation; they too play important roles in shaping the spatial and physical manifestations of ethnic retail. I conducted a consumer intercept survey in this study, but more in-depth research can be achieved through interviews, questionnaire surveys, or focus group methods. I was also unable to gain access to the developers of the Pacific Mall. I could only collect relevant information, including developers' quotes, through secondary data, such as newspaper reports.

The third limitation involves the data analysis. There was a lack of "member checks", i.e., feedback from key informants with regards to the accuracy of my interpretations and conclusions. Nearly one-third of my interviewees showed interest in receiving a summary of the research findings in response to my offer. If time had permitted, a better way to increase internal validity of my study would have been to arrange follow-up interviews with key informants, to double check my interpretations of the data.

### **3.7 SUMMARY**

In this research I adopted an exploratory, multiple-case study approach. The methodological steps were designed to collect information to achieve the research objectives. . The study provides empirical data on the nature of ethnic retailing and the role of municipal planning in addressing their diversity. Four case studies located in urban and suburban settings, representing three different ethnic groups with profound intra and inter-group differences, were chosen for this research. I targeted three groups of key players in the ethnic retailing areas, namely ethnic entrepreneurs, City officials (City councillors, City planners, and economic development officers), and community agency representatives. The research findings add new angles to the discussion of interactions among various key players in the multicultural planning process. Multiple data collection methods were employed, including secondary document and archival record research, site observations, informal information interviews, key informant semi-structured interviews, and a consumer intercept survey. Qualitative and quantitative data analyses were conducted to interpret the raw data, convey its meanings, and provide logical explanations of the studied phenomenon. Triangulation of the data collected and its



analysis ensured the quality of the study, in terms of its credibility, validity, and reliability, despite several limitations that can be improved upon in future research.

The overall research design provided feasible and effective measures to collect the information required to achieve the research goals, generate new knowledge, and enrich existing literature in this area.

## **Chapter 4 Ethnic Commercial Strip I: East Chinatown**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter studies the Toronto East Chinatown retail area. It begins with an outline of its background and community social profile. A set of business profiles is also provided to help understand the nature of the businesses in this area. The chapter then discusses the ongoing construction of the China Gate project and other revitalization efforts in the East Chinatown retail strip. It explores the grassroots approach the local business association, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, East Toronto (CCCET) initiated, and identifies the involvement of City officials, including councillors, planners and personnel from the Economic Development Office (EDO), and community agency representatives.

The research findings show that synergies were created in the alliances of various players to promote community economic revitalization and long-range neighbourhood sustainability. However, city planners were absent from and inactive in the redevelopment of this declining retail neighbourhood.

Table 4-1 outlines major events in the East Chinatown revitalization process, the involvement of the key players, and the interpretation of these interactions. This table, referred to throughout the chapter, serves to distil the story of East Chinatown and the role(s) of various actors and agencies in its development.

Table 4-1: Major Events and Key Player Involvement in East Chinatown

Time Period	Major Events	Key Players				Interpretations
		Local Business Association	Politicians	Economic Development	Community Agencies	
1998-2001	- China Gate project first introduced to the community with a wall mural - Merchants survey	Initiates the China Gate project and approached local councillor for support	Councillor Layton fully supports the gateway and secures land from Parking Authority		RCDC helps CCCET conduct a merchant survey to determine development strategy	Grassroots bottom-up approach is a must. Political and community support creates synergy.
2001-2003	- The CCCET Archway Organizing Committee is formed - Receives donation from the Chinese governments worth CD\$ 200,000	- Starts domestic and overseas fundraising - Gains support from Chinese governments	Local councillor and MPP help promote the project			CCCET led to mobilization of the community social capital and utilization of political resources.
2000-2004	Major studies: - Expanding Economic Opportunity for Riverdale's Chinese Community - Building Community Wealth in South Riverdale: A Strategic Plan - Riverdale Main Street Baseline Study - Residents and Visitors' Survey	- Becomes member organization of SRRP - Partners with SRRP and RCDC for business surveys and research		Partnership with SRRP to facilitate public consultation and provide outreach	- SRRP is established as an umbrella organization with 11 community group members, including RTC, RCDC, CCCET - RCDC helps Chinese start-up businesses and assists with business surveys and research	Community agencies form an alliance. On the other hand, the City joins the partnership, and EDO administers outreach.
2003-2004	East Chinatown Area Capital Works Strategy	Proposes archway design concept	Project proposal submitted to City council	Allocates \$25,000 for the preparation of the capital work	SRRP & the City hire design consultant team for East Chinatown capital improvement plans	The revitalization of the area requires a holistic approach. City and the community helped the local businesses achieve this goal.
2003-2004	NDP candidates win the municipal, provincial and federal elections in the local riding	Supports and campaigns for NDP candidates	Elected MP, MPP and councillor continue to support the gateway project			CCCET tried to establish a consistent political channel to maximize political resources.
2004	City Council approval		- Councillor Fletcher elaborate the importance of the gateway as a gift from a foreign country - approval from all council members	- Facilitates communications with stakeholders - Initiates a two-phase construction plan - Secures half of the construction costs		Council approval is key. EDO played a leading role in project facilitation, communication, and outreach.
2004	- Phase I construction begins with lion statue installation - Wall mural beautification	Provides mural design with Chinese cultural features		Allocates \$75,000 for Phase I construction, \$15,000 for wall mural	RTC hires local student workers and artists to assist mural painting	CCCET gained the City's financial support and the community's assistance.
2006	Fundraising complete, and all funds are in place	Fundraises \$325,000	Local MP, MPP and councillor support fundraising events	Contributes \$325,000 for Phase II construction		Project moves forward.

## 4.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 4.2.1 Geographical and Historical Background

East Chinatown was established in the late 1970s and is one of the oldest ethnic commercial strips in the inner city of Toronto, specifically in the South Riverdale neighbourhood. Centred around the intersection of Gerrard Street East and Broadview Avenue, East Chinatown stretches along Gerrard Street East (from the Don Valley Bridge to the west and De Grassi Street to the east) and Broadview Avenue (from Simpson Avenue to the north and Dundas Street East to the south) as outlined in Figure 4-1. Figure 4-2 shows the businesses at the major intersection of Gerrard and Broadview.

Figure 4-1: Geographical Location of East Chinatown  
Source: City of Toronto, 2008.



Figure 4-2: Intersection of Gerrard Street & Broadview Avenue



The Chinese business community settlement in this east end area dates back to the urban renewal of the 1960s, when the original Chinatown was demolished and a new

Downtown Chinatown boosted property values.<sup>1</sup> A number of new Chinese businesses chose to set up in the eastern part of the inner city, namely the Broadview-Gerrard area, for the following reasons: lower real estate and rental prices, good public facilities, including the Riverdale Park and the public library, and convenient public transit connecting to the downtown (Lai, 1988; Wang, 1996). The first Chinese store in the area, most likely opened in 1972, and more stores emerged over the next couple of years. East Chinatown started to boom in the early 1980s (Lai, 1988).

The area was zoned originally for residential use. The Chinese business community opposed it and successfully altered the zoning to low-density commercial use in some areas east of Broadview Avenue and north and south of Gerrard Street, enabling them to convert buildings for commercial use (Wang, 1996). Many of the stores in this area are in two-storey buildings. Some have retail use at the street level and housing above, while others experienced “vertical intensification, as some upstairs residences along Gerrard Street East were converted to business offices and travel agencies” (Wang, 1996, p. 14).

## **4.2.2 Community Social Profile**

### **4.2.2.1 Ward 30 profile**

East Chinatown is within the boundaries of Ward 30, which is delineated by the Don River to the west, Coxwell Avenue and Leslie Street to the east, Danforth Avenue to the north, and Lake Ontario to the south (Figure 4-3). In 2001 the Ward was home to approximately 55,000 people, 42.1% of whom were immigrants. Although the proportion of the immigrant population was lower than the City of Toronto’s average (49.4%), Ward 30 had a higher concentration of Chinese immigrants (12.7%) than the City average (4.2%) (Table 4-2). Between 1996 and 2001, 54.5% of the recent immigrants who settled in Ward 30 were from Mainland China (Table 4-3). Overall, people of Chinese origin

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<sup>1</sup> The original Chinatown was demolished to make way for the construction of the new City Hall. The Chinese community quietly moved out of the area without relocation assistance, because they lacked the communication skills to petition or negotiate with the government and had no opportunity to express their views (Lai, 1988; Winnicki, 1969). Many of the Chinese residents and businesses moved westward to the Spadina and Dundas area, which was a community hub for Eastern European Jews before most moved to the suburbs (Hiebert, 1993b; Lai, 1988). This area was soon succeeded by the Chinese community and a new Downtown Chinatown was formed. As the Chinese immigrant population grew in the 1970s, property values of the Downtown Chinatown area also increased.

made up 24.8% of the total Ward population, more than twice the city-wide proportion (9.9%) (Table 4-4). The proportion of visible minority individuals in Ward 30 was slightly higher than the city average (45.2% vs. 42.8%). In summary, Ward 30 is an ethnically diverse community, with a substantial Chinese population.

Figure 4-3: Ward 30 Boundary  
Source: City of Toronto, 2003a.



Table 4-2: Total Population by Immigrant Status and Place of Birth (Ward 30 & City of Toronto)  
Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census.

Produced by: City Planning, City of Toronto. 2003a.

Ward 30			City of Toronto		
	No.	%		No.	%
China, People's Republic of	7,020	12.7	China, People's Republic of	102,640	4.2
Viet Nam	2,920	5.3	Italy	74,380	3.0
United Kingdom	1,410	2.6	Philippines	68,120	2.8
Philippines	1,015	1.8	India	64,240	2.6
Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region	945	1.7	United Kingdom	63,870	2.6
Greece	920	1.7	Jamaica	56,080	2.3
United States	720	1.3	Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region	55,595	2.2
India	590	1.1	Sri Lanka	53,150	2.2
Jamaica	530	1.0	Portugal	48,345	2.0
Italy	440	0.8	Guyana	41,985	1.7
Others	6,635	12.1	Others	586,245	23.8
<b>Total Immigrants</b>	<b>23,145</b>	<b>42.1</b>	<b>Total Immigrants</b>	<b>1,214,650</b>	<b>49.4</b>
<b>Non-Immigrants</b>	<b>31,320</b>	<b>56.5</b>	<b>Non-Immigrants</b>	<b>1,198,815</b>	<b>48.8</b>
<b>Non-Permanent Residents</b>	<b>775</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>Non-Permanent Residents</b>	<b>43,360</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>55,040</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>2,456,825</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4-3: Total Recent Immigration (1996-2001) by Selected Places of Birth (Ward 30 & City of Toronto)

Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census.

Produced by: City Planning, City of Toronto. 2003a.

Ward 30			City of Toronto		
	No.	%		No.	%
China, People's Republic of	2,440	54.5	China, People's Republic of	45,905	16.4
Pakistan	400	8.9	India	26,560	9.5
Philippines	210	4.7	Pakistan	17,495	6.2
Viet Nam	205	4.6	Philippines	16,755	6.0
India	160	3.6	Sri Lanka	15,885	5.7
United States	85	1.9	Iran	11,015	3.9
United Kingdom	60	1.3	Russian Federation	9,715	3.5
Jamaica	45	1.0	Korea, South	8,240	2.9
Russian Federation	35	0.8	Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region	8,180	2.9
Yugoslavia	35	0.8	Ukraine	7,385	2.6
Others	800	17.9	Others	113,520	40.4
<b>Total Recent Immigrants</b>	<b>4,475</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total Recent Immigrants</b>	<b>280,655</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4-4: Top Ten Ethnic Origin Groups (Ward 30 & City of Toronto)

Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census.

Produced by: City Planning, City of Toronto. 2003a.

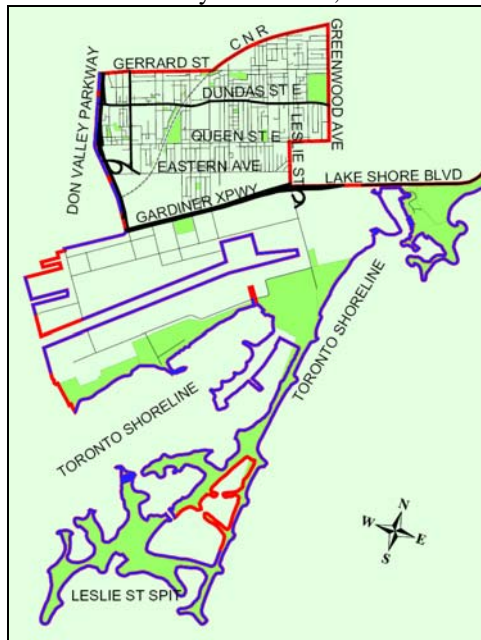
Ward 30			City of Toronto		
	No.	%		No.	%
<b>Single Response</b>	<b>37,275</b>	<b>67.7</b>	<b>Single Response</b>	<b>1,803,925</b>	<b>73.4</b>
Chinese	13,650	24.8	Chinese	242,920	9.9
Canadian	4,655	8.5	Canadian	161,220	6.5
English	2,485	4.5	Italian	138,715	5.6
Greek	1,400	2.5	East Indian	133,665	5.4
East Indian	1,110	2.0	English	95,465	3.9
Filipino	1,090	2.0	Filipino	76,410	3.1
Irish	1,075	1.9	Portuguese	75,800	3.1
Italian	955	1.7	Jamaican	65,505	2.7
Scottish	860	1.6	Jewish	60,915	2.5
Vietnamese	745	1.4	Greek	43,670	1.8
Others	9,250	16.8	Others	709,640	28.9
<b>Multiple Response</b>	<b>17,755</b>	<b>32.3</b>	<b>Multiple Response</b>	<b>652,885</b>	<b>26.6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>55,030</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,456,810</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### 4.2.2.2 South Riverdale neighbourhood profile

East Chinatown is located in the South Riverdale neighbourhood (Figure 4-4).<sup>2</sup> According to the 2001 Canadian Census, the neighbourhood had a higher percentage of working people between the ages of 25 and 64 (61%) than the City average (56.5%). The average and median family incomes were approximately \$55,000 and \$45,000, respectively, and were lower than the city-wide average and median family income (\$76,000 and \$54,000). The neighbourhood's employment lands consist of warehouses, manufacturing plants, and commercial strips. This, more or less, reflects "South Riverdale's origins as an industrial, blue-collar neighbourhood" and the challenges the community is facing, including "de-industrialization, declining competitiveness, infrastructure disinvestment, and redevelopment pressures" (SRRP et al., 2001, p. 5).

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 3 for more information about the series of neighbourhood profiles provided by the City of Toronto.

Figure 4-4: South Riverdale Neighbourhood Boundary  
 Source: City of Toronto, 2003b.



The neighbourhood profile also shows the predominant presence of the Chinese population in South Riverdale (Figure 4-5). Comprising 34% of the total population in the area in 2001, the Chinese community had a higher representation in the South Riverdale neighbourhood than in other areas of Ward 30 (26.5%) as well as the City of Toronto (10.6%) (Table 4-5).

Figure 4-5: Visible Minority Population of South Riverdale Neighbourhood  
 Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census. Produced by: City of Toronto, 2003b.

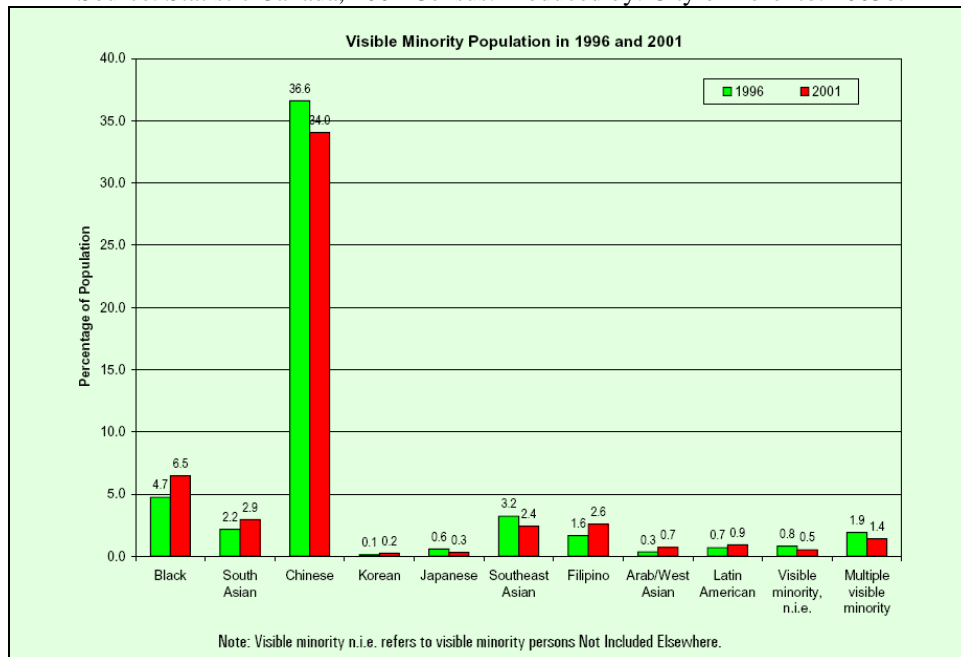




Table 4-5: Visible Minority Population (Ward 30 & City of Toronto)

Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census.

Produced by: City Planning, City of Toronto, 2003a.

Ward 30			City of Toronto		
	No.	%		No.	%
Chinese	14,565	26.5	Chinese	259,710	10.6
Black	3,520	6.4	South Asian	253,915	10.3
South Asian	2,400	4.3	Black	204,075	8.3
Filipino	1,205	2.2	Filipino	86,460	3.5
Southeast Asian	975	1.8	Latin American	54,350	2.2
West Asian	420	0.8	Southeast Asian	33,870	1.4
Latin American	400	0.7	Arab	22,355	0.9
Japanese	380	0.7	West Asian	37,200	1.5
Arab	115	0.2	Korean	29,755	1.2
Korean	115	0.2	Japanese	11,595	0.5
Visible minority, n.i.e.*	225	0.4	Visible minority, n.i.e.*	37,980	1.6
Multiple visible minorities	565	1.0	Multiple visible minorities	19,855	0.8
All others	30,160	54.8	All others	1,405,680	57.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,885</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,456,800</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 4.3 BUSINESS PROFILE

### 4.3.1 Business Composition

The major business types in East Chinatown can be categorized in three groups: food related businesses (40%), other retail (25%), and other services (35%) (Table 4-6). These three categories have fluctuated, but the overall ratio has remained constant for 13 years. Both the food businesses and the retail sector have slightly decreased over the years, while the services sector grew by approximately 6%.

Table 4-6: East Chinatown Business Composition from 1993 to 2005

Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author.

Business composition (%)	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Ave.
<b>Food related</b>	42.3	44.2	41.5	38.6	38.8	39.2	37.5	37.9	39.1	38.6	38.5	39.4	38.7	39.6
Food stores	24.4	24.8	20.4	20.3	20.0	20.3	19.4	19.3	20.7	18.7	19.3	18.8	19.4	20.4
Food services	17.9	19.4	21.1	18.4	18.8	19.0	18.1	18.6	18.3	19.9	19.3	20.6	19.4	19.1
<b>Other retail</b>	26.0	24.8	25.9	26.6	26.1	24.1	25.0	24.2	22.5	23.5	23.6	24.4	23.2	24.6
Apparel	4.9	4.7	5.4	3.8	4.9	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.0	3.1	3.8	3.2	4.0
Household & appliance	3.3	3.1	2.7	3.8	3.0	3.2	3.1	4.4	4.1	5.4	5.6	3.8	3.2	3.7
<b>Other services</b>	31.7	31.0	32.7	34.8	35.2	36.7	37.5	37.9	38.5	38.0	37.9	36.3	38.1	35.9
Hair & Beauty	13.0	13.2	14.3	14.6	13.3	13.3	13.1	12.4	13.6	12.1	12.4	11.9	11.6	13.0
Health	3.3	3.1	4.1	5.1	6.1	6.3	7.5	6.2	6.5	6.6	6.8	6.3	6.5	5.7
<b>Total stores (excl. vacancy)</b>	123	129	147	158	165	158	160	161	169	166	161	160	155	

Food stores and restaurants are still the dominant business types and are a typical Chinatown attraction. The retail sector, for the most part, serves the basic daily needs of local residents, and generally provides low-order products that lack in appeal to a larger

customer base. The service sector is expanding at a faster pace than the business, personal, and household services sectors. However, there is a need to diversify and improve the quality of the products and services these businesses provide for them to survive in the long-term.

### 4.3.2 Business Turnover

Table 4-7 shows the number of business openings and closures in East Chinatown from 1993 to 2005. It provides an idea of the number of businesses entering and leaving the market. Over the years, the market has fluctuated annually, with larger numbers of business openings than closures. Some conversions occurred in 1998, 2003 and 2005.

Table 4-7: East Chinatown Business Turnover from 1993 to 2005  
Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author; City-wide data produced by Hopgood, 2005, p. 56.

Year	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Openings</b>	N/A	20	42	42	19	28	14	19	19	17	12	31	12
<b>Closures</b>	N/A	14	24	31	12	35	12	18	11	20	17	32	17
<b>Vacant Stores</b>	13	12	15	21	11	17	19	21	16	21	21	26	32
<b>Total Stores (incl. vacancy)</b>	136	141	162	179	176	175	179	182	185	187	182	186	187
<b>Vacancy Rate (%)</b>	9.6	8.5	9.3	11.7	6.3	9.7	10.6	11.5	8.6	11.2	11.5	14.0	17.1
<b>City-wide Vacancy Rate</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	9.4	8.7	9.1	9.5	10.0	9.7	10.0	9.7	9.1	N/A

Table 4-7 also shows the vacancy rate, another benchmark in business performance evaluation. Data from the past 13 years demonstrate fluctuating cycles. In three periods, from 1994 to 1996, from 1997 to 2000, and from 2001 to 2005, the numbers of vacant stores continuously increased. Especially in the past couple of years, the vacancy rate has risen at a higher rate and it peaked at 17.1% in 2005. The vacancy rate in East Chinatown is generally higher than the City average, except in 1997 and 2001, when East Chinatown was at its lowest vacancy rate. In my interviews with merchants, local business owners stated that they were strongly affected by the SARS outbreak in 2003 and streetcar track maintenance construction in the summer of 2004. These may have been major factors in the area's business decline of subsequent years.

### 4.3.3 Changes in Ethnicity

The Centre for the Study of Commercial Activity (CSCA) defines retail "ethnicity" as follows:

The assignment of ethnicity is based on individual [the students'] judgement. An establishment is classified as ethnic if the signage or lines of merchandise are characteristic of a particular minority of national group within the Canadian population, and especially if the target customers could be considered ethnic (Erguden & Biasiotto, 2002, n.p.).

In accordance with this definition, and the CSCA data, retail ethnicity is analyzed in this section, based on the signage, merchandise, and customers of the store, regardless of the ethnic background of the storekeeper. For example, an Indian-run phone card store, generally, is classified as “business with no ethnic content”. A Korean-owned store selling Chinese fast food and snacks is classified as a “Chinese” business and a store run by a Chinese shopkeeper selling Korean ginseng is more likely to be recorded as a “Korean” business. This definition of ethnicity applied to store classification is different from what is defined as “ethnic business” or “ethnic retail” throughout the rest of this thesis (see Chapter 1); it is only used when referring to the CSCA data. When stores are classified as “ethnic” in the CSCA data, it refers to the “ethnic content” of the goods and services, rather than the ethnicity of storekeepers. The CSCA data indicate whether store merchandise feature ethnic characteristics and businesses have general appeal to certain groups of customers. These data illustrate the ethnic orientation of the businesses with their products, and the groups of customers they target, although the ethnicity of the storeowners is not revealed.

Table 4-8 provides an overview of the ethnic content of East Chinatown businesses, and major changes that have occurred in the past 13 years. The Chinese businesses and the businesses with no ethnic content are the two main categories examined. Interestingly, these two categories of businesses are growing in opposite directions (Figure 4-6); Chinese businesses have decreased from approximately 65% to 48%, while businesses with no ethnic content have increased by approximately 20%. In 2005, their proportions were almost the same. Based on the definition of “ethnicity” employed, this change does not mean that fewer Chinese merchants operate businesses in this area, while more non-Chinese merchants are opening stores there, since there is no reference to the ethnicity of the store owners or operators. Rather, the findings show a propensity to reduce the appeal of the businesses to one specific group of customers, and expand their clientele base by carrying more general merchandise.

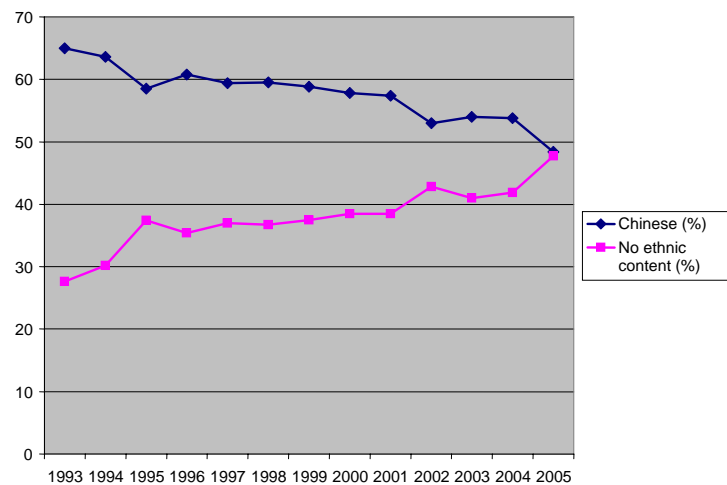
Table 4-8: Ethnic Content of East Chinatown Businesses from 1993 to 2005

Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author.

Ethnicity (%)	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Chinese</b>	65.0	63.6	58.5	60.8	59.4	59.5	58.8	57.8	57.4	53.0	54.0	53.8	48.4
<b>No ethnic content</b>	27.6	30.2	37.4	35.4	37.0	36.7	37.5	38.5	38.5	42.8	41.0	41.9	47.7
<b>Vietnamese</b>	4.1	3.9	2.7	3.2	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.7	4.1	3.6	3.7	3.1	3.2
<b>Other</b>	2.4	1.6									1.2	0.6	
<b>Indian</b>	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.6									
<b>West Indian</b>			0.7										
<b>Malaysian</b>										0.6			
<b>Thai</b>												0.6	0.6
<b>Total stores (excl. vacancy)</b>	123	129	147	158	165	158	160	161	169	166	161	160	155

Figure 4-6: Proportion Tendencies of Chinese Businesses & Businesses with No Ethnic Content

Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author.



While the CSCA data does not differentiate among the sub-ethnicities of the Chinese group, the Chinese community is, in fact, very heterogeneous, with numerous subgroups that have regional, dialectical, and cultural differences. The origins of the Chinese business owners in East Chinatown reflect this diversity, and a number of periodical shifts have occurred in the composition of the group, associated with major social and political events.

During the 1970s, due to the Hong Kong riot in 1967 and the introduction of Canada's new immigration policy, a new wave of Hong Kong immigrants arrived in Toronto. Subsequently, most of the early businesses in East Chinatown were owned by Hong Kong immigrants and other Cantonese immigrants. In the 1980s, Hong Kong entrepreneurs retreated from the area and moved northward to the suburban fringes of the Metro Toronto area, including Agincourt, Markham, and Richmond Hill.

The successors of East Chinatown were Vietnamese, of whom many were ethnic Chinese (Wang, 1996). To this day, the Vietnamese presence continues to be predominant, resulting in the sobriquets of East Chinatown as “Little Saigon” (Tompkins, 2002), and Downtown Chinatown as “Saigon City” (Cheung, 1999). In the early 1990s, prompted by the Tiananmen Square incident, there was a significant increase in the number of Mainland Chinese immigrants to Canada. In the following decade, with recent immigrants from Mainland China settling in Toronto, the Chinese formed the second largest ethnic group in the 1996 Canadian Census, and the largest group in the 2001 Census (City of Toronto, 2004a). Although many of these new immigrants settled directly in the suburban areas, some continued to settle in the two Chinatowns in the inner city. There are more stores and services operated by Mainland Chinese immigrants in East Chinatown that target Mandarin speaking new immigrants; no doubt their increasing presence will inject new energy into the area and add diversity to the local business community.

#### **4.3.4 Consumer Views**

I conducted an intercept survey with eight shoppers to fast track data on the demand side of the ethnic market. The shoppers’ comments are generally consistent with the business data. The local Chinese resident respondents regularly shop locally because of the convenience. Other Chinese or non-Chinese visitors to the area are mainly from the Greater Toronto Area and do not come often. Most of them do not shop in East Chinatown due to the lack of appeal of the low-end products and the lack of variety in the merchandise.

In summary, the consumer insights confirm that businesses in East Chinatown mainly cater to a local co-ethnic customer base. This data points to the need to diversify its businesses and broaden the targeted markets.

## 4.4 MAJOR DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

### 4.4.1 The Background of the China Gate Project

East Chinatown is facing a series of challenges caused by demographic changes, the suburbanization movement, and the poor physical condition of the business area itself. Nowadays, new immigrants generally bypass the inner city and move to the suburbs; so do many of the earlier immigrants and the second or third generations who have lived in the inner city for decades. The resulting potential loss of businesses and customers makes it difficult for East Chinatown to compete with the more famous and tourist flooded Downtown Chinatown, as well as the mushrooming suburban satellite Chinatowns, namely the Chinese shopping plazas and malls. In addition, East Chinatown must address its physical limitations, including overcrowded sidewalks, rundown streetscapes, and lack of parking. These factors prevent the area from sustaining its business vitality and improving its appeals to a larger customer base.

Beginning in 1998, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, East Toronto (CCCET) initiated the China Gate project, “Zhong Hua Men” in Chinese, to promote local business, boost tourism development, revitalize the business environment, and compete with other Chinese commercial areas. Until the China Gate is actually built, it is temporarily represented by a mural (15 x 20 feet) placed at the major intersection of East Chinatown to introduce the project to the community (Figure 4-7).

Figure 4-7: The China Gate Mural



The local business community has extended much effort during the past ten years to revitalize the area, demonstrating a strong desire to save their neighbourhood, as well as express their ethnic pride. One may question the usefulness of the gate in revitalizing the area. Community leaders from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, East Toronto

(CCCET) argue that although the City of Toronto consists of over 400,000 Chinese immigrants, it is one of the few cities in the world that do not have an archway structure to represent the Chinese community. The President of the CCCET, who immigrated to Canada in the 1970s, explains the importance of the gate to the older generation of immigrants:

*China Gate is the symbol of Chinese community. If you go to Chinatowns in American cities, or other large Canadian cities, like Vancouver and Montreal, you'll see the gate. But strangely, Toronto has no such gates.... The gate has significant meaning to overseas Chinese, and builds up the Chinese culture. Chinese diasporas feel at home wherever they see the gate.* (Business Interviewee CB4, June 14, 2004)

Individual entrepreneurs generally consider the project as a good thing, but do not think it is sufficient to change current business conditions in the area, as a bookstore owner points out:

*The China Gate project is a very good idea. It features Chinese culture, which will attract more people to come visit. The more cultural expression, the better [attraction for people]..... [But] the China Gate can't make fundamental changes, because it has nothing to do directly with each individual storefront. It's just advertising.* (Business Interviewee CB2, June 13, 2004)

A councillor's assistant involved in the project, provides a holistic perspective on this issue:

*There's no doubt the China Gate will help promote East Chinatown, but it's hard to measure how much benefit it would bring to the area. It's important to solve the basic issues, like street cleanliness, safety, and business services first. Otherwise, a China Gate alone still can't attract more people to come.* (Councillor Assistant Interviewee CC1, January 6, 2006)

Indeed, a single archway structure cannot rejuvenate a declining neighbourhood. It is important to note that many business issues (e.g., cleanliness, parking, and safety) remain unresolved, and the physical conditions in the area have not been improved.

#### **4.4.2 The China Gate Design Features**

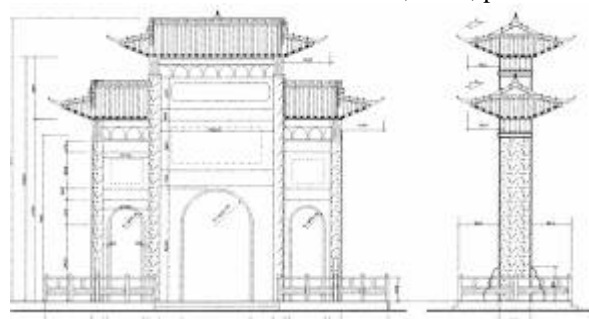
The future China Gate will be located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Gerrard Street and Broadview Avenue. It will be incorporated in the existing public parking lot (Figure 4-8). The gate has a traditional design, with three arches covered by a green, ceramic glazed, tile roof (Figure 4-9), and traditional Chinese motifs on the granite wall above the arches. However, these traditional symbols are somewhat distant from the

modern lives of the Canadian-Chinese, and do not reflect the contribution of the Chinese community to Canadian society. In response to feedback from the community, images of Chinese railway workers will be included in the design, in order to pay tribute to the early Chinese pioneers who contributed to Canada’s history (Li & Huang, 2006; Toronto “Zhong Hua Men” Archway Organizing Committee, 2004).

Figure 4-8: Location of the China Gate (shown in the right circle)  
Source: Todhunter & Lee, 2004, p21.



Figure 4-9: Elevations of the Archway  
Source: Todhunter & Lee, 2004, p23.



Along with the promotion of the China Gate, two additional projects form part of a broader revitalization plan for the East Chinatown area. One project is the Capital Works Strategy, featuring physical infrastructure upgrades and streetscape improvement, funded by the Economic Development Office (EDO) of the City of Toronto (Table 4-1).<sup>3</sup> The second is a mural project on the back wall of the public parking lot, 200 feet from the location of the future archway (Figure 4-10).<sup>4</sup> The mural project was a joint venture of the EDO, a local community agency, the Ralph Thornton Centre (RTC), and the CCCET.<sup>5</sup> The project attempts to promote a cleaner and more beautiful environment as a backdrop to the future China Gate. Moreover, Chinese themes are strongly presented in the murals.

<sup>3</sup> The design approaches include adding sidewalk pavement, street lighting, trees, and street furniture (e.g., benches, and trash receptacles) and incorporating a Chinese theme.

<sup>4</sup> The back wall that was covered with messy advertisements has been beautified with four murals, featuring traditional Chinese paintings and poems (also translated into English) under the theme of “four seasons”.

<sup>5</sup> The EDO allocated \$15,000 from its Banner and Mural Program, and the RTC recruited twelve local students and two artists to paint the mural, based on the CCCET’s design.



Figure 4-10: Before and After Effects of the Mural Project  
Source: Ralph Thornton Centre (photo on the left)



#### 4.4.3 Ethnic Expression

In the Chinese architectural tradition, an archway is used to glorify or commemorate famous figures or events. It is treated as an imposing monument, preserving the essence of a family or a clan. Outside of China, it serves more as a popular means, or even stereotypical symbol, translating Chinese culture in western society. Chen (2005, p. 93) describes it as “a well-recognized aesthetic, used in many places to indicate a tourist-friendly Chinese ethnicity”. Why do today’s Chinese entrepreneurs continue to rely on this old Chinatown image to save their neighbourhood and businesses? How does this approach relate to broader societal trends, such as theme-parking or Disneyfication?

Historically, Chinatown is a complex construct that combines social, political, economic, cultural and even racial forces. The precinct is layered with multiple meanings across different periods of time, from an isolated ghetto in its early years, a slum in the peak of urban renewal (between the 1950s and 1960s), to a tourist spot and a well-recognized ethnic residential and commercial neighbourhood, and a symbol of the recent age of multiculturalism. Lai (1973, p. 101) defines Chinatown as “basically an idiosyncratic oriental community amidst an occidental urban environment”. His argument represents prevalent conceptualizations of Chinatown as a colony of the East in the West.

Contrary to this school of thought, Australian geographer Kay Anderson (1991, p. 8) argues that the creation of Chinatowns in the western world is a physical manifestation of “a comparable cultural abstraction that belongs to the beliefs and institutional practices of white European society”. This western conceptualization defines and shapes the images of Chinatown according to the interests and practices of the white host society. Anderson further clarifies: “‘Chinatown’ is not ‘Chinatown’ *only* because the Chinese—

whether by choice or constraint—have lived in enclaves. Rather ‘Chinatown’ is in part a European creation” (p. 9). The author admits that her work only represents a western perspective on how Europeans perceived the “race” of Chinese and defined and controlled the “place” of Chinatown through the western cultural hegemony and political and legitimate means. This new approach creates a “discourse” with conventional wisdom, although it excludes the perspectives of Chinatown residents.

In East Chinatown, the construction of the new gate reflects certain aspects of both schools of thought (Chinatown as an eastern colony, and as a European creation). The gate reflects the internal and external factors that determine how local businesses and society at large tend to define the image of Chinatown and the expression of Chinese ethnicity in the landscape. The idea of the archway imitates a well-recognized or stereotypical Chinatown image, indicating, as Anderson argues, “residues of past conceptions of identity and place continually shaped practices that sedimented their image within later formulations and practices” (Anderson, 1991, p. 33). On the other hand, in a highly commercialized era, “Chinatown” has become a marketing brand that is molded and packaged in fixed forms and exploited for the tourist industry by Chinese merchants and other interest groups. Similar to components of a theme park, forms such as archways, lanterns, and dragon and lion patterns, are generally considered symbolic cultural heirlooms of the Chinese community.

One may question the authenticity of the “Chineseness” reflected in Chinatown; Ley (2005) describes it as a “mistaken identity”, attractive to tourists but not to the well-educated “hyper-modern” recent immigrants. However, it is necessary to consider that, after all, Chinatown is a hybrid cultural form from China and Canada; it represents a cultural metamorphosis. The creation of this hybrid cultural form reflects the dynamics of a fluid diasporic Chineseness.

#### **4.4.4 The Development Process**

##### **4.4.4.1 Political support**

Since the development of the China Gate requires City Council approval, the CCCET approached local politicians to gain their support for the project. They first approached the then City Councillor of Ward 30, Jack Layton, Member of Parliament of

the Toronto-Danforth riding and leader of Canada's New Democrat Party (NDP). Jack Layton played an important role in launching the project and "was instrumental in securing the land from the Toronto Parking Authority" in 2001 (Alcoba, 2002, p. A10). The proposal was approved by City Council in 2004 (Table 4-1). The president of CCCET recalls the inception of the project, and highlights the importance of a bottom-up self-promotion approach for the Chinese community.

*We've had numerous meetings with City officials. The first meeting was with the senior management of Toronto Parking Authority. Jack Layton came along with us and strongly supported us.... City officials don't have a clear idea of what exactly Chinese culture is. We must express ourselves and make our voice heard. Otherwise, they can't really understand. For example, at the beginning city officials had no idea of what a "China Gate" is. That's why I had to draw the perspective [of the gate and show it to them]. (Business Interviewee CB4, June 14, 2004)*

The CCCET also exerted its influence on politicians and has the know-how to utilize political resources. When Jack Layton ran for office in the 2004 federal elections, the CCCET assisted in the campaign and urged Chinese constituents to vote for him, to pay tribute to his contribution to the community's development. Members of CCCET also supported other NDP candidates at the provincial and municipal levels, hoping to establish consistent political connections and support for the China Gate project and the community in the long term.

#### **4.4.4.2 Domestic and oversea fundraising**

The total construction cost of the China Gate is estimated at \$650,000. The City shares half of the cost, and the CCCET set up an Archway Organizing Committee in 2001 to launch fundraising for the project. At first, the Committee limited its fundraising events to the local Chinese community; however it did not achieve its goal in this manner. When the proposal gained council approval and City sponsorship in 2004, the Committee initiated public campaigns that exceeded the geographical boundaries of East Chinatown and the Chinese community.<sup>6</sup> The events drew city-wide attention and donations from corporations, communities, and individuals; the Committee finally exceeded its target for half of the total cost. In July 2006, the City secured \$325,000 in

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<sup>6</sup> The Committee organized a series of fundraising events in downtown Toronto as well as in Markham that accelerated the fundraising process, including dinner with Chef Yan (host of *Yan Can Cook*, the hit TV cooking show), Cantonese Opera Banquet, Kung Fu Night, and BMW Lucky Draw.

the reserve fund account for the project (Table 4-1).

The Committee also sought help from the Chinese government. The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council of China and the Jiangmen Municipal Government of China offered strong support to help sustain Chinese cultural heritage and reinforce its national identity among the Chinese diasporas. In 2003, the Chinese government donated a pair of white stone, lion statues (2 metres in height) and building materials worth a total of CDN\$200,000. This overseas governmental support contributed to securing approval for the project from the local council. A former assistant of the current Ward 30 councillor recalls:

*At the council meeting, Councillor Fletcher also elaborated the importance of the China Gate as a project supported by the Chinese government, and there's no reason for the city to refuse a present from the government of a foreign country. This strong argument helped convince those councillors who had doubts about the proposal at the beginning. (Councillor Assistant Interviewee CC1, January 6, 2006)*

#### **4.4.4.3 Collaboration among stakeholders**

Since East Chinatown is one of the priority areas in the City of Toronto's Employment Revitalization Program, the Economic Development Office (EDO) has been active in leading the China Gate project; the EDO has been facilitating communications between internal and external stakeholders, including the CCCET, the Toronto Parking Authority (TPA), Works and Emergency Services, and the Official Gifts Committee, "to determine how the City could assist the Chinese Chamber in expediting this project" (Policy & Finance Committee, 2004, p. 5). The project includes two phases of construction. Phase One was completed in September 2004; the EDO's capital budget of \$75,000 was applied to install the two stone lion statues from China.

In addition, the EDO convinced the Official Gifts Committee and the City council to accept the China Gate as a gift to the city; as such City staff will be responsible for its maintenance, and to ensure that this large-scale landmark meets City standards. In short, the EDO has been committed to the project's implementation and has facilitated the review of its plans and drawings by appropriate City officials and utilities.

## 4.5 KEY PLAYERS: CREATING SYNERGIES

### 4.5.1 The Business Community

The business community in East Chinatown is represented by a voluntary business association, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, East Toronto (CCCET). Established in 1983, the CCCET now has more than 300 members. The top priority of the association is to utilize political resources and open political channels with the three levels of government. The president of CCCET emphasizes the importance of this bottom-up approach; another interviewee echoes the strong influence the organization can have on working relationships with City officials:

*CCCET has very close relationship with City Hall.... We believe CCCET has the responsibility to work with City officials in order to serve the community well.... City officials are only doing their jobs; hence they won't initiate projects [for specific communities]. We, the Chinese community, must propose our plans by ourselves. (Business Interviewee CB4, June 14, 2004)*

*Our community is very powerful.... We need to make it clear that now politicians must listen to us and serve our needs. If they can't satisfy us, they won't get elected anymore. The City councillor is the head of the Ward. City staff must obey whatever decision the council has made. In other words, as long as the councillor supports our proposal, City staff must do their job. (Business Interviewee CB3, June 14, 2004)*

A City planner who has been working in the area for nearly ten years believes the business community has the vision and drive to collaborate with the City:

*Over the last few years, they've had a number of businessmen who really have a vision, and they're working together to try to promote their area.... And I also think that they make that lead to... getting the city to help them, tapping into the expertise we offer...using what is relevant to what they want to achieve there. (Planner Interviewee CP1, May 9, 2005)*

In the case of China Gate project, the CCCET is collaborating with the City to build a strong community alliance. However, this quasi-official channel is not sufficiently strong to be sustained in the long run. After all, it took nearly ten years for the CCCET to accomplish this project, while many other fundamental business issues, such as cleanliness, parking, and safety have remained unresolved; the physical condition of the area has not improved. The business community must seek other ways to strengthen its partnerships with the City; for example, joining the Business Improvement Area (BIA)

program.<sup>7</sup> However, business people in this area were not interested. As one interviewee commented, “*because the Chinese Chamber of Commerce is pretty strong ... if they want anything done, they get it done, [hence the] BIA will not be of much value*” (Community Agency Interviewee IA1, May 10, 2005). Other interviewees reveal major hurdles to joining the program, due to “*cultural difference in the views of forming a BIA*” (Councillor Assistant Interviewee CC1, January 6, 2006). Merchants were not comfortable being charged a levy to join; they were uncertain of the benefits of forming a BIA, and concerned that imposing a levy would increase their property tax.

## **4.5.2 City Officials**

### **4.5.2.1 City councillors**

In the City of Toronto, councillors are elected by the constituents of each Ward, and represent the interests of a particular community. Councillors basically address the needs of their constituents and receive credit for what is done for the community. The China Gate project demonstrates how East Chinatown merchants seized the opportunity to access financial and political resources from City Hall. At the same time, politicians have encouraged community engagement that supports collaboration. Positive and constructive relationships between Chinese merchants and local politicians are key to moving the China Gate project forward.

An important factor in building these close relationships is effective communication that can overcome linguistic and cultural barriers. A former administrative assistant at the councillor’s office, who speaks fluent Cantonese, Mandarin, and English, was instrumental in making the communication channels work. As the CCCET interviewees attest, she became their “key contact” at City Hall, since many CCCET members cannot communicate well in English. The assistant elaborates on this issue:

*Project communication and coordination was my key involvement. The merchants of CCCET are all volunteers. They may not have much time to follow through the project, and they don’t speak English well.... They can’t communicate directly with other city departments, but contact me first and ask me to communicate for them.... Communications with city departments may not be a problem for native Canadian businessmen, or the new generation of immigrant entrepreneurs. But*

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 3 for more information about the BIA program.

*for the old generation Chinese businesspeople, it could be very hard for them to seek help from city hall.... The language and culture difference is a big challenge. Besides, they need someone who understands how city hall works. Without someone like me as an internal Chinese-speaking contact person, it would be very difficult for them to move along the project.... They rely on me to work for them (Councillor Assistant Interviewee CC1, January 6, 2006).*

#### **4.5.2.2 City planners**

City planners' involvement in the retail development of the East Chinatown area was minimal, and limited to providing building permit approvals. A practical explanation for this is that retail strip development is beyond the planning department's jurisdiction, as one area planner argues:

*We [area planners] do development approval; they [EDO] do economic development.... We're not really geared to improve the situation. I mean if it's a financial kind of thing you want the best expertise you have in the city.... You might start with Planning, but we make the referral to Economic Development. (Planner Interviewee CP1, May 9, 2005)*

In other words, City planning is geared towards the early "planning" and "approval" stages in the physical development of retail strips. Business management or growth guidance stages in the development of a commercial area do not seem to be included in planners' daily agendas. Consequently, community outreach is not substantially involved in the community building process. The planning system is actually passive in its responses to local needs. It is only when a community voices their needs that planners respond to them. This City planning position is admitted to by an area planner and attested to by a community agency business consultant:

*We [city planning] don't really establish and do outreach in that way [like Economic Development].... We're always responding to what people bring to the city.... We're not...actually leading. It's kind of grassroots, right?... The community comes up with the ideas and then we help them implement them. (Planner Interviewee CP1, May 9, 2005)*

*[City planners] are neutral.... They don't initiate [things]. The push comes from the people living in the area. For example, they [planners] cannot radically change [the area], you know, do everything [from] the sidewalk to the window colours. They can't do it. But if something is happening there, and the local people, the local merchants[suggest changes], because commercially it is going to benefit and culturally it is going to benefit, then things can happen. (Community Agency Interviewee IA2, May 13, 2005)*

#### 4.5.2.3 Economic Development Officers

Compared to the passive role of planners, the staff of the Economic Development Office (EDO) played a proactive and leading role in initiating employment revitalization programs, facilitating collaboration between internal and external stakeholders, and undertaking community outreach and consultations. East Chinatown is considered one of EDO's 19 targeted employment revitalization areas, and, together with four adjacent areas, consists of the South Riverdale Revitalization Project (SRRP); the SRRP is supervised and administered by EDO, and is based on a large-scale community consultation. The outcome of this community-based initiative is a tailor-made area-specific development strategy and action plan.

The EDO not only allocated funds (Table 4-1), but conducts outreach initiatives in the community, resulting, thus far, in more effective two-way communication between the community and the City. One example is EDO's instrumental guidance in helping the CCCET administer City funding and accelerate the project process:

*They [EDO] notified us if we don't make use of the money by the end of this year, City Hall would withdraw the fund and reconsider it again next year. So they suggested we use the money to construct the foundation first, set up a pair of lion statues on the site, lay electric wires underground, and demonstrate an advertising board. If they didn't provide us the useful information, we wouldn't know anything [about city policy] and would have lost the city funding. We're very thankful they helped us figure out the two-phase solution. (Business Interviewee CB4, June 14, 2004)*

It is EDO's mandate to advocate for businesses and advance the economy; to this end, EDO initiates a series of creative programs to improve and benefit employment revitalization areas. These programs include commercial façade improvement, capital improvement, banners and murals, commercial and research grant, community festivals and special events, and crime and safety audits, some of which have been applied to the China Gate project. Although the gate as a piece of public art has

not traditionally been funded through the Employment Revitalization Program budget, the significance and magnitude of the project merited the City's contribution as a means of supporting the Chamber's [CCCET] efforts to generate additional business development and tourism in the community. (Policy and Finance Committee, 2004, p. 4)

As for the working relationships with other City departments, an EDO



interviewee advocates an “*interdisciplinary approach*” in which factors, including public health, environmental, economic, social and cultural issues are considered at the same time; this would require interdepartmental collaboration (EDO Interviewee CE1, May 13, 2005).

#### **4.5.3 Community Agencies**

The revitalization efforts in East Chinatown are based on community engagement and support. As one City staff report indicates, “South Riverdale has a high level of community participation, active community agencies supporting revitalization” (Halstead, 2001, p. 2). A former councillor’s assistant comments on how community support ensured the realization of the gateway:

*Aside from politicians’ efforts, support from the whole community is also a very important factor for success. The councillor’s office has received more than 100 petitions from the community in favour of the [China Gate] project. (Councillor Assistant Interviewee CC1, January 6, 2006)*

Among the many community agencies, three were noticeably involved in the area, the South Riverdale Revitalization Project (SRRP), the Ralph Thornton Centre (RTC), and the Riverdale Community Development Corporation (RCDC).<sup>8</sup> These groups played active roles in community consultation, outreach and research (Table 4-1).

In 2000, in partnership with the Economic Development Office, the South Riverdale Revitalization Project (SRRP) was funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), formerly Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). With “eleven member organizations representing South Riverdale’s businesses, residents, and social service agencies” (Halstead, 2001, p. 2), including the RTC, RCDC, and CCCET, the SRRP facilitated a series of focus groups and public forums. The consultations were held in the RTC, with nearly 300 stakeholders, and produced a strategic plan, “Building Community Wealth in South Riverdale”. In this plan, East Chinatown was one of five targeted employment areas to receive thorough community input and analysis, addressing its strengths, weaknesses, and future opportunities (SRRP

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<sup>8</sup> SRRP was an initiative based on a community alliance from 2000 to 2004; RTC is a long established community facility devoted to having “a supportive environment in which the Riverdale community responds to issues and needs” (Ralph Thornton Centre, 2005); and RCDC was a local community economic development consulting organization that operated from 1997 to 2005.

et al., 2001). Furthermore, an East Chinatown capital improvement plan was developed.

Also funded by HRSDC since 1997, the RCDC specialized in business outreach, research, and consultation. In particular, it applied its business expertise to help newcomer entrepreneurs overcome major barriers to their success; for example, they provided access to business information and access to start-up financing.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the RCDC launched a series of market research and business surveys, in partnership with other interest groups.<sup>10</sup>

These examples prove that community agencies can function as bridges between business communities and City officials. Their expertise in community outreach, consultation and research is a valuable asset to the community; the role they play in the community cannot be replaced by business associations or City departments. However, due to reduced governmental funding, the stability of the community agency sector is in question and some community services are at risk of elimination. Due to cutbacks in funding from HRDC, both SRRP and RCDC were terminated in 2004 and 2005, respectively. As a result, many of the development strategies initiated by the SRRP were not implemented.

The RCDC has made efforts over a long period of time to accumulate community resources and build trust among local merchants, as in the case of helping East Chinatown merchants form a BIA; however, due to funding cutbacks, no further action followed. A former RCDC business consultant elaborates:

*It's difficult for them[merchants] to comprehend the benefits of forming a BIA... So it is a key role the RCDC was playing a lot, like bringing people together... pacifying different groups, then lead them to get there.... And RCDC*

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<sup>9</sup> For example, in 2000, the RCDC secured an \$80,000 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant to launch a new project called "Expanding Economic Opportunity for Riverdale's Chinese Community", which supported Mandarin-speaking Chinese new immigrants and their start-up businesses (Keung & Talotta, 2001; RCDC, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> In 1998, a market research project entitled, "East Chinatown: A Merchants Survey" was conducted in partnership with the CCCET in order to understand the perceptions and concerns of business owners about their business environment as well as their hopes for the future (RCDC & CCCET, 1998). In 2002, the RCDC teamed up with the SRRP to conduct a "Riverdale Main Street Baseline Study" surveying East Chinatown and the other four employment revitalization areas; they collected business data related to business operation and promotion, physical conditions, city services, and future visions (RCDC & SRRP, 2002). The study aimed to create a local business database to guide future planning. The RCDC also assisted in a survey of residents and visitors to East Chinatown and the Gerrard India Bazaar in 2003, led by the tourism program at the University of Guelph and the planning program at Ryerson University (Joppe et al., 2003a, 2003b).

*has done quite a bit in this direction.... But all of a sudden, the funding is cut, so you know, there's not much action.... And unfortunately, that has come to an end.* (Community Agency Interviewee IA2, May 13, 2005)

In a community agency survey conducted by Community and Neighbourhood Services of the City of Toronto entitled, “Cracks in the Foundation”, among 316 agencies responding to the survey, 56% had programs at risk of termination, 44% had ended or eliminated programs, 45% had lost their funding, and 71% had clients who required service in a language other than English (Community and Neighbourhood Services, 2004). If government funding remains limited or uncertain, while services are devolved and left to the community sector, the long-term stability and capacity of community agencies to deliver appropriate services and serve local needs is crucial.

#### **4.5.4 Summary**

This chapter illustrates the economic and physical revitalization process in East Chinatown and focuses on the ongoing China Gate project. It examines the roles of three key players in this revitalization, namely the local business association, city officials, and community agencies, and the synergy they created. This case highlights the inactive role of City planners in the process, which seems problematic, since it puts the long-term sustainability of the area at risk. Overall, the East Chinatown case raises several questions for the planning system. While merchants struggle to survive and have worked hard for many years to save the declining retail area, why are planners absent from the response to the potential retail blight? How can planners create a holistic vision for the area? What planning tools would be effective in augmenting the local market and helping sustain the business environment? These challenges also represent an opportunity for City planners to reconsider their role in supporting ethnic retailing as well as recreating the community as a whole.

## **Chapter 5 Ethnic Commercial Strip II: Gerrard India Bazaar**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on the Toronto India Bazaar. It introduces the original development of the commercial strip in the 1970s and its subsequent evolution. The area's business profile over the past 13 years is analyzed, and a Business Improvement Area (BIA) operating in partnership with the City is described. The chapter then discusses specific details of major improvement initiatives in the Gerrard India Bazaar as well as ethnic expressions planned for future development. In this chapter I argue that the business community in this area must strengthen its partnerships with City officials in order to forward the development of the area and sustain its businesses; City planners should be more involved in the development process by better communicating with the community and accommodating expressions of ethno-cultural differences.

Table 5-1 summarizes the major events, key players' involvement in the development of this area, and interpretations of these interactions. The table is referred to throughout the chapter.

Table 5-1: Major Events and Key Player Involvement in Gerrard India Bazaar

Time Period	Major Events	Key Players				Interpretations
		BIA	Politicians	Economic Development	Community Agency	
1972	The opening of the Naaz Theatre					The accidental start-up of Gerrard India Bazaar
1982-present	-The establishment of Gerrard India Bazaar BIA -Area promotion -Community festivals and events -Streetscape improvement	-14 elected property owners and business operators are board members -2 part-time staff -Sub-committees	Local councillors sit on the BIA board	-Commercial Area Advisor assigned to the BIA and sits on the board -EDO provides 50/50 matched funds for streetscape improvement	Riverdale Community Development Corporation (RCDC) involves in many aspects of the BIA activities	A partnership is being formed between the BIA, community agencies, and the City.
2003	A series of surveys conducted with merchants, visitors, residents, and festival participants	Tourism development strategies explored			RCDC works as a bridge between the BIA and the university research groups	The BIA needs to develop a vision and strategy through professional support from consulting agencies or research organizations
2003-present	-Conceptual development of a South Asian cultural centre -Conceptual TTC advertising of the area with a “Bollywood” theme	Work closely with the Ryerson planning faculty members and students	Join students’ presentations. Show interest	-Join the design efforts -May not be able to provide funding, but can involve other interest groups	-RCDC facilitates meetings with merchants and the research group -Suggests the City fund the agency in order to forward the project.	The business community has the final say on what they want. Community agencies and other professional groups can use their expertise to help them set their goals. If there is a clear goal and an action plan, the City can assist them.
2004	22 street lampposts installed at a cost of \$250,000	Collect a levy of \$150,000 from its members		Fund half of the capital improvement cost as its financial incentive program		The City’s 50/50 cost-shared partnership in capital improvement projects helps the BIA realize their improvement plan.
2004-2006	Festival of South Asia	Organize the festival and promote the area	Negotiate with the TTC to waive the \$25,000 cost of for street closure	No funding allocated for this festival		The City can work better with the BIA to secure more funding for cultural events and festivals.
2006	Gerrard India Bazaar BIA eligible for the Façade Improvement Program	7 proposals are approved by the City	City council approval of EDO’s budget for the Façade Improvement Program to be applied to other 21 eligible BIAs	EDO initiates new capital funding for commercial façade upgrade in eligible BIAs		The BIA program is fully supported by City council and strongly promoted by the EDO as an effective means for economic revitalization at the neighbourhood level.

## 5.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 5.2.1 Geographical and Historical Background

About 1.5 kilometres east of East Chinatown, the Gerrard India Bazaar, also known as “Little India”, is located on Gerrard Street East between Greenwood and Coxwell Avenues, where over 100 South Asian businesses cover nine blocks, almost half a kilometre in length. Businesses in the centre of the strip, between Woodfield Road and Craven Road, have joined the Business Improvement Area (BIA) program (Figure 5-1).<sup>1</sup> In this study, the Gerrard India Bazaar generally refers to the larger boundaries of this area, between Greenwood and Coxwell Avenues, whereas the BIA refers to the central business stretch of three blocks, where businesses owners have full membership.

Figure 5-1: Geographical Location of Gerrard India Bazaar BIA (in the shaded area)  
Source: Urban Development Services, City of Toronto. Edited by Author.



- The long arrow in the inset shows the broadly defined Gerrard India Bazaar between Greenwood and Coxwell Avenues; the shorter arrow indicates the location of the BIA.

The Gerrard India Bazaar emerged in the early 1970s, almost concurrently with East Chinatown. Unlike most traditional ethnic commercial strips—“normally associated with the point of entry of an immigrant group”, and initially serving “the needs of the immediate neighbourhood” (Jones, 2000, p. 415) as is the case in East Chinatown and

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 3 for more information about the BIA program.

Corso Italia—the India Bazaar emerged and continued to develop in a different manner. The retail strip began accidentally in 1972, when Gian Naaz, a mechanical engineer who immigrated from India purchased the Eastwood Theatre, an English, Italian and Greek cinema hall, and turned it into the Naaz Theatre. Hindi films were shown at the theatre three times daily on weekends (Brouse, 2005; Hackworth & Rekers, 2005; Hutsul, 2004; Oliveira, 2000). The location was chosen because it was the cheapest in the city. Despite the dispersed settlement pattern of the South Asian population in the Toronto area, Bollywood moviegoers flocked to the theatre. Since that time, the rundown commercial strip once dominated by Anglo-Saxon and Greek stores, had been replaced by South Asian sweet shops, sari stores, restaurants, record shops, and grocery stores catering to the booming South Asian market.

Today’s India Bazaar has become a vibrant business incubator and an attractive tourist destination serving the regional community. It features a large variety of goods, including clothing, textiles, jewellery, kitchenware, groceries, books, souvenirs, videos, records, etc. People also come to the strip for South Asian cuisine, Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, or Bangladeshi food. The street life in this area resembles a typical Indian scene, with cornstands on the sidewalk, selling spicy barbequed corn and sweets, oriental music and the smell of spices filling the air, and brilliant sarees and sparkling jewellery in window displays (Figure 5-2).

Figure 5-2: Businesses in Gerrard India Bazaar

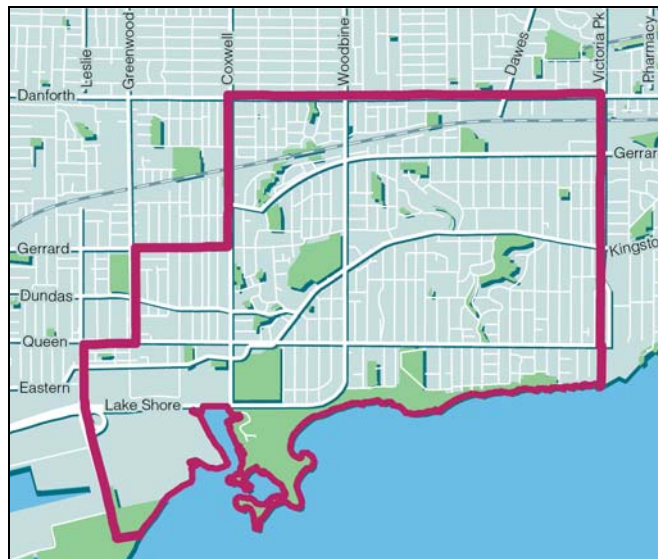


## 5.2.2 Community Social Profile

### 5.2.2.1 Ward 30 & 32 profile

The east end of Gerrard Street East runs along the boundary between Ward 30 and Ward 32, dividing the northern part of the Gerrard India Bazaar in Ward 30 from its southern part in Ward 32 (Figure 5-3).

Figure 5-3: Ward 32 Boundary  
Source: City of Toronto. 2003c.



The ethno-cultural profile of Ward 30 was introduced in Chapter 4 in the discussion of the East Chinatown case, pointing to the large presence of people of Chinese origin, and a low percentage of South Asian people (See Tables 4-2, 4-3, 4-4, & 4-5). Ward 32 shares a similar profile with Ward 30, with a low percentage of South Asian people residing in the neighbourhood. The similarities between the two Wards are highlighted in Table 5-2; additional data on the ethno-cultural profile of Ward 32 are listed in Tables 5-3 to 5-6. These data demonstrate that the local South Asian residential population is not sufficiently large to support the India Bazaar businesses; consequently, the India Bazaar serves a larger dispersed community and not the local one.

Table 5-2: Highlights of South Asian Profiles in Ward 30 & Ward 32  
Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census. Produced by: City of Toronto. Table compiled by Author.

	Ward 30	Ward 32
<b>Immigrants from India</b>	1.1%	0.7%
<b>Recent Immigrants (1996-2001)</b>	4,475	2,625
<b>Pakistan</b>	8.9%	11.6%
<b>India</b>	3.6%	5.7%
<b>East Indian Origin</b>	2.0%	1.3%
<b>South Asian Visible Minority</b>	4.3%	3.0%



Table 5-3: Total Population by Immigrant Status and Place of Birth (Ward 32)

Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census.  
Produced by: City of Toronto, 2003c.

Ward 32		
	No.	%
United Kingdom	2,775	5.0
China, People's Republic of	1,900	3.4
United States	1,010	1.8
Viet Nam	755	1.3
Philippines	540	1.0
Jamaica	390	0.7
India	385	0.7
Greece	360	0.6
Germany	340	0.6
Italy	330	0.6
Others	5,910	10.6
<b>Total Immigrants</b>	<b>14,695</b>	<b>26.3</b>
<b>Non-Immigrants</b>	<b>40,590</b>	<b>72.7</b>
<b>Non-Permanent Residents</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>55,860</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 5-5: Top Ten Ethnic Origin Groups (Ward 32)

Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census.  
Produced by: City of Toronto, 2003c.

Ward 32		
	No.	%
<b>Single Response</b>	<b>29,380</b>	<b>52.6</b>
Canadian	6,150	11.0
English	4,380	7.8
Chinese	3,500	6.3
Scottish	1,645	2.9
Irish	1,545	2.8
Italian	955	1.7
East Indian	715	1.3
German	640	1.1
Filipino	615	1.1
Greek	590	1.1
Others	8,645	15.5
<b>Multiple Response</b>	<b>26,490</b>	<b>47.4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>55,870</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 5-4: Total Recent Immigration (1996-2001) by Selected Places of Birth (Ward 32)

Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census.  
Produced by: City of Toronto, 2003c.

Ward 32		
	No.	%
China, People's Republic of	585	22.3
Pakistan	305	11.6
United Kingdom	165	6.3
India	150	5.7
Philippines	135	5.1
United States	120	4.6
Iran	115	4.4
Mexico	65	2.5
Germany	50	1.9
South Africa, Republic of	35	1.3
Others	900	34.3
<b>Total Recent Immigrants</b>	<b>2,625</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 5-6: Visible Minority Population (Ward 32)

Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census.  
Produced by: City of Toronto, 2003c.

Ward 32		
	No.	%
Chinese	3,760	6.7
Black	2,460	4.4
South Asian	1,655	3.0
Filipino	675	1.2
Latin American	535	1.0
Southeast Asian	370	0.7
West Asian	270	0.5
Japanese	255	0.4
Korean	160	0.3
Arab	70	0.1
Visible minority, n.i.e.*	375	0.7
Multiple visible minorities	400	0.7
All others	44,865	80.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>55,850</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### 5.2.2.2 Greenwood-Coxwell neighbourhood profile<sup>2</sup>

The Gerrard India Bazaar is located in the Greenwood-Coxwell neighbourhood (Figure 5-4). The Greenwood-Coxwell neighbourhood has a slightly higher percentage of working people between the ages of 25 and 64 (59.2%) than the city average (56.5%). In 2001 the average and median family income in the neighbourhood were approximately \$55,000 and \$47,600, respectively, lower than the city-wide index of \$76,000 and \$54,000. Combined with other indicators of statistic data, including a below city average college education level (19.3% vs. 24.9%), “the neighbourhood is still firmly working class in its orientation” (Hackworth & Rekers, 2005. p. 231). In this regard, the Greenwood-Coxwell neighbourhood is similar to the South Riverdale neighbourhood where East Chinatown is located.

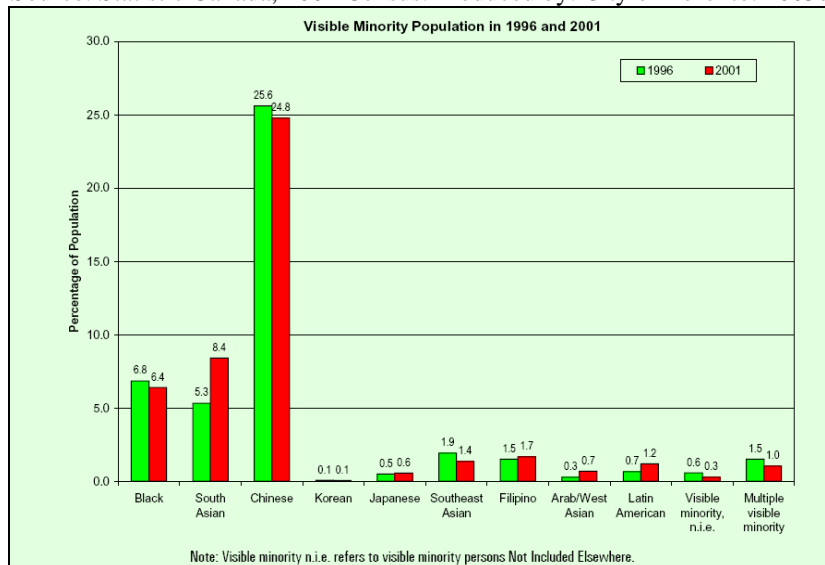
<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 3 for more information about the series of neighbourhood profiles provided by the City of Toronto.

Figure 5-4: Greenwood-Coxwell Neighbourhood Boundary  
 Source: City of Toronto. 2003d.



At the neighbourhood level, there is higher proportion of population of East Indian origin in the Greenwood-Coxwell neighbourhood than in Ward 32 overall (4.0% vs. 1.3%). The South Asian population presents a higher concentration in this neighbourhood than in Ward 32 (8.4% vs. 3.0%), and has increased from 5.3% in 1996 to 8.4% in 2001 (Figure 5-5). However, people of Chinese origin remain the predominant group, representing nearly 25% of the neighbourhood population. In summary, the evidence shows that the development of the Gerrard India Bazaar is not “an organic response to the local community”; rather, it is “an accident of ground rent designed to serve a regional community” (Hackworth & Rekers, 2005, p. 230).

Figure 5-5: Visible Minority Population of Greenwood-Coxwell Neighbourhood  
 Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census. Produced by: City of Toronto. 2003d.



## 5.3 BUSINESS PROFILE

### 5.3.1 Business Composition

The business data analyzed in this section was retrieved from the Centre for the Study of Commercial Activity (CSCA), at Ryerson University.<sup>3</sup> The data includes business records from 1993 to 2005, excluding the year 2000 (this data was lost).

Food related business and other retail are the two major business types in Gerrard India Bazaar; on average, they represent 39.6% and 40.1% of the businesses, respectively. The other services category accounts for only 20.2% of the market (Table 5-7). The predominance of retail and food businesses may suggest a tendency to create a “one-stop shopping destination” appeal for the larger community, by providing more shopping and dining choices. In comparison, the services sector may not be the major attraction as it is in the case in East Chinatown, where the local community forms the targeted customer base, and the services sector represents 35.9% of the area’s businesses, a much higher percentage than the retail businesses (24.6%).

Table 5-7: Gerrard India Bazaar Business Composition from 1993 to 2005  
Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author.

Business composition (%)	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Ave.
<b>Food related</b>	43.9	42.3	40.2	40.0	42.1	41.0	40.9	N/A	41.4	35.9	36.1	36.7	35.1	39.6
Food stores	17.1	17.1	17.2	17.0	18.1	16.0	15.5		15.9	15.2	14.3	14.7	13.5	16.0
Food services	26.8	25.2	23.0	23.1	24.1	25.0	25.4		25.5	20.7	21.8	22.0	21.6	23.7
<b>Other retail</b>	35.8	36.6	40.2	40.0	38.4	41.0	40.9	N/A	39.3	43.5	42.2	41.3	41.9	40.1
Apparel	15.5	15.5	16.4	17.7	17.3	18.1	17.6		16.6	19.3	18.4	18.0	16.2	17.2
Jewellery	3.3	4.1	4.9	6.2	8.3	8.3	6.3		9.0	9.0	8.9	8.7	8.8	7.2
<b>Other services</b>	20.3	21.1	19.7	20	19.6	18.1	18.3	N/A	19.3	20.7	20.4	22.0	23.0	20.2
Hair & Beauty	4.1	4.9	2.5	3.1	2.3	2.1	2.1		2.1	1.4	1.4	1.3	2.0	2.4
Motion picture & video distri.	4.1	4.1	3.3	2.3	2.3	1.4	1.4		1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	2.0	2.2
<b>Total stores (excl. vacancy)</b>	123	123	122	130	133	144	142	N/A	145	145	147	150	148	138

Indeed, most of the merchant interviewees mentioned that the Bazaar fills a niche as one-stop shopping destination that attracts people beyond geographical boundaries as well as ethno-cultural lines. A survey of 56 merchants conducted by Joppe et al. (2003a, p. 3) shows that:

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 3 for more information on the raw data retrieved from CSCA.

Almost half (48%) of the current clientele comes from outside the neighbourhood.... The most important reasons that bring visitors to the area appear to be 1) shopping for food / going to a restaurant (29%); 2) variety of products or shops / can get all at once (19%); 3) shopping for clothes (18%); 4) feeling of “just like back home” / ambiance (13%).... The clientele of the Bazaar has changed over the years...in terms of ethnicity (the Bazaar now receives more customers from various backgrounds).

As Table 5-7 shows, among the food related businesses, food services such as restaurants, bars, and takeout represent a higher proportion than food stores, such as groceries, bakeries, fruit markets, and superstores. However, both retail and services in food related businesses experienced a decline after 2001. Food services hit their lowest at 20.7% in 2002, possibly associated with the 9/11 tragedy that reduced the number of tourists from the US. The SARS outbreak in 2003 may also have had adverse affect on the food business. In the retail sector, apparel and jewellery stores are most prominent, accounting for nearly one quarter of the total businesses. These stores construct an exotic South Asian commercial landscape along the Gerrard Street.

### **5.3.2 Business Turnover**

In terms of business openings and closures, the India Bazaar has not experienced much fluctuation over the past 13 years (Table 5-8). Generally speaking, there is a balance between businesses entering the market and those leaving the market. Significant increases in the number of new business only occurred in 1996 and 1998. Overall, the commercial strip expanded from 130 stores in 1993 to 163 in 2005; nearly one fourth of the businesses have operated since 1993. A number of the interviewees also indicated that their stores are among the first business establishments, and have operated since the 1970s.

The vacancy rates varied from 5.0% to 10.7% over the years. The two highest vacancy rates occurred in 2002 and 2004, possibly as result of the lingering effects of the 9/11 tragedy in 2001 and the SARS outbreak in 2003. However, the overall business performance of the area was better than that of city-wide retail strips. From 1996 to 2004, the Gerrard India Bazaar had lower vacancy rates than the city average, except in 1999

and 2004.

Table 5-8: Gerrard India Bazaar Business Turnover from 1993 to 2005  
Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author; City-wide data produced by Hopgood, 2005, p. 56.

Year	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Openings	N/A	14	25	34	15	30	21	N/A	18	38	11	24	18
Closures	N/A	14	26	26	12	19	23		15	38	9	21	20
Vacant Stores	7	12	12	11	7	12	15		12	16	14	18	15
Total Stores (incl. vacancy)	130	135	134	141	140	156	157		154	161	161	168	163
Vacancy Rate (%)	5.4	8.9	9.0	7.8	5.0	7.7	9.6		7.8	9.9	8.7	10.7	9.2
City-wide Vacancy Rate (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	9.4	8.7	9.1	9.5	10.0	9.7	10.0	9.7	9.1	N/A

### 5.3.3 Changes in Ethnicity

South Asian businesses in the Gerrard India Bazaar represent a large spectrum of regional differences in terms of sub-cultures, sub-ethnicities, and religions. The entrepreneurs in this area originate not only from the Indian subcontinent countries (such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Bhutan), but also from other parts of the world (including the West Indies, Africa, Asia, and Europe). People from these ethnically diverse communities also speak different languages and dialects, and follow diverse religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism (Kumar & Martin, 2004; Oliveira, 2000). The term “South Asian” is an umbrella term used to distinguish people from the Indian subcontinent based on their ethnic origin; the term also implies the heterogeneous and diverse nature of the group.

The CSCA data on this area are insufficient to distinguish the multi-faceted ethnicities of the South Asian group.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, “South Asian” businesses are categorized in a single ethnic group as “Indian”. For the purpose of data analysis, when referring to the CSCA data in this section I use the terms “South Asian” and “Indian” interchangeably. In addition, they refer to only the ethnic characteristics of the businesses rather than the ethnicities of the storekeepers.

Table 5-9 illustrates the general ethnic content of the Bazaar businesses, regardless of the ethnicity of the storekeepers. The two main categories are Indian/South Asian businesses and businesses with no ethnic content. Overall, each category accounts

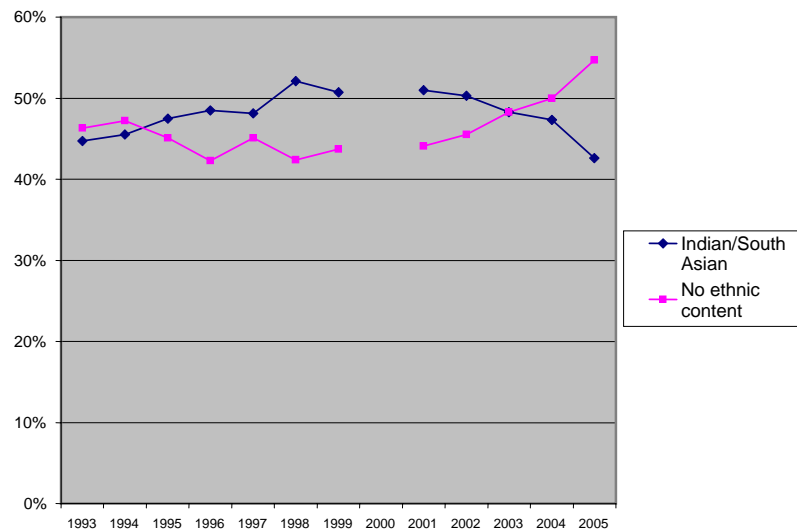
<sup>4</sup> The CSCA data define “ethnicity” based on students’ individual judgement, and reflects their observations of store signage, merchandise, and customers, regardless of the ethnic background of the storekeeper. See Chapter 4, Section 4.3.3 for more details.

for nearly half of the total businesses in the area and has remained steady over the years. Figure 5-6 shows the steady growth and similar percentages of these two categories.

Table 5-9: Ethnicity Content of Gerrard India Bazaar Businesses from 1993 to 2005  
Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author.

Ethnicity (%)	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Indian (South Asian)</b>	44.7	45.5	47.5	48.5	48.1	52.1	50.7	N/A	51.0	50.3	48.3	47.3	42.6
<b>No ethnic content</b>	46.3	47.2	45.1	42.3	45.1	42.4	43.7		44.1	45.5	48.3	50.0	54.7
<b>Chinese</b>	4.1	4.1	3.3	4.6	3.8	2.8	2.8		2.8	2.8	2.0	1.3	1.4
<b>Vietnamese</b>	3.3	2.4	2.5	2.3	0.8	0.7	0.7		0.7				
<b>Middle-Eastern</b>	1.6	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.4	1.4		1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.4
<b>Korean/Japanese</b>			0.8	0.8	0.8								
<b>West Indian</b>				0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7						
<b>Total stores (excl. vacancy)</b>	123	123	122	130	133	144	142		145	145	147	150	148

Figure 5-6: Proportion Tendencies of Indian/South Asian Businesses & Businesses with No Ethnic Content  
Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author.



Unlike East Chinatown, where businesses are trying to broaden their customer base to the general public, the steady 50/50 share of Indian/South Asian businesses and businesses with no ethnic content in the India Bazaar suggests an ongoing focus on both the ethnic and mainstream market by “rebranding itself as a tourist destination and broadening its appeal to attract mainstream shoppers, while maintaining its traditional South Asian customer base” (Yelaja, 2005. p. A1).

An increasingly strong South Asian identity has been established in the core area of the Bazaar, namely the three blocks within the BIA territory. Hackworth and Rekers’ (2005) study traces the ethnic identification of the BIA businesses in this area in 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000. Based on the Might’s Street Directory that indicates business

names with ethnic content, their findings reveal that South Asian identification, reflected explicitly in business names, has increased from 0% in 1970 to 71.9% in 2000, while no clear ethnic identification has weakened significantly from 89.1% in 1970 to 28.1% in 2000 (Table 5-10). The central portion of the Bazaar was dominated primarily by East Indians in the 1970s and mid 1980s (Oliveira, 2000). As the area expands, more Pakistani, Sri Lankan, and Bangladeshi stores have emerged. A small pocket in the west end of the strip has shown an increase in the number of Muslim-owned enterprises, and is now nicknamed “Little Pakistan”.

Table 5-10: Ethnic Identification of Businesses in Gerrard India Bazaar BIA  
 Source: Might’s Criss Cross Directory. Table excerpted from Hackworth & Rekers, 2005, p. 220.

	1970	1980	1990	2000
<b>Total BIA Businesses</b>	46	31	36	64
<b>Clear South Asian Identification (%)</b>	0.0	45.2	66.7	71.9
<b>Other Ethnic Identification (%)</b>	10.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>No Clear Ethnic Identification (%)</b>	89.1	54.8	33.3	28.1

### 5.3.4 Consumer Views

I conducted an intercept survey with ten shoppers (South Asian and non-South Asian) to fast track data on the demand side of the ethnic market. Only two respondents live close by and they do not shop often in the area. The rest of the respondents were from different places, including the Greater Toronto Area, the US, and France. These shoppers were mainly drawn by the large variety of South Asian goods in the India Bazaar. As one respondent from the US commented, “*I can find things [here] we can’t find in New York*” (Shopper Interviewee IS2, August 11, 2006). From the South Asian shoppers’ perspective, the India Bazaar provides almost everything they need in terms of speciality goods, such as South Asian wedding dresses and jewellery. Non-South Asian patrons were attracted by the exotic atmosphere of the India Bazaar and the food. These consumer views are consistent with the business data and demonstrate that the India Bazaar is a regional one-stop shopping destination, serving both South Asian and non-South Asian clientele.

## **5.4 MAJOR DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

### **5.4.1 BIA Issues<sup>5</sup>**

#### **5.4.1.1 The BIA organization**

The Gerrard India Bazaar was approved as a Business Improvement Area (BIA) in 1982. Currently, its board members include 14 elected property owners and business operators, two local councillors and one Commercial Area Advisor from the Economic Development Office. In addition, the BIA hired two part-time staff members to assist in its operation: A coordinator in charge of administration, liaison, and advertising, , and a customer service representative, in charge of security, parking, banners, festivals, flyers, etc. (Business Interviewee IB8, July 6, 2005). The BIA's annual budget was approximately \$110,000 in 2005, half of which was spent on marketing.

In the early 1980s, businessmen of the newly established BIA invested their collective efforts to improve and promote the area. Within the first year's budget of \$10,000, the BIA businesses advertised the area and designed a BIA logo, distributed buttons to shoppers, used unified shopping bags, and promoted the name "India Bazaar" in the media. In addition, they organized local events, such as family movie nights, and Diwali and Christmas celebrations. The BIA also encouraged active participation from its members by organizing small business workshops and bus tours to visit other BIAs; they formed sub-committees to help with street improvements, public relations, promotions, finance and parking (Gerrard India Bazaar BIA, 1982). At that time, the BIA also negotiated with the City to address issues, such as parking, the official status of the area as a tourist spot for extended weekend hours, street lighting, and business attraction initiatives.

#### **5.4.1.2 Cleanliness and parking issues**

Over the years, cleanliness and parking have been the two major challenges of the BIA. According to a survey conducted by Joppe et al. (2003b), among 313 respondents, 55% of the visitors to the area and 59% of its residents suggested that the cleanliness of the commercial strip requires improvement. Parking issues were listed by 32% of the visitors and 37.5% of the residents. In some cases, these issues are a source of friction

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 3 for more information on the BIA program.



between neighbourhood residents and the South Asian business community due to different cultural practices. For instance, South Asian patrons are familiar with chaat stands on the sidewalks, selling freshly barbecued corn on the cob and other savory snacks; however, they may not be aware of the garbage issues the discarded corncobs, corn husks, and betel nuts cause. Furthermore, some South Asians believe that feeding pigeons can bring good luck, yet they disregard the fact that it also causes pigeon infestation, to the chagrin of the residents in the area. The BIA “struggles to keep up with the garbage, mediating disputes with the residents’ association, and educating its members about the inadvisability of feeding pigeons” (Brouse, 2005. p. 33). In addition, the BIA hires extra help to clean up after the street festivals they organize.

Lack of parking space is another community issue. The retail strip was not originally “*intended to be a commercial strip. So it’s not set up like other commercial strips in the city. There’s a physical constraint there.... [For the most part] they have parking on the side streets*” (Planner Interviewee CP1, May 9, 2005). In addition, the only parking lot in the area is insufficient to accommodate many of the customers who drive to the area from other places. According to Joppe et al.’s survey (2003b), 65% of the 205 visitors in the study came to the Gerrard India Bazaar by car (65.8% were from across the GTA, 16.3% visited from other parts of Canada, and 17.8% were international travellers). Without sufficient parking capacity in the area, visitors’ automobiles spread onto residential streets, cause traffic congestion, or are parked in tow-away zones. The BIA has been negotiating with the Toronto Parking Authority to provide a second parking lot or a parking structure; however, over the years, no workable solutions have been reached. The BIA hires staff to patrol the strip and “direct customers to the parking lots and prevent them from parking in tow-away zones” (Bain, 1999. p. K4). This situation generates frustration among both visitors and the local merchants, as one merchant points out:

*We employ a part-time person. Especially between [4pm and 6pm], he goes in each store normally and asks the people “do you have the car outside”.... If one car is towed away, that means you’re finishing that customer, next time he won’t come here. And he will tell the ten other people.... We’re not [just] losing one customer, we’re losing ten families. BIA has presented the thing [to the Parking Authority], but...they cannot change the by-laws.... We had the last meeting with [the councillor], and the traffic guy and everything.... [The decision was to] put*

*up [a] big bold letter sign “no parking between 4 to 6pm, Monday to Friday ...and on a parking ticket.... We’re trying to do this, and they promise they’ll do it. (Business Interviewee IB2, July 12, 2005)*

#### **5.4.1.3 South Asian community festivals**

Organizing community festivals is a common approach among many BIAs to promote local economic development and identity construction. In the India Bazaar, hosting festivals is not only a means of introducing the diverse South Asian cultures to the larger community, but also to reconcile among its many sub-cultural groups, especially along religious lines.

The mixture of religions and faiths among the businesses in the Bazaar is evident. Despite religious conflicts in their countries of origin (between Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims), businessmen on the Gerrard retail strip have a common desire for economic prosperity and a peaceful life. Ultimately, they try to avoid discord and friction, and conduct their businesses in a professional manner. The BIA organizes a series of annual festivals that celebrate the South Asian cultures.<sup>6</sup> In 2004, the BIA held a joint Diwali-Eid festival because the two happened to coincide roughly on the same weekend. When the BIA members realized that “Muslims would still be fasting until after dark, they moved the kickoff party on the Friday from 2 pm to 7pm” (Brouse, 2005, p. 35).

In addition, when organizing community festivals, the BIA promotes the area among wider audiences. One merchant elaborates on this approach:

*The BIA is aware [of] understand[ing] other cultures as well. Whenever we celebrate the festivals,... [we] have to think of all other communities.... It should be modified or it should be celebrated in such a way that the other community also takes part [even if] it doesn’t belong to that culture.... The BIA is trying to go with the mainstream, to go with other communities, so they can understand our culture, and we can understand their cultures. (Business Interviewee IB2, July 12, 2005)*

#### **5.4.1.4 Physical streetscape improvements**

Significant physical streetscape improvements have yet to be conducted in the BIA area of the India Bazaar. This is partially due to the BIA’s relatively small annual budget that is based on levies from the merchants. For example, in 2004 22 street

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<sup>6</sup> These events include the Eid Festival (End of Ramadan for Muslims), the Baisakhi Festival (a Punjabi and Sikh celebration of spring in April), the Diwali Festival (Festival of Lights for Hindus), and finally Christmas and New Year celebrations for the Christian community. The Festival of South Asia is a general event that draws thousands of visitors each year to explore and enjoy South Asian food, arts, and cultures.

lampposts were installed at the cost of \$250,000. The City provided half of the matched capital funding as part of the financial incentive program assisting streetscape improvements. The \$150,000 levy collected from BIA members was insufficient to carry out the improvement project independently (Jain, 2004). Recently, a performance stage was built at the corner of the public library building, at the cost of \$80,000. It is an incremental process and the streetscape improvements in the area, such as tree planting and seasonal flowers, are on a small scale.

The City also offers a Façade Improvement Program to 21 BIAs; it covers half of the cost of eligible improvements to commercial building façades, to a maximum grant of \$10,000 for non-corner properties and \$12,500 for corner buildings. However, in previous years, the Gerrard India Bazaar did not receive funding due to the City's financial constraints. Several buildings in the west section of the BIA, however, were recently painted in bright colors to add a fresh look to the strip. This initiative was completed by the property owners, as one shopkeeper who rents a storefront recalls:

*Whenever a festival takes place every year, the owner thinks that my store should look better. The front presentation...should always be good.... The owner decides on painting [the walls bright] colours...to reflect the joys and the...celebration.... They believe life is beautiful ... The BIA...encourages the [property] owners to make their stores more tidy and look better.... There's no funding. It's all done by the owners themselves. (Business Interviewee IB2, July 12, 2005)*

The shopkeeper reflects on what the façade program could contribute to the Bazaar:

*[That could] help [establish the area] architecturally, [the] expressions of...their own identities.... Their culture should be [exhibited] on the street, see, by placing either, say the pictures or some statues, or whatever... That's how the façade should work, so that immediately, if you go to Gerrard India Bazaar, you see this area identified as a South Asian area. (Business Interviewee IB2, July 12, 2005)*

Starting in 2006, Toronto City Council approved an increased capital budget for the implementation of the Façade Improvement Program that will be applied to another 21 BIAs (Economic Development and Parks Committee, 2005). The Gerrard India Bazaar is one of the newly eligible BIAs; seven proposals from the area's property owners have been approved. These property owners will receive grants from the City to cover half the cost of the building facelift.

#### 5.4.2 Expressions of South Asian Identity in Future Developments

As previously mentioned, the businesses in the Gerrard India Bazaar represent a large spectrum of regional, cultural and religious differences among the South Asian communities, while sharing similarities and coexisting in harmony. The large variety of merchandise that is displayed on the street and in the stores, labels and showcases the strong “South Asian” identity of the area.<sup>7</sup>

Ethnic identity can be expressed not only through the goods and services that the businesses deliver, but also through physical forms, as the China Gate project in East Chinatown demonstrates. The BIA merchants of the India Bazaar have expressed interest in adopting such an approach. The BIA teamed up with the planning faculty at Ryerson University, to seek design remedies for the retail area: “first, to suggest ways to develop the ethnic identity of the Bazaar; and second, to develop design strategies to improve the physical and visual conditions of the market” (Kumar & Martin, 2004. pp. 5-6). Merchants also requested that, “*the physical expression of our culture and identity should be something common for all South Asians*” (Business Interviewee IB1, July 7, 2005), and “*help create the harmony within the South Asian community and with the mainstream*” (Business Interviewee IB2, July 12, 2005). Another merchant further comments:

*We’re trying here to represent...South Asians, that includes Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, West Indians.... We also have customers. So...that would have to be defined really, to include the all inclusive.... You cannot just focus on one particular, you know, group or so.* (Business Interviewee IB3, July 12, 2005)

A series of design concepts were developed by a group of planning students under the supervision of the Ryerson planning faculty. The final design focused, for the most part, on the use of a “Bollywood theme”, a popular cultural symbol, to represent the South Asian identity—which has also become a “youthful, popular, and flamboyant contemporary cultural phenomenon” —in mainstream society across North America (Kumar & Martin, 2004. p. 6). Students suggested sponsoring a streetcar and covering it

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<sup>7</sup> In the bazaar you can easily find Indian silk, Punjabi Suits, wedding lehngas and sherwanis for brides and grooms, sarees and dupattas (long scarves), South Indian vegetarian thali and dosa, North Indian bhelpuri and chaat, Muslim’s halal meat, nihari (stew) and haleem (soup), Punjabi lassi (yogurt drink), Sri Lankan kiritbath (rice milk), traditional Tandoori and Mughlai cuisines, as well as kitchenware, musical instruments, sports goods, cultural books, music and movies, and religious pictures and statues.

with “Planet Bollywood” advertising to promote the Bazaar throughout the city (Figure 5-7), since the existing streetcar route runs through the Bazaar from the west end of the city to the east end. They also proposed the idea of renovating and reopening the original Naaz Theatre, now a commercial and office complex, and developing attractive streetscapes by creating a Bollywood Walk of Fame, colourful murals, and movie posters.

Figure 5-7: The TTC Meets Bollywood  
Source: Kumar & Martin, 2004.



Another conceptual idea is the construction of a South Asian cultural centre. The RCDC facilitated a number of sessions where students presented their ideas to the business community as well as City officials; they discussed what a cultural centre should be, as a RCDC consultant describes:

*A cultural centre would provide [an] educational hub where you know, different cultural things can be displayed, workshops could be done, or when artists are in town, they can come to this cultural centre and do performances at the grassroots level.... So, that is the whole idea of creating, you know, an environment if people feel comfortable coming and learning about this South Asian culture at different levels. (Community Agency Interviewee, IA1, May 10, 2005)*

At present the center is only at the beginning of a plan for action. Merchants must consider critical issues, such as location and funding. It is not an easy task and the project depends on the motivation and leadership of the business community, and how they will pull the required resources together.

## 5.5 KEY PLAYERS: BUILDING BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

### 5.5.1 The Business Community

Forming a BIA was important for the business community in India Bazaar to ensure a nurturing business environment and a strong partnership with the City. As an assistant of the local councillor points out, when India Bazaar was designated as a BIA it added value and made a significant difference in the area:

*Anytime...you get a BIA together, what happens is that the neighbourhood becomes alive.... If you walk that strip of Gerrard Street, um, you've got the area where the BIA is and then the other area, and it's like walking night and day...And you notice that the lighting is much better in the area where the BIA is. And it's livelier. [It has] more pedestrian traffic. It becomes safer. (Councillor's Assistant Interviewee CC2, March 3, 2006)*

However, while a standardized BIA program generally offers beautification and improvement templates, it is not sufficient in dealing with more complex issues in relating to cultural differences. For example, due to their diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, it was not easy for the Bazaar merchants to work together through the BIA. As one community business consultant states, “*that has been a challenge...to bring them together ...in decision making or event planning. [But now] they're learning to work together*” (Community Agency Interviewee IA1, May 10, 2005). The BIA also has plans to expand its boundaries and bring the neighbouring businesses on each side of the street under its wing (Bain, 1999). But there was no consensus among the neighbouring businesses on joining the BIA. A possible reason for this may be that the businesses want to continue to reap the benefits offered by the BIA and to be included in all the festivals and in the BIA business directory, without paying the levy. One business consultant comments:

*India Bazaar has a strange problem. They have three blocks of merchants in the BIA, and there are at least three blocks on each side, which has developed...because India Bazaar is popular.... They join hands from time to time, but they're hesitant to join the BIA as full members. [If] the BIA is expanded, then they [would] have more resources to spend, and could do more things. (Community Agency Interviewee, IA2, May 13, 2005)*

Some interviewees believe this benefit-reaping business behaviour is based on ethnic and religious differences; they claim that most of the Muslim businesses owned by

Pakistanis at the fringe of the BIA do not want to join the majority of Hindu and Sikh businesses within the BIA boundaries (Business Interviewee IB8, July 6, 2005; Community Agency Interviewee IA2, May 13, 2005). This is a complex issue and it is difficult to draw any conclusions on the matter; the ethno-cultural diversity of the South Asian community embedded in the Gerrard enterprises deserves further discussion, especially in the future development of the area.

In terms of individual business strategies, the South Asian entrepreneurs tend to adopt an independent, or as Marger (1989) calls it, an “individualistic”, rather than “collectivist” approach.<sup>8</sup> This independent business strategy has helped them adapt to the business strip, and serve a large range of ethnically and geographically unbounded clientele. The entrepreneurs of the India Bazaar echoes Walton-Roberts and Hiebert’s (1997) study on the Indo-Canadian enterprise in the construction industry of Greater Vancouver, where the most successful entrepreneurs grew beyond the constraints of the intra-ethnic market.

Another dimension of the India Bazaar entrepreneurs’ independent business strategy, are unexpected business practices that clash with the norms of the host society. One typical example is a restaurant that uses portable trailers connected by plywood walkways and awnings to augment the space, picnic tables under colourful sari-tents in a large patio to create outdoor dining space in the summer, and a semi-outdoor kitchen open to the patio. The restaurant recreates a traditional scene of a South Asian street eatery, but it may not meet City regulations, such as fire and safety standards (Councillor Interviewee IC1, July 28, 2005). An area planner also reports that some Bazaar businesses “*had more negative experience with the City*” than those in East Chinatown, due to cultural differences and the lack of two-way communication about City rules:

*India Bazaar keeps running into planning because things are happening without building permits. Okay, that’s a cultural thing. Um, we were always being called in to look at things after the fact, like they would build the structure on the side of their building and they wouldn’t understand...it’s a City piece of land there; you*

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<sup>8</sup> According to Oliveira’s empirical investigation of South Asian entrepreneurs in the Gerrard India Bazaar, the factors attributed to this independent business strategy include: previous occupational and educational business backgrounds in countries outside Canada, personal sources of business financing, advantage in English language communication, less reliance on ethnic community resources for business information and networking, and lack of cultural and linguist homogeneity that “automatically militates against the emergence of a tightly-knit ethnic community with a high degree of institutional completeness” (Oliveira, 2000, p. 97).

*don't own it, so you can't build on it. So they were always running into the City in a negative point of view.... Their initial issue with the City had to do with trying to understand what the rules are. That's the natural cultural difference that both sides have to learn how to communicate.* (Planner Interviewee CP1, May 9, 2005)

In conclusion, the India Bazaar entrepreneurs must go beyond adopting independent business strategies, and consider working together with other businesses, developing better communication with the City and gaining substantial support from the City.

## **5.5.2 City Officials**

### **5.5.2.1 City councillors**

Compared to the merchants in East Chinatown, the South Asian entrepreneurs rely less on councillors' support, which may be attributed to their advantage in the English language and the BIA organizational structure. A former assistant of the councillor stressed the difference:

*[Instead of clinging to councillor's office for help, merchants in] the Gerrard India Bazaar (GIB) joined the BIA and work with the Commercial Area Advisor from the City to improve their areas. ... As a comparison [to East Chinatown's businessmen], the GIB merchants have no language problems at all. They don't even need interpreter at council meetings and can discuss their issues directly with City officials.* (Councillor Assistant Interviewee CC1, January 6, 2006)

Local councillors have played a relatively minor role in working with the businesses in this area. They offer help only when needed. For example when they recognized the cultural differences reflected in the case of the portable trailers-turned restaurant, they became involved; they helped the Pakistani owner understand the City rules, and suggested he consider renovating the building instead of using temporary structures (Councillor Interviewee IC1, July 28, 2005). The ethnic business sector requires more attention, as a former constituent assistant argues:

*The minority businesses have not yet established themselves in the new society. They normally encounter more difficulties than those local businesses. That's why they need more help and support [from the City].* (Councillor Assistant Interviewee CC1, January 6, 2006).



After all, local City councillors can offer the most effective support to fulfilling the goals of the business community. The business community must sustain strong relationships with politicians, as one area planner emphasizes:

*You need to work with the councillor, because the councillors represent the council at the...local level. [You] get the councillor on board for projects, and they're the ones who make the decision on how all the budget for the City is spent. (Planner Interviewee CP1, May 9, 2005)*

### **5.5.2.2 City planners**

As was the case in East Chinatown, planners were absent from the retail development of the India Bazaar. Interviewees' comments regarding planners' inactive role in the area can be summarized in three categories: First, some argue that it is beyond the Planning Department's jurisdiction, because of the economic development focus of the BIA and its small scale improvement initiatives:

*There is no planners' job here. [Instead], it's economic development office's job (Councillor Interviewee IC1, July 28, 2005).*

*The Planning [Department] is not really involved; it's more Economic Development. And then the community, the councillor and the businesses have more decision making on planning in business areas, but not the Planning Department. (Councillor Assistant Interviewee CC2, March 3, 2006)*

*Planning tends to do on a larger scale, and not so much on a smaller scale. BIAs tend to be like three or four blocks.... If you look at any BIA, planning wasn't necessarily involved.... The BIAs are not doing large scale development. All they're doing is accessorizing or changing the streetscape.... It's incremental; it's streetscape; it's the outdoor furniture, lighting, and then façade of their buildings. And that's usually what they do, what the BIAs do to improve. But they don't build...any grand buildings. (Councillor Assistant Interviewee CC2, March 3, 2006)*

Second, the opposing view argues that the Planning Department, especially their urban design function should collaborate more with the Economic Development Office on the long term development of BIA strips:

*There should be much more interface between the two offices,... And I don't think it's done very much. And I think that's one downfall of what we've been doing today. I think planning, especially the urban design group, um, there's a lot more we should be doing with each other.... I think that's why; I think it's something we lack. And I think planning and us should really sit down...and figure out what is the interface between the two operations,[how to] play a lot more proactive role to get things done.... I think there's got to be a more proactive stance on behalf of*

*the corporation as a whole.... It's got to be a matter of everybody being on the same page ... It should be a matter of getting the expertise and those that approve things that happen on the street, getting them together, and getting them all to understand the importance, the timing, the commitment the BIA is making, and putting every effort that we have into bringing these changes about. (EDO Interviewee IE1, May 10, 2005)*

Third are arguments that highlight the need for a multicultural department to represent different ethnic groups:

*The City wants to do lots of things to improve the...entire city.... Now the problem is[that] the City departments, also the planners [are held back by]either lack of information or [not knowing] how to approach each community. And it's very difficult to approach individually.... They should have that department, uh, representing...all different communities. Their department should be also a multicultural department, so that they can understand the, say, the requirement of that particular community. It'll help them to understand, to work, and to make it easy to work on that. (Business Interviewee IB2, July 12, 2005)*

#### **5.5.2.3 Economic development officers**

Building strong partnerships with the City is a key element in the establishment of the area, its operation, and management. The BIA is administered through the Economic Development Office (EDO). EDO assigns commercial area advisors from its BIA office to work with local BIA members. Here, the role of economic development officers is, for the most part, administration and auditing. Officers help BIA businesses achieve their goals, but are not involved in decision-making or vision setting, as one EDO staff member states:

*The other part of the role is helping the BIA determine what it is they want to do, what issues they're trying to address, and what are their goals.... And our job [is] not to be the board, but just to assist the board in that respect, and to guide them when they need it. But otherwise, to let them sort of create an image to brand their area the way they see fit.... We don't come in there with a hammer and say, "You've got to do this, this and this". It's more like "You tell us what you want to do, and let us help you get there." (EDO Interviewee IE1, May 10, 2005)*

The advisor further points out that if a BIA explicitly promotes its ethnic identity as their brand or image, the EDO officer would not hesitate to assist them achieve this goal:

*We don't insist that areas become BIAs. And then when they do, we don't give them the direction. We let them come up with their own direction. So, ethnic BIAs are free to promote their culture in any...shape or form that they see fit, and to any degree that they see fit.... I don't think it's a matter of having specific policies*

*for ethnic areas. I think it's having the programming in a place that allows all areas to brand themselves the way they think they need to be branded. If that becomes an ethnic branding, if that's their niche, then by all means that's exactly what they should do. (EDO Interviewee IE1, May 10, 2005)*

In this case, the economic development officers tend to play a less active role in the development of the ethnic retail area and rely on the standardized BIA programs.

### **5.5.3 Community Agencies**

The Riverdale Community Development Corporation (RCDC) was a long-time community partner with the Bazaar businesses, providing business consultations, loans, and research services (Table 5-1). The business consultants from the RCDC approached the merchants in both East Chinatown and Gerrard India Bazaar, and often worked as a bridge between the business people and the outside community (Business Interviewee IB8, July 8, 2005; Community Agency Interviewee IA2, May 13, 2005).

Since the RCDC was established in 1997, “the BIA started to involve the RCDC in almost every aspect of their activities”, including preparing budget reports and grant applications, planning events, and conducting research projects (RCDC, 2002. p11). When the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management at the University of Guelph and the School of Urban Planning at Ryerson University approached the area to conduct an ethnic tourism development strategy study, RCDC assisted in administering a series of surveys to merchants, local residents, and festival visitors. A consultant who worked closely with the BIA and the faculties recalls:

*I found out what we're doing is not enough. We should have a strategy.... We thought there's more of a need to develop a long term strategy, [to] find out what is the impact of ethnic tourism on the economy of the City, and the [local] community.... One [of the two projects] is to see and suggest the physical development of appearance that we can incorporate to make it more attractive. And the second [is to look at] what is the impact of tourism on the local economy and the community, and what [ethnic] tourism can bring in more revenue to the City. (Community Agency Interviewee IA2, May 13, 2005)*

Due to funding cutbacks from HRSDC, the RCDC was terminated in July 2005. The director of RCDC continued to suggest several solutions the City could offer to secure partnerships between the City, the agency, and the businesses:

*A couple of things the City can do. The City can recognize that there're a couple of strips that need revitalization, and they can provide some funding, you know, to us that*

*we can move forward the revitalization...do [a bit of] research and then help the local businesses. The City can also provide us with seed money.... We need one full-time coordinator to help us take the South Asian cultural centre project and move it to the next level. This individual will contact all the potential funders...bring the City, the funders and the community together, and start looking at a place, a space where the cultural centre can be established, and then, you know, do some planning before it can be taken to the next level. (Community Agency Interviewee IA1, May 10, 2005)*

## **5.6 SUMMARY**

This chapter discussed the development of South Asian businesses in the Gerrard India Bazaar; it revealed the different nature of the businesses in this area as compared to the ethnic enclave of East Chinatown. First, there is no significant South Asian residential population to support the businesses in this retail strip. Second, the area serves a wider ethnically and geographically unbounded clientele. Third, the majority of the businesses joined the Business Improvement Area (BIA) program and work in partnership with the City to improve the area. Fourth, because of their English language advantage and the BIA organizational structure, the South Asian business community relies less on political resources, especially assistance from City councillors. Yet, the South Asian entrepreneurs must improve their collaborations despite their ethno-cultural and religious differences. In addition, they must strengthen their communication with City officials, especially City planners, in order to better understand how the municipal planning system works. For example, they must respect zoning and building permits to avoid creating dangerous precedents in the City.

In this case, the ethno-cultural differences of the community had an impact on the retail environment. However, the role of City planners continues to be absent from ethnic retail development and inactive in addressing different cultural practices. This incompatible reality poses challenges for municipal planning. City planners should proactively educate newcomers about the planning system and find ways to integrate immigrants and allow them to express their cultural differences.

## **Chapter 6 Ethnic Commercial Strip III: Corso Italia**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter explores the Toronto, Corso Italia retail area. It outlines the historical development and business profile of the retail strip and introduces major development issues in the BIA area. The chapter follows a streetcar right-of-way dispute and discusses the roles of different key players in the final decisions regarding the physical changes to the area. The discussion illustrates planners' efforts to deal with city-wide development issues, which also caused frictions with the local business community. The chapter poses a challenge to the planning system to effectively communicate with ethnic communities and better accommodate their needs, in order to balance city-wide and local interests.

Table 6-1 highlights the major events and key players' involvement in the area's development, as well as the interpretations of these interactions. The table will be referred to throughout this chapter.

Table 6-1: Major Events and Key Players' Involvement in Corso Italia

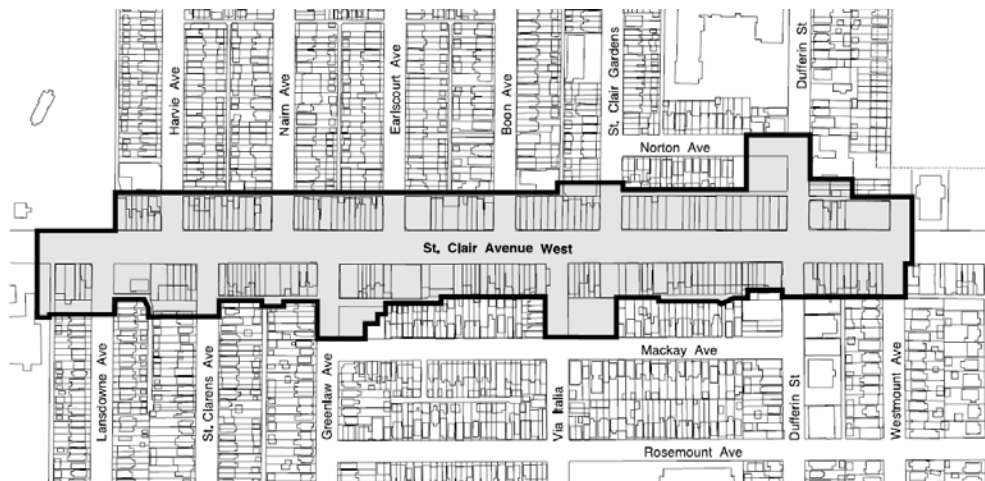
Time Period	Major Events	Key Players					Interpretations
		BIA	Politicians	Planners	Economic Development	Community Agencies	
1984-present	-The establishment of the Corso Italia BIA -Façade improvement -Streetscape improvement -Community festivals and events	14 elected property owners and business operators are board members	Local councillor sits at the board		-Commercial Area Advisor assigned to the BIA and sits at the board -EDO provides 50/50 matched funds for façade and streetscape improvement		The BIA program helps to build partnerships between the City and the business community.
2001-now	SWRC is established (2001) and develops two major strategy plans: -Revitalization strategy plan -Capital design strategy	The BIA's chair is also the chairperson of SWRC	Local councillor is one of the founding members of SWRC		EDO is in partnership with SWRC, and provides guidance and funding for two major strategy studies	By collecting community input and developing action strategies, SWRC is the link between the City and the community	SWRC is an example of how community agency plays a role in connecting various stakeholders.
2003	Alternative design proposal prepared by Corso Italia BIA	Hires architects to develop a conciliatory design proposal that promotes a balanced use of public space and public transit	Local councillor supports this alternative, but the City council turns it down and votes for the right-of-way (ROW) instead	Transportation planners recommend the right-of-way alternative			The business community of Corso Italia had the most objections to the right-of-way. Hence, they took action to get their voices heard.
2003-2004	Environmental Assessment (EA) process	-Business people actively participate in public consultation meetings and voice their concerns. -They believe the EA is a decide-and-defend process		-Planners are dedicated to community outreach by organizing public meetings and workshops. -they fail to ensure the business community that the ROW is the way to go			Planners and the business community had many face-to-face communication opportunities. However, due to the communication gap, partially caused by cultural differences, mistrust built up at the very beginning.
2003-2006	SOS is formed and sues the city in court. They win in 2005, but lose in the new hearing in 2006.	-Many of the business people allied with opposing residents under the citizen group SOS. -They join the protest rally, raise legal funds, and launch a legal challenge				As a citizen group, SOS represents interests of many local businesses and residents. -The solid community foundation empowers the group to fight the City	There is no clear-cut answer to this controversial conflict. One implication is that community groups can exert their influence on local issues.

## 6.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 6.2.1 Geographical and Historical Background

Located on St. Clair Avenue West from Westmount Avenue, just east of Dufferin Street and slightly west of Lansdowne Avenue, Corso Italia is a retail strip of about 250 businesses and has been designated as a Business Improvement Area (BIA) since 1984 (Figure 6-1).<sup>1</sup> The business owners of the area proclaimed this section as “Corso Italia”, the Italian version of “Little Italy”. The area has been recognized as Toronto’s third Little Italy, since the Italian population moved beyond their original settlements in the Ward (bounded by College, Queen, and Yonge Streets and University Avenue) and the area around College and Grace Streets (also labelled as “Little Italy” under its BIA organization) (Byers & Myrvold, 1999; Hackworth & Rekers, 2005; Zucchi, 1988).

Figure 6-1: Geographical Location of Corso Italia BIA (in the shaded area)  
Source: Urban Development Services, City of Toronto.



Over the past 60 years, the area has experienced remarkable ethnic succession and transformation. In the 1950s, the area was known as “Little Britain” as most of the stores were British and Jewish owned (Buzzelli, 2001). With the influx of Italian immigrants to Toronto after World War II, this area became a receptive destination point for the Italian immigrant community, and was firmly marked by Italians from the 1960s to the 1980s. Italian owned businesses, organizations, and community services (e.g., Italian book collection in the local library, Roman Catholic churches, Italian theatre, social clubs and

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 3 for information on the BIA program.

billiard halls, and a soccer field and bocce courts) flourished and replaced the British and Jewish enterprises, creating a new neighbourhood identity (Figure 6-2). One of the street names has even been changed by the City, from “Elmwood Avenue” to “Via Italia” (Byers & Myrvold, 1999). Incrementally, “Little Britain” gave way to “Little Italy”.

However, since the 1970s the number of Italian immigrants to Canada has dropped. In addition, in the late 1980s the Italian community began to move to the outer suburbs, such as Woodbridge. The Italian identity of the neighbourhood has faded as a result. Meanwhile, the area became a reception destination for Portuguese immigrants. In the 1990s, immigrants from Latin America and Asia began to move to the area. The neighbourhood has become ethnically mixed, a diversity that is reflected in its residential population and commercial identity.

Figure 6-2: Businesses in Corso Italia



The overall commercial use of the retail strip continues to persist to this day, mainly due to the streetcar service that has run along St. Clair Avenue West since 1913 (Buzzelli, 2001; Byers & Myrvold, 1999). Currently there are five BIAs with about 600 businesses located back to back along the avenue. Corso Italia is the oldest and the largest one.

## 6.2.2 Community Social Profile

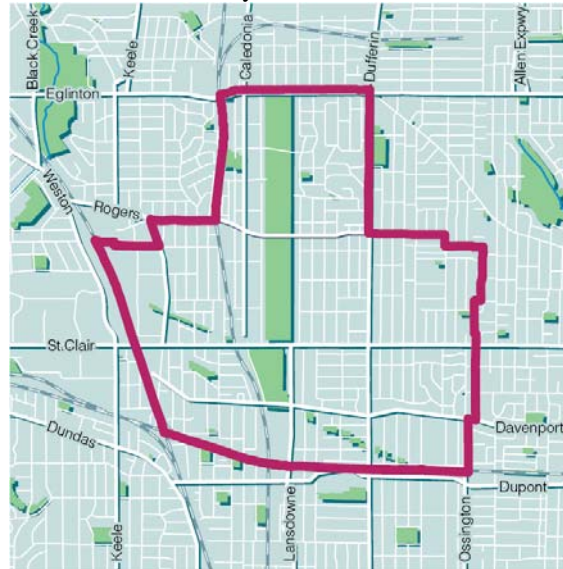
### 6.2.2.1 Ward 17 profile

Geographically, Corso Italia is located within the boundaries of Ward 17 (Figure



6-3), home to approximately 54,000 people and 18,000 households in 2001. Compared to the high percentage of Chinese or Asian population in Ward 30 and Ward 32, where East Chinatown and the India Bazaar are situated, Ward 17 features different ethno-cultural profiles.

Figure 6-3: Ward 17 Boundary  
Source: City of Toronto, 2003e.



As Table 6-2 and 6-4 shows, the Portuguese population has replaced the Italians as the largest group in the area by place of birth (17.1% vs. 10.7%), and by ethnic origin (27.0% vs. 17.2%). Statistic data also indicate that the Portuguese have outnumbered the Italians in Ward 17 in terms of mother tongue (24.6% vs. 14.3%) and home language (10.5% vs. 6.8%) (City of Toronto, 2003e). As for recent immigrants, from 1996 to 2001 Ward 17 represented more cultural diversity than Wards 30 and 32. People of Chinese origin represented less than 10% of the recent immigrants in the area, and people from other countries reached nearly 65% (Table 6-3); whereas in Ward 30, the figures were approximately 55% and 18%, respectively, and in Ward 32 22% and 34% respectively (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2.1 and Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2.1). Blacks (9.0%) and Latin Americans (6.6%) were the two largest visible minority groups in Ward 17 (Table 6-5); their presence was more prominent in this area than in Ward 30 (6.4% and 0.7%, respectively) and Ward 32 (4.4% and 1.0%, respectively) (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2.1 and Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2.1).

Table 6-2: Total Population by Immigrant Status and Place of Birth (Ward 17)

Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census.  
Produced by: City of Toronto, 2003e.

Ward 17		
	No.	%
Portugal	9,220	17.1
Italy	5,785	10.7
Viet Nam	1,785	3.3
Jamaica	1,405	2.6
China, People's Republic of	915	1.7
Philippines	745	1.4
Greece	570	1.1
India	510	0.9
United Kingdom	425	0.8
Guyana	350	0.7
Others	8,120	15.0
<b>Total Immigrants</b>	<b>29,830</b>	<b>55.3</b>
<b>Non-Immigrants</b>	<b>22,315</b>	<b>41.3</b>
<b>Non-Permanent Residents</b>	<b>1,855</b>	<b>3.4</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>54,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 6-3: Total Recent Immigration (1996-2001) by Selected Places of Birth (Ward 17)

Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census.  
Produced by: City of Toronto, 2003e.

Ward 17		
	No.	%
China, People's Republic of	350	9.3
Viet Nam	265	7.0
Philippines	155	4.1
Jamaica	125	3.3
India	105	2.8
Mexico	105	2.8
Pakistan	90	2.4
Colombia	70	1.9
Korea, South	55	1.5
United States	50	1.3
Others	2,390	63.6
<b>Total Recent Immigrants</b>	<b>3,760</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 6-4: Top Ten Ethnic Origin Groups (Ward 17)

Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census.  
Produced by: City of Toronto, 2003e.

Ward 17		
	No.	%
<b>Single Response</b>	<b>44,660</b>	<b>82.7</b>
Portuguese	14,600	27.0
Italian	9,295	17.2
Canadian	2,060	3.8
Chinese	2,000	3.7
Vietnamese	1,400	2.6
Jamaican	1,390	2.6
East Indian	985	1.8
Filipino	905	1.7
Greek	900	1.7
Spanish	890	1.6
Others	10,235	19.0
<b>Multiple Response</b>	<b>9,315</b>	<b>17.3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>53,975</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 6-5: Visible Minority Population (Ward 17)

Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census.  
Produced by: City of Toronto, 2003e.

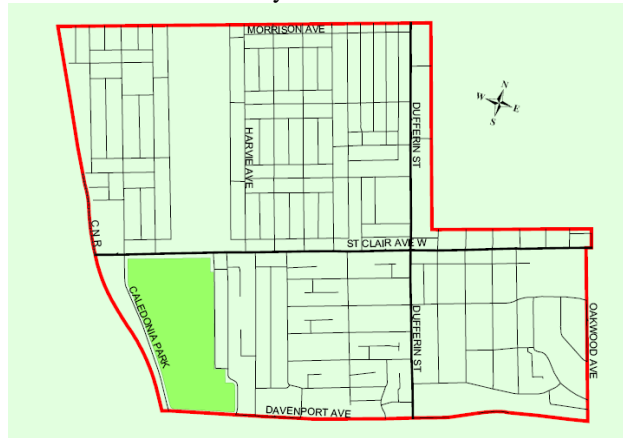
Ward 17		
	No.	%
Black	4,845	9.0
Latin American	3,590	6.6
Chinese	2,110	3.9
Southeast Asian	1,700	3.2
South Asian	1,410	2.6
Filipino	965	1.8
Korean	275	0.5
West Asian	155	0.3
Arab	125	0.2
Japanese	110	0.2
Visible minority, n.i.e.*	665	1.2
Multiple visible minorities	525	1.0
All others	37,525	69.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>54,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### 6.2.2.2 Corso Italia-Davenport neighbourhood profile

The Corso Italia-Davenport neighbourhood (Figure 6-4) shares a similar social profile with the neighbourhoods where East Chinatown and the India Bazaar are located.<sup>2</sup> It has a slightly lower percentage of working people between the ages of 25 and 64 (55%) than the city average (56.5%). In 2001 the average and median family income in the neighbourhood were approximately \$58,400 & \$49,600, respectively, slightly higher than the income levels of the South Riverdale and Greenwood-Coxwell neighbourhoods, but lower than the city-wide index (\$76,000 and \$54,000, respectively). In addition, the neighbourhood's below city average college education levels (17.1% vs. 24.9%) reflect its working-class population (Hackworth & Rekers, 2005).

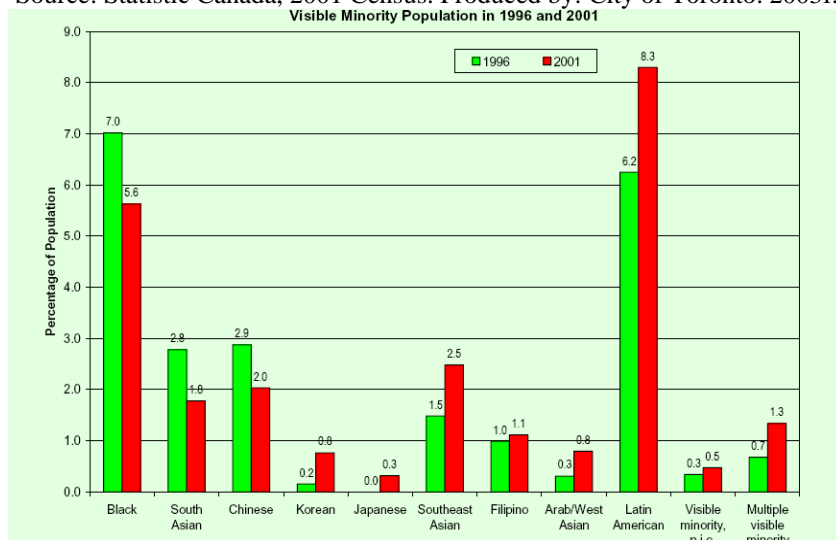
<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 3 for more information about the series of neighbourhood profiles provided by the City of Toronto.

Figure 6-4: Corso Italia-Davenport Neighbourhood Boundary  
 Source: City of Toronto. 2003f.



In contrast to the ethno-cultural profile of Ward 17, the Italian group had a slightly higher representation than the Portuguese by home language (10.55% vs. 9.09%) and ethnic origin (30.2% vs. 25.3%) at the neighbourhood level (City of Toronto, 2003f). In terms of the composition of the visible minority population, Latin Americans had the highest representation, growing from 6.2% in 1996 to 8.3% in 2001 (Figure 6-5), followed by Blacks who consisted 5.6% of the neighbourhood population in 2001. Unlike the neighbourhoods of East Chinatown and the Indian Bazaar, where subgroups of Asians (especially the Chinese) are, generally, the predominant visible minority groups, the Corso Italia-Davenport neighbourhood represents a more multi-ethnic mixture, and a dramatic ethnic shift from its earlier European residents (the British, Italians, and Portuguese) to a Latin American, Black, and Asian population.

Figure 6-5: Visible Minority Population of Corso Italia-Davenport Neighbourhood  
 Source: Statistic Canada, 2001 Census. Produced by: City of Toronto. 2003f.



## 6.3 BUSINESS PROFILE

### 6.3.1 Business Composition

The business data analyzed in this section was retrieved from the Centre for the Study of Commercial Activity (CSCA), at Ryerson University, which contains business records from 1993 to 2005.<sup>3</sup> However, the CSCA data only covers 60% of the total 250 businesses within the Corso Italia BIA boundary, since the business strip west of Greenlaw Avenue was not included in the CSCA data. To ensure data consistency throughout the case studies, the thesis relies on the CSCA's data to depict the business nature of Corso Italia.

Businesses in Corso Italia feature a large proportion of retail. As Table 6-6 reveals, retail represents nearly half of the businesses in this area, whereas food related businesses and other services each consist of approximately 25% of the market share. A trendy European style and an authentic Italian experience are the two selling points the Corso Italia BIA has marketed. As the BIA website boasts, especially in comparing the area with its southern counterpart, Little Italy on College Street:

*Corso Italia on St. Clair is known for [its] fashionable shops that reflect what's hot in Europe. Top-of-the-line Fashion shops draw crowds, as do a multitude of cafes, restaurants, trendy gelaterias and cappuccino houses, offering the flavours of various Italian Regions. (Corso Italia BIA, 2006a)*

*Here the streets are lined with fashionable, high-end Italian shops, Italian lampposts, and trendy gelaterias and cappuccino houses. If Little Italy represents the "heart" of Italy, then Corso Italia is the "skin"—exquisite, fashionable, with just enough attitude to be seductive. (Corso Italia BIA, 2006b)*

In the retail sector, apparel stores are the most prominent category and account for almost 36% of the businesses (Table 6-6). The apparel sector features high-end clothing boutiques, such as men and women's fashion stores that carry Italian or European labels and elaborate wedding dresses; these shops help create a trendy European shopping atmosphere in Corso Italia, and have also become a business niche in the area. Food services (e.g., restaurants) and food stores (e.g., groceries) represent, on average, 19.9% and 6.6%, of the businesses, respectively.

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 3 for more information on the raw data retrieved from CSCA.

Table 6-6: Corso Italia Business Composition from 1993 to 2005  
 Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author.

Business composition (%)	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Ave.
<b>Food related</b>	26.9	26.0	24.4	25.0	24.4	27.7	27.9	28.6	26.4	26.3	26.6	27.0	27.2	26.5
Food stores	7.7	7.6	5.9	6.6	6.9	6.9	7.0	7.1	7.0	5.3	5.8	5.7	6.6	6.6
Food services	19.2	18.3	18.5	18.4	17.6	20.8	20.9	21.4	19.4	21.1	20.9	21.3	20.6	19.9
<b>Other retail</b>	49.2	50.4	49.6	50.0	51.2	50.0	48.8	47.6	50.4	46.6	47.5	48.2	48.5	49.1
Apparel	36.2	36.6	34.8	37.5	38.2	36.2	34.9	35.7	37.2	35.3	35.3	34.0	35.3	35.9
Gen. merchandize	5.4	5.3	5.9	5.9	4.6	5.4	7.0	5.6	5.4	4.5	4.3	5.0	5.2	5.3
<b>Other services</b>	23.9	23.7	25.9	25.0	24.4	22.3	23.3	23.8	23.3	27.1	25.9	24.8	24.3	24.4
Hair & Beauty	4.6	4.6	5.2	5.9	5.3	4.6	4.7	4.0	3.9	5.3	5.0	4.3	3.7	4.7
Banks	3.1	3.1	3.0	2.9	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.1	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.8
<b>Total stores (excl. vacancy)</b>	130	131	135	136	131	130	129	126	129	133	139	141	136	133

Unlike Little Italy on College Street, Corso Italia has a relatively lower proportion of restaurants catering to people from outside of the community, including tourists. As Hackworth and Rekers' study (2005) noted, "restaurants in Corso Italia are generally less expensive, older, and more dependent on a local consumer base than those in the more commercially successful Little Italy to the south" (p. 233); this implies a more authentic Italian experience, rather than a tourist appeal to the area. In the services sector, hair and beauty shops and banks were the largest categories serving the basic needs of the community. Most of the major Canadian banks have branches in the area, including CIBC, Bank of Montreal, TD Canada Trust, Sociabank, HSBC, and National Bank of Canada.

Compared with the cases of East Chinatown and the Gerrard India Bazaar, Corso Italia specializes, to a large degree, in retail, especially high-end fashion stores that draw customers from all over the city. Yet, its food related businesses and services are more locally oriented. This dual customer-base approach is different from the singular based clientele in the previous cases; in East Chinatown businesses mostly serve the local residential population, and in India Bazaar, they tend to target a more regional customer base and the tourist market.

### 6.3.2 Business Turnover

Over the past 13 years, businesses in Corso Italia have maintained a balance between businesses entering the market and those leaving it. In addition, no significant

changes have occurred in terms of the total number of stores (Table 6-7). It is safe to say that businesses are very stable in this uptown shopping strip.

Table 6-7: Corso Italia Business Turnover from 1993 to 2005  
Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author; City-wide data produced by Hopgood, 2005, p. 56.

Year	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Openings</b>	N/A	6	24	25	7	12	13	11	9	30	10	16	13
<b>Closures</b>	N/A	5	20	24	12	13	14	14	6	26	4	14	18
<b>Vacant stores</b>	8	6	3	6	10	4	5	8	10	12	7	5	6
<b>Total stores (incl. vacancy)</b>	138	137	138	142	141	134	134	134	139	145	146	146	142
<b>Vacancy rate (%)</b>	5.8	4.4	2.2	4.2	7.1	3.0	3.7	6.0	7.2	8.3	4.8	3.4	4.2
<b>City-wide vacancy rate (%)</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	9.4	8.7	9.1	9.5	10.0	9.7	10.0	9.7	9.1	N/A

In addition, a lower-than-city-average vacancy rate between 1996 and 2004 indicates Corso Italia’s stable business environment. Its general business performance is much better than the East Chinatown and the Gerrard India Bazaar areas. This area’s success is attributed mainly to the following reasons: First, Corso Italia has better developed commercial buildings and public infrastructures that were first established in the early era of “Little Britain”. Second, having both local and regional customer bases helps the area enlarge its market. Third, the upscale fashion businesses create a niche and attract relatively wealthy businesses and customers to this working-class neighbourhood (Toronto Life, 1984). Finally, the Italian or European appeal of the area caters to common mainstream tastes of both Italians and non-Italians alike.

### 6.3.3 Changes in Ethnicity

From British, Jews, Italians, and Portuguese to Latin Americans and Asians, the ethnic succession in the commercial area of Corso Italia has been substantial. However, as indicated in the previous two chapters, the CSCA data is insufficient to determine the ethnic diversification of the businesses and distinguish the ethnicities of the entrepreneurs in the area.<sup>4</sup> This results in a general categorization of “Italian” businesses, without distinguishing other businesses of similar European appeal. Therefore, this section uses the two terms, “Italian” and “European” interchangeably when referring to the CSCA

<sup>4</sup> The CSCA data defines “ethnicity” based on students’ individual judgement, and reflects their observations of store signage, merchandise, and customers, regardless of the ethnic background of the storekeeper or owner. See Chapter 4, Section 4.2.4 for more details.

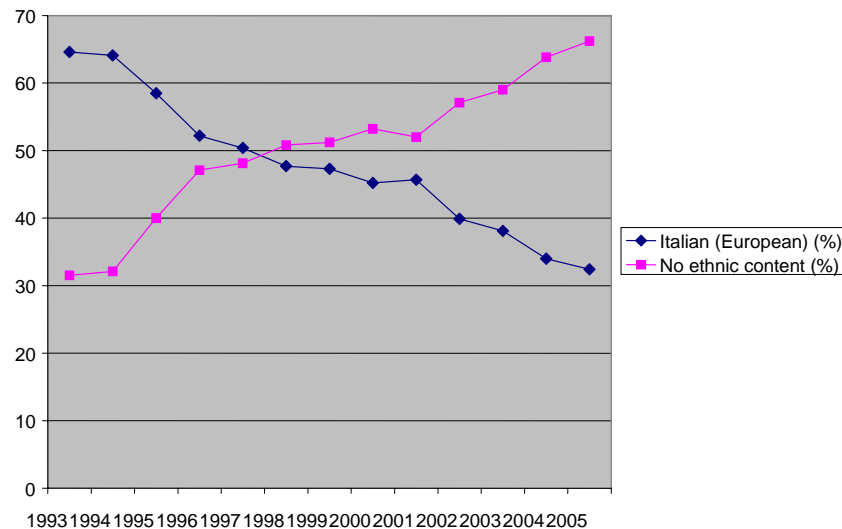
data and analysis. In addition, they refer to only the ethnic characteristics of the businesses rather than the ethnicities of the storekeepers.

Table 6-8 illustrates contrasting growth patterns between the two major business categories, the Italian/European businesses and the businesses with no ethnic content. The category of Italian/European businesses experienced significant decline between 1993 and 2005, from 64.6% to 32.4% of the businesses in this area: the category of businesses with no ethnic content experienced a soaring growth during this time period, from 31.5% in 1993 to 66.2% in 2005. Figure 6-6 reflects the contrast between the two groups.

Table 6-8: Ethnicity Content of Corso Italia Businesses from 1993 to 2005  
Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author.

Ethnicity (%)	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Italian/European</b>	64.6	64.1	58.5	52.2	50.4	47.7	47.3	45.2	45.7	39.9	38.1	34.0	32.4
<b>No ethnic content</b>	31.5	32.1	40.0	47.1	48.1	50.8	51.2	53.2	52.0	57.1	59.0	63.8	66.2
<b>Chinese</b>	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7
<b>West Indian</b>	0.8	0.8			0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.4	0.7
<b>Indian</b>	0.8	0.8											
<b>Armenian</b>	0.8	0.8											
<b>African</b>	0.8	0.8											
<b>Middle Eastern</b>			0.7										
<b>Japanese</b>										0.8	0.7		
<b>Total stores (excl. vacancy)</b>	130	131	135	136	131	130	129	126	129	133	139	141	136

Figure 6-6: Proportion Tendencies of Italian/European Businesses & Businesses with No Ethnic Content  
Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author.



Hackworth and Rekers' (2005) study supports similar proportion tendencies. Employing the *Might's Street Directory* to trace business names with ethnic content, the authors differentiated the businesses with clear Italian identification from those with no clear ethnic identification. Their findings show a drop in the proportion of businesses with clear Italian identification, from 43.2% in 1980 to 31.1% in 2000, and an increase in the proportion of businesses with no clear ethnic identification, from 56.2% in 1980 to 67.4% in 2000.

These data indicate that businesses in Corso Italia have a propensity to target a mainstream market. They have reduced the level of "Italian" or "European" ethnic expression in their store names, signage, and the appeal of their merchandise. Compared with the strong ethnic flavour preserved in East Chinatown and the Gerrard India Bazaar, the Italian or European character of Corso Italia's businesses is declining gradually.

#### **6.3.4 Consumer Views**

I conducted an intercept survey with ten shoppers, many of whom are local residents who regularly shop at the local stores. The rest of the respondents were from places across the province and shop in Corso Italia for quality specialty products, such as shoes and wedding dresses. Respondents comment that the population of the area is becoming more mixed with newcomers of Asian and Latin American origins. This growing diversity is also reflected in the local businesses that provide products catering to a wider range of groups. These consumer views are consistent with the findings from the business data, and show that businesses in Corso Italia are diversifying their merchandise to serve wider audiences and maintaining high-end products to serve a dual local and regional customer base.

### **6.4 MAJOR DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

#### **6.4.1 The Corso Italia BIA<sup>5</sup>**

Established in 1984, the Corso Italia BIA is one of the oldest and largest BIAs across the City of Toronto. Currently, the BIA has around 250 member businesses. Similar to the Gerrard India Bazaar BIA structure, the Corso Italia BIA's board members

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 3 for information on the BIA program.



include 14 elected property owners and business operators, one local councillor, and one Commercial Area Advisor from the Economic Development Office. Due to its large membership base, in 2005 the Corso Italia BIA accumulated an annual budget of approximately \$210,000. Compared with other BIAS, the Corso Italia BIA is no exception in using its funds to focus heavily on streetscape improvement, seasonal decorations, event planning, marketing, and advertising.

In addition, the Façade Improvement Program instituted by the Economic Development Office has been in place since 2003. Corso Italia is one of the 22 BIAS eligible for multi-year grants under this program, which provides grants to private property owners to redesign, renovate, or restore commercial or industrial building facades.<sup>6</sup> The program has become a popular incentive in many BIA areas, and in 2006 it was expanded to 21 additional BIAS; the program plans to cover all BIAS by 2010.

In Corso Italia, 15 façade upgrade proposals were approved in 2005. Local merchants regard the program as a welcome initiative, as one grant receiver comments:

*People want to come to a place that looks nice, not to a rundown street. [But] façade [upgrade] is a very difficult one, because it's hard enough to make a dollar in business today... So there's very little incentive for...small businesses to create a nice façade, when you...may not see return [for] 15 to 20 years.... So when you get the City saying "If you fix the building, we'll give you half [of the cost] up to \$10,000 or \$12,000". Now there's a sound of doing something. (Business Interviewee CIB1. November 11, 2005).*

In addition to improving the physical appearance of the strip, the BIA has been active in organizing city-wide popular events in the past ten years, such as a cycling race Grand Prix, an annual street festival, fashion shows, and a world record-breaking, spaghetti-making, fundraising event. To a certain degree, these events reflect the Italian or European flavour that the BIA would like to preserve. Furthermore, the Corso Italia area has held the biggest events in the local history and maintained its central status in Toronto's Italian community. These events included the Italian presidential visits in 1967 and 1986, Queen Elizabeth's walking tour in 1984, and celebrations of Italy's World Cup

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<sup>6</sup> Improvements may include brick cleaning, restoration, wheelchair accessibility, doors, signage, windows, lighting, and masonry. Half of the cost is covered by the program, with a minimum of \$2,500 and a maximum of \$10,000 for non-corner properties. Corner properties are eligible for a maximum grant of \$12,500.

victories in 1982 and 2006; the victory celebrations drew an estimated 200,000 people, many of whom were Italian Canadians. (Buzzelli, 2001; Byers & Myrvold, 1999).

#### **6.4.2 Expressions of Ethnic Identity**

Buzzelli's (2001) study of St. Clair Avenue West vividly illustrates the transformation of the area from Little Britain to Little Italy by capturing the hybrid forms of the streetscape, reflecting both the old British Georgian style and the new Italian architectural expressions. Participants in his study reported being proud to enhance the Italian style of their storefronts; yet, they reacted negatively towards the new immigrant shopkeepers who did not conform to this style. Buzzelli concludes that: "Landscape change, therefore, captures St Clair's and Toronto's demographic diversification with its attendant pride and tension" (p. 584).

Slightly different from Buzzelli's findings, this study reveals that the merchants prefer a more toned-down expression of ethnicity, so that they may appeal to more customers from different backgrounds. The eight business interviewees in this area, of mixed ethnic origins (e.g., Italians, Portuguese, and Canadians), have had stores in this area for 10 to 48 years, an average of 30 years. When asked how they like the Italian theme expressed in Corso Italia, and how they would "uplift" their store façade, only two stressed that the area needed "*a stronger Italian image*" (Business Interviewee CIB7, November 1, 2005) and should "*keep that Italian identity alive*" (Business Interviewee CIB6, October 28, 2005). The rest of the interviewees were more in favour of a European theme or a neutral appeal. The following are typical comments made by three merchants of Canadian, Portuguese, and Italian origins, respectively; they want to project a toned-down image that targets wider audience instead of specific groups.

*We recognize that the area has changed.... We know that the Italians are no longer predominant in the area; actually Portuguese are. But that's changing as well. We're getting more of the Asian influence, South American influence, and so on and so forth. We understand we have to, you know, live in that world. It's not a problem, either. We tend to, as a business community, uh, look to branding ourselves more as a European destination. We believe that this is a destination shopping area. And that's what we're promoting. (Business Interviewee CIB1, November 11, 2005)*

*I don't want to either be a Portuguese theme or Italian, just be European, because we're in Canada.... And I wouldn't put things in Portuguese or flags or things*

*like that to identify one group or another. So I'll be neutral. But I'll stay with that European theme, [keeping it] a nice building as they have in Europe with fancy canopies and windows. (Business Interviewee CIB4, October 27, 2005)*

*I don't want to add any cultural expression [to my storefront]. Our clientele is very mixed. Not necessary [to] claim the "Italian" identity. Every nationality is welcome.... I don't think we're really aiming for Italian or European [characteristics]. I think we're aiming for, um, elegant but not sloppy. (Business Interviewee CIB2, November 11, 2005)*

Another community focus regards the name "Corso Italia" as a collective image of the business community. Merchants "*don't want to lose that [Italian] flavour.... But it's nice to have a sprinkling of nationalities*" (Business Interviewee CIB2, November 11, 2005). One BIA board member, estimates that, currently, approximately 60% of the storekeepers are of Italian origin, 20% of Portuguese origin, and 20% of other origins (Business Interviewee CIB4, October 27, 2005). Merchants wondered if it still makes sense to use the name Corso Italia, as it does not correspond with the demographic transition and diversification of the area; one merchant expresses this concern:

*It's no longer Italian. I think the name is "Corso Italia" because of the past.... Among the BIA, there are a lot of store-owners now [who] are Portuguese. So I don't know if it's fair to call it Italian any more. It's more of an Italian-Portuguese split. But, you know, I guess we've spent so much money on advertising Corso Italia as a name, I don't know if it makes sense to change it now. (Business Interviewee CIB3, October 27, 2005)*

This subject has been discussed at BIA meetings. A possible solution is to use "Corso Italia" as a sub-heading to indicate its connection to the Italian businesses; one BIA board member explains:

*[The name of Corso Italia] is a little bit deceiving now, just like "Little Italy".... We probably have to come up with a generic name [with a sub-heading, such as] St. Clair Gardens-Old Corso Italia.... It used to be Corso Italia, but now it's a mix. Otherwise you're showing the wrong image.... It's a very touchy subject when that comes across the BIA, because a lot of the members, you know, they feel that's the name for it.... If we do change, keep that sub-heading there, but keep it generic so that everybody can relate to it. [So] people know what they're getting. (Business Interviewee CIB4, October 27, 2005)*

Changing the name of the annual, BIA-run, street festival raised similar debates, regarding which language would attract more people from diverse groups. As early as the 1950s, the Italian immigrants living in the area had the *fiesta* (an Italian word for *festival*),

a celebration sponsored by the local churches (Byers & Myrvold, 1999). Since 1997, the BIA has hired event planners to organize an annual street festival called *fiesta* (a Spanish word for *festival*). The name change from *festa* to *fiesta* reflects the increasing influence of the Hispanic community from Latin America, as a former local councillor recalls:

*Whether it should be Fiesta or Festa has been an ongoing argument for a long time. The Italians don't want to give up that Italian identity, but the newcomers are saying, even young Italians, [and] everybody new to the area is saying.... "You know, you got to go [with] Latin Fiesta. We have to... come up with a new idea."* (Former Councillor Interviewee CIC3, November 24, 2005)

The *fiesta* is marketed by the BIA as a city-wide event and targets a wider audience. It is programmed to celebrate the cultural traditions of Italians, Portuguese, Europeans, and Hispanics. A BIA board member elaborates on the use of *fiesta* as the festival name:

*We welcome all the different communities. I think when we started with this, um, the big music trend was the South American music, the Brazilian dance, and all that things. So *fiesta* makes sense. But in our *fiesta*, we [also] have Italian musicians, classical music from the University of Toronto. So you know, it's a nice mix of everything. But it just seems that everybody understands *fiesta*. "Fiesta" is "Festa" in Italian.... And in Portuguese, it's "Festa" too.... *Fiesta* means you go to celebrate, and you have a good time!* (Business Interviewee CIB2, November 11, 2005)

Following the demographic shift in Corso Italia, merchants have tended to adopt a multi-ethnic or more neutral approach for the purpose of marketing and advertising; however, businesses continue to identify themselves as Italian or Portuguese through the merchandise they carry and the services they provide. At the same time, identity is expressed less along ethnic lines. Rather the area promotes itself with a toned-down Italian theme and a more generally accepted multi-ethnic image.

#### **6.4.3 The Streetcar Right-of-Way Dispute**

In 2003, due to deteriorating streetcar tracks, major repairs were scheduled along St. Clair Avenue West, from Yonge Street to just west of Keele Street. A total of 6.7 kilometres are being replaced with new tracks. Meanwhile, a New Official Plan was approved by City council, identifying St. Clair Avenue West as one of the City's avenues to be allocated for higher density and mixed-use developments. One of the ways to support these avenue developments is to provide better transit. With these considerations

in mind, the City of Toronto and the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) launched a dedicated streetcar right-of-way plan along St. Clair Avenue West; the plan aimed to achieve reliable transit service and “spark the main street revival that St. Clair needs”, as Howard Moscoe, the then TTC chair was reported saying in a newspaper article (McGran, 2004).

The plan is clear cut in theory: the two centre lanes of the 6-lane St. Clair Avenue will be reserved exclusively for streetcars, and the raised tracks will be unobstructed by cars. In order to keep the other four lanes of traffic and build the platform in the middle of the road, sidewalks must be narrowed and some of the curb-side parking must be removed. This project will serve as a precedent to examine the idea of implementing right-of-ways on other avenues across the City, as the New Official Plan indicates. However, during the Environmental Assessment process, the City’s ambitious vision was strongly challenged by the local community and faced opposition that even reached court. Since then the proposed streetcar right-of-way plan has become the centre of a controversy that has divided the community and built mistrust between the community and the City.

Among those BIAs that are most affected by the St. Clair Right-of-Way (ROW), merchants in Corso Italia were the loudest in their opposition to the plan and they exerted strong influence on the dispute. One community group leader commented, “*the Corso Italia BIA is the one that is the best organized and able to articulate*” (Community Agency Interviewee CIA1, November 10, 2005). The Corso Italia merchants were most concerned with the reduction of on-street parking and the loss of sidewalk space for trees, cafés, and pedestrians that the ROW would cause. On-street parking can be critical for many main street businesses, especially for businesses who market themselves as destination stores and have a regional draw of customers, as it is convenient for deliveries and customers.

Sidewalk width is also a sensitive issue, particularly in Corso Italia, because “*to get some kind of patio space would be important for that area*”, as an area planner comments (Planner Interviewee CIP3, November 22, 2005). The area has a tradition of sidewalk cafés and outdoor patios, with trees and pedestrian activities on the street, reflecting an Italian or European city lifestyle. The first sidewalk café in the City of

Toronto was established in Corso Italia, as area merchants recall.<sup>7</sup> From their point of view, the reduction of sidewalk space, for the construction of the ROW passenger platform in the middle of the road, will evoke fear and even anger at the resulting changes to the current vibrant ambience.

In addition, merchants and local residents have challenged the Environmental Assessment, as a decide-and-defend process that ignored the people who are actually being affected by the plan, and especially disadvantaged immigrants. They argued that their ethnic background and English language skills put them in a weaker position and hindered their ability to express their opinions and communicate with the City on the matter. Some of the major arguments along ethnic lines are highlighted as followed:

*I think the ethnic part of it works against us.... The majority of what they [the City] consider here is the Italian, Portuguese community. Who are they, right? They're [the City] not listening.... I hate to say that, and it shouldn't be so. But I think it happens.... If we were in Forest Hill, if Forest Hill stood up, they [the City] would say, "Oh, Forest Hill is talking". [The city won't fight with them]. But with us, they said "Oh, it's just a few Italian businessmen there grumbling."* (Business Interviewee CIB2, November 11, 2005)

*Portuguese don't speak out: A lot of residents in this area are Portuguese as first generation. They're afraid to speak out. They don't know the consequences of speaking out. They don't understand that this is a democratic country where they can [have] free speech. So lots of them are very skeptical. They don't say anything, because they don't want to say. They don't want to get in trouble. They don't know what's gonna come on them if they opposed the government, opposed the city. So they don't want to say anything.* (Business Interviewee CIB3, October 27, 2005)

*It's harder for people who don't speak English to participate in the process.... We have Vietnamese, Turks, Portuguese, Spanish, Italians, you name it. We got it. They [the city] didn't put out all of [the language translations]. Some of the literature they did translate after we demanded it. But if you end up in a big public meeting, where all of the information is presented on boards and in oral presentations in English, it's harder for people [who don't speak English] to participate.* (Community Agency Interviewee CIA1, November 10, 2005)

In the following section, the dynamics of the involvement of various players in the decision making process will be discussed further, in order to examine their roles and

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<sup>7</sup> According to three business interviewees, CIB1, CIB2, and CIB5, La Sem, a small Italian-style patisserie introduced the first sidewalk café in Toronto in the 1960s. The then city councillor Joseph Piccininni, who was from an Italian background, was instrumental in issuing the first outdoor café permit from City Hall.

interactions in defining the major physical changes to the St. Clair Avenue West retail strip.

## **6.5 KEY PLAYERS: ALLIES OR RIVALS**

### **6.5.1 The Business Community**

The Corso Italia business community was actively involved in the streetcar right-of-way dispute. They participated in numerous public consultation meetings, accomplished an alternative conciliatory design proposal, and confronted the City in court (Table 6-1).

The business people of the area were highly aware of the importance of building community partnerships with the City and other stakeholders. They were actively involved in various community groups, such as the St. Clair West Revitalization Committee (SWRC)—a liaison body between the community and the City that is facilitated by the Economic Development Office—and other sub-groups established for the ROW project. The merchants participated in numerous focus groups, community workshops, and public meetings.

In addition, the business community developed an alternative design for the area that aimed to balance the needs of the entire community in terms of public space and public transit. The community design proposal features: two traffic lanes in each direction, with the center lane dedicated to streetcars during rush hours, wider sidewalks with room for trees, dedicated bike lanes, lay-by parking, no platform, and restricted left-turn lanes (Brown & Storey, 2003). “By re-calibrating the spaces allotted to the public realm, and achieving a balance between pedestrian, transit, automobiles, parking, servicing, and cycling” (Brown & Storey, 2003, p. 5), this proposal has been endorsed by and can be adapted to the other four BIAs along St Clair West Avenue. The conciliatory approach that promotes more pedestrian friendly and less divisive use of the avenue was supported by several high-profile urbanists, including John Sewell, a former Toronto Mayor, Richard Gilbert, a former Corso Italia councillor (1976-1991) and transportation consultant, and Christopher Hume, the Toronto Star urban affairs columnist (Henry, 2005; Hume, 2004; Sewell, 2004). However, the proposal was rejected by the City and the TTC due to its “marked decrease in auto travel speeds and a resulting increase in

travel on side-streets” (McPhail et al., 2004, p. 15), and the safety concern of a shared streetcar lane (Planner Interviewee CIP1, December 6, 2005).

When Corso Italia merchants could not reach a consensus with the City on the ROW project, they were further convinced it was a “done deal”, decided and defended by the City. They had deep concerns that the ROW would damage the retail strip and its urban fabric, as urban experts predict (Gilbert, 2004; Sewell, 2004). As a result, Corso Italia merchants were determined to stop the ROW by all means. A citizens’ group named “Save Our St. Clair” (SOS) was formed, consisting of local merchants and residents opposing the ROW. The SOS launched a legal challenge to take the City to court, arguing that “the city violated the Planning Act by going ahead with the project without amending its official plan” (McGran, 2005).<sup>8</sup> The divisional court ruled in favour of SOS over the City in October 2005. However, the City accused one of the judges of bias; the three-judge panel stepped down as a result and a new hearing opened. In the end, the court gave the City a green light to pursue the ROW project.

There are always two sides to a debate. Some would argue that without the ROW the area would “stand still”; according to a former local councillor, who represented the area for over 15 years and knew the local community very well the area is not sustainable in its present state (Former Councillor Interviewee CIC3, November 24, 2005). The dispute lasted for over three years, and was fuelled by confrontations from both sides. The local business people were highly involved throughout the EA process in their attempts to promote their conciliatory design concept, and influence the future of the retail area. Although they were not able to apply “conciliatory urbanism” to the strip, the area’s entrepreneurs made their voices heard; more importantly, the controversy left room for politicians and City staff to consider developing efficient and effective dialogues with the local community, particularly in a neighbourhood with diverse ethno-cultural profiles.

## **6.5.2 City Officials**

### **6.5.2.1 City councillors**

City council approved the ROW design in September 2004, hoping to “deliver a

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<sup>8</sup> At that time, the New Official Plan was not in effect, because of appeals to the Ontario Municipal Board, even though it was approved by City Council in November 2002. The in-use plan designates St.Clair Avenue a “main street”, while the new plan designates it an avenue surface with transit priority.



showcase example of the best of what this City can be” (McPhail et al., 2004, p. 31). However, three of the four local councillors, whose wards are directly affected by the ROW, opposed to it. The current councillor of Ward 17 was one of them.

From a City councillor’s perspective, decision-making normally depends on the desires of the local community. Over 11,000 local residents signed a petition opposing the ROW at that time. Local councillors, in accordance with the desires of their constituents, pushed City Hall to vote against the plan. Politicians also promoted community-led revitalization initiatives. They saw it as a better way to involve local people, rather than parachuting a plan into a community, as one councillor assistant explains.

*[City staff] have to actually listen to people, work with people on the street. Um, there’s a lot of criticism with the right-of-way plan about the consultation, and saying that it was forced on them, etc. Um, that’s not healthy. That creates bad will between the City and the neighbourhood.... Make sure those affected are consulted. And they know what’s gonna be happening. The people who own property, they should know what to expect on the street. And they hopefully have a say on the ideas.... I mean to involve people not just because you can’t force something on them, but also because if this plan you’re putting together is gonna work, you’re gonna need their help to implement it, you’re gonna need them. They’re the actual people who’re gonna be doing these changes where we’re planning. So either: A) when they find out about it, they’re gonna fight us. Or: B) they’re not gonna find out about it...they’re gonna try to do their own thing until, uh, you know, they eventually find out this is what our plan was. But if people are on [your] side, they won’t fight you. In fact, they can help you. That’s what we can do better. (Councillor Assistant Interviewee CIC1, November 10, 2005)*

In summary, the Corso Italia community is proactive, mobilized, and powerful in taking a leading role that overwhelmed politicians’ influence. Compared to the cases in East Chinatown and the Gerrard India Bazaar, merchants in Corso Italia had higher level of public involvement and made a stronger impact on local issues, which in turn, brought the local councillor onboard in their fight.

#### **6.5.2.2 City planners**

City planners, particularly transportation planners, were dedicated to community outreach to promote the ROW plan. They organized eight formal public meetings, five workshops, and 40 community meetings with local community groups at different stages of the dispute, within the period of one year. In other words, they conducted community

outreach events almost once a week for a year (Planner Interviewee CIP1, December 6, 2005). However, the opposition they encountered in the local community was beyond their control. The transportation planner who was in charge of the ROW project concluded that in addition to the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) syndrome, cultural factors played a role in the mistrust and inefficient communication they experienced with cultural groups in the area:

*I have a hard time trying to figure out exactly where all the anxiety comes from other than these “you can’t change things,” “I don’t want you to change anything”.... Part of it too...is a cultural issue. No question. Absolutely no question.... It’s just...how we communicate with different cultural groups when we’re doing a public process. You know I was told by one of the councillors (he’s Italian) that... “You’re really in a no-win situation here, because in the Italian community, if you’re upset with something or upset with someone, you’re expected to be fairly emotional about expressing your feelings and that you don’t like it, and so on. And so when you challenge someone, you expect that they’re going to respond back in the same way that they will be you know, fairly aggressive and say “Oh, you’re wrong”. But...we’re trained to be polite, not confrontational, not emotional. You keep it very straight. And this councillor said to me, you know, “When you do that, people in the Italian community think you’re hiding things” [Laughs]. So right there, there’s mistrust. Guaranteed. So I said, “Oh, brother! We can’t win”, you know.... It’s about how people communicate and how people relate and how you build trust. In a multicultural neighbourhood, that can be incredibly difficult. (Planner Interviewee CIP1, December 6, 2005)*

When asked if the department had hired planners from Italian backgrounds to do outreach, the planner admitted, “that probably would’ve been a good idea” although language translation was provided:

*We did have translators at our public meetings. We had Portuguese and Italian. And in fact, we did translate all of our material. So all of our public notices, our newsletters, it was all translated in Italian, in Portuguese and French.... Actually [we] had language lines here in the City.... So we did attempt to reach out, but we probably could’ve done it in a slightly different way, like you say, have separate meetings for the Italian community with somebody who could relate to them, and could explain the information...in a proper way. So that might have been...the alternative approach. (Planner Interviewee CIP1, December 6, 2005)*

Similarly, City planners must recognize the cultural preferences of the community. During the ROW public consultations, for example, local people demanded the project reflect the ethnic background and cultural identity of the community. In response to their requests, planners considered incorporating the history and culture of

the neighbourhood into art work displays, or the design of a streetcar shelter as an, “identity bay” that showcases stories and anecdotes from the neighbourhood. In another example, the planned raised right-of-way, with its six-inch curb, could, potentially, disturb access to a local funeral home which requires special street crossing treatment for its services, such as pavement with a different texture and a drop-down on the curb (Planner Interviewee CIP1, December 6, 2005).<sup>9</sup>

These examples illustrate the importance of integrating cultural sensitivity into planning practice, and developing more effective communication with the community. However, aside from these specific cases, should ethno-cultural diversity awareness be institutionalized in planning policies or, at least, be recognized at the practical level? Interviews with two local community planners indicate that the answer is “No”. Their responses also reveal a deeply rooted “plan for land use but not land users” approach throughout their planning practice:

*In planning, sort of, what we say is that you can't plan for people; you can't plan for certain groups of people, rather you're planning for form, urban form, massing, density* (Planner Interviewee CIP2, November 22, 2005).

*I mean all that planning does is the built form. It's land use. That's all we control. We can't control more than that. We don't control who uses those buildings.... To some degree, we plan how to use those buildings. But we don't dictate who can use them or what services locate in those areas.... Well, in planning we don't really differentiate between groups of people. So we just look at it as chance of land use.... This is retail...and that's how we would look at it. We wouldn't say that because this particular group is using that retail, they may have different needs and something else ... A general blanket policy that would [be] standard. We wouldn't specify by particular kind of group.* (Planner Interviewee CIP3, November 22, 2005)

They planners further explain, “we can't dictate who locates in a certain place” (Planner Interviewee CIP2, November 22, 2005), and “we also can't dictate who drives in from outside the neighbourhood” (Planner Interviewee CIP3, November 22, 2005); they leave it up to the market, and “let the market dictate what will work and what won't work” (Planner Interviewee CIP3, November 22, 2005). Based on the “planning for land use” principle, “the buildings, the massing, the zoning is blind to any kind of...person or

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<sup>9</sup> In both Italian and Portuguese cultures, people have funeral services across the street from the funeral home; a funeral procession crosses the street with the coffin into the church. After the service, the funeral procession drives past the home of the deceased and then continues to the cemetery.

*ethnicity or situation*” (Planner Interviewee CIP2, November 22, 2005). In addition, due to their lack of experience in dealing with ethno-cultural issues, planners tend to take a reactive position and leave it to the community to respond to and make demands, as one planner admitted:

*Planning is ignorant [to the ethnicity of a specific group] until it becomes a big problem, a big community outcry about the incompatibility of these uses, which, you know, the average planner has not had enough experience with cultural diversity and different needs of different cultures to understand that. That’s why the public consultation process brings that kind of stuff out. (Planner Interviewee CIP2, November 22, 2005)*

Establishing urban design guidelines is one of the ways in which planning policy or practice can incorporate cultural diversity. Under the New City of Toronto Act, the city will have more control and flexibility to shape the character of neighborhoods, rather than examining land use components, such as size, density, massing, and parking requirements.<sup>10</sup> One councillor assistant elaborates further:

*We have very cookie-cutter planning policies.... Right now there’s no flexibility in that regard.... But if there are ways in which the planning policy can reflect multiculturalism, I think those are interesting ideas. And I think there’s room for it to grow along the urban design aspect of it, because you’re talking about buildings that have, you know, multicultural character or taking examples from around the world. Right now we have absolutely no incentive to do that or, in some cases, quite frankly, ability to do that. If you come to the council with something a little bit unusual, the City planners might be a bit down on it, and say, “Hey, why don’t you do something that looks a bit more like all the other grey boxes we have, right?” But if we have a new vision...for the whole street, that’s anything but the planning act, building codes, something very cookie-cutter. If we had some urban design guidelines, something that gave us some flexibility to say, you know what, we have all grey boxes here now, but we would like to have something else, whatever that is, we could have...something multicultural. Then we’ll have the flexibility to really start approving these things.... I think there’s some hope with the new City of Toronto Act that we’ll have a little bit more flexibility that way. (Councillor Assistant Interviewee CIC1, November 10, 2005)*

### **6.5.2.3 Economic Development Officers**

Economic Development Officers (EDO) were not involved in the matters of the ROW project, and have focused on BIA issues alone. Their primary role is “to facilitate

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<sup>10</sup> The new City of Toronto Act was proclaimed on January 1, 2007 to provide the City with broad powers and significant legislative freedoms.

*businesses*” and the department “*works as a conduit*” (EDO Interviewee CIE1, November 4, 2005). As a conduit the officers deliver useful information and resources to help improve the business environment of an area, but they remain neutral with regards to the ethnic component of businesses, as one EDO interviewee explains:

*It's all what the businesses want. They decide and we help.... We don't differentiate ethnic retail from other businesses. There's no discrimination. We don't have the policy to say, "Build 10 Chinatowns". When we see that ethnic component, we help businesses identify themselves through branding, marketing and promotion. It's collective work to help on a higher level. (EDO Interviewee CIE1, November 4, 2005)*

When it comes to assisting ethnic retail, EDOs can be more proactive, flexible and creative than City planners who are legislatively bound by their regulatory roles. One councillor-assistant compares the ways these departments function, and believes planners could play a more substantial role when the New City Act is in place:

*Right now, again, there are really no planning policies to help the ethnic retail. So right now the Economic Development Department has all the crowd in terms of helping the ethnic retail. The City of Toronto Planning Department is very legislatively bound. They have to act within policies and plans, and they're very limited in terms of their flexibility of what they can do.... Economic development they can get very creative.... The planning department...they have to be very pragmatic. They're very limited in terms of how they can look at it, and say, uh, you know, this either meets the appropriate acts, the appropriate legislation, or doesn't. And that's it. But the economic development isn't bound by this. There's no law on how to hold a festival, right? They meet with the people in the neighbourhood and say, "So we want a festival. What would we want to do? Let's talk about it. You got this idea, you got that idea. Let's build it. Let's go." So right now the economic development has some sway, and that's more than [what] the planning has. But again, if the New] City Act [is adopted], the planning is given a little bit lead way, a little bit flexibility, they could become a major player in that. But they're not right now. (Councillor Assistant Interviewee CIC1, November 10, 2005)*

A former local councillor highlights the need to strengthen the collaboration between planning and EDO; building a community requires collaborative efforts that go beyond restricted departmental focus on retail developments or by-law requirements. The councillor echoes issues raised by interviewees in the cases of East Chinatown and the Gerrard India Bazaar.

*Because of the St. Clair streetcar right-of-way, it's [their working relationship] really been damaged, because so many merchants don't want it, and the planning*

*department of the city pushed it.... The planners can come up with ideas to assist things like the parking, and stuff like that. And they [EDO] start working on other issues like the development of the identity, and things like that other than whether or not the streetcar is gonna run on the single lane on its own. I think they have to start to mend those fences and develop that relationship again.... It's got to be collective.... Planners know some; economic development knows others. And [with] the information that two of them have, they should be able to come up with the passage in the Official Plan that would allow for good economic development.... You need to have both. And you need to come up with a comprehensive plan, not just economic development, not just how high should the building be and shadowing. (Councillor Interviewee CIC3, November 24, 2005)*

### **6.5.3 Community Agencies**

In 2001, a liaison committee called the St. Clair West Revitalization Committee (SWRC) was formed; the committee consists of concerned citizens, business leaders, City councillors and other local stakeholders, in partnership with the Economic Development Office of the City of Toronto (SWRC, 2002). The purpose of the group was to collect community input and help develop action strategies for the revitalization of the St. Clair West area.

One of the major outcome of this initiative is the “Our Future Together: A Community Based Revitalization Strategy for St. Clair West”, which compiles 82 revitalization strategies that were developed through intensive public consultations. The report also highlights ethnic retail as an important attribute of the retail strip. Another accomplishment of the committee is a capital design strategy developed by Brown and Storey Architects and Richard Gilbert (2004). The strategy builds upon the initiatives of the SWRC, and details design concepts and guidelines for open spaces, transit nodes, and streetscapes in the area. As a result, City staff made a recommendation to City council that the “detailed design process for the [ROW] project will incorporate, wherever possible, the priorities identified by SWRC. The Economic Development Division will also include a request for funding in the 2005 capital budget to begin implementation of elements of the SWRC capital design strategy” (McPhail, 2004, p. 27).

SWRC, guided and funded by the Economic Development Office, plays an important role in neighbourhood revitalization and transit improvement based on intensive community consultations. This SWRC is parallel to the SRRP community agency in the case of East Chinatown that was proactive in revitalizing that area. In

addition to this quasi-official organization, there are two more citizen groups, Save Our St. Clair (SOS) and St. Clair Right-of-Way Initiative for Public Transit (SCRIPT); each group represents different interests of the local community. SOS is backed by residents and business owners who oppose the ROW, while SCRIPT is more resident-based and in favour of the City's vision. These two groups have become the two vocal opposing camps of the divided community.

No non-partisan group can provide community outreach in an unbiased manner in this context, as RCDC had accomplished in East Chinatown and the India Bazzard.

## **6.6 SUMMARY**

This chapter illustrated the development of Corso Italia, an area where multiple ethnic groups have left their imprints on the retail landscape. It also highlighted the community opposition to the streetcar right-of-way project proposed by the City. This issue was raised not to determine whether or not the right-of-way is necessary, but to reveal the real challenges planners face in their daily practice. This case reveals the dilemmas City planners experience when they attempt to balance city-wide and local interests, especially when these interests are not allied. Planners, by the nature of their work, deal with planning issues with a broader city-wide perspective as in the need for a Right-of-Way network. Obviously, in such circumstances, planners are not sympathetic to small groups and do not act as advocates for local needs. Yet, this attitude can easily cause friction with local communities. Ethno-cultural differences add another layer of complexity to the dispute, and call for special attention.

Another implication of the ROW dispute is that the development of an ethnic retail area should not be viewed in isolation, as simply a business matter; rather, it is intertwined with many aspects of community planning, such as transit use, public space, housing density, and community activities. This complexity points to the need for a comprehensive plan to address these factors and involve interdepartmental collaboration and, possibly, community agencies.

City planners are currently conducting an Avenue Study along St. Clair West Avenue to provide parameters for development intensification and to direct new growth for the future development of the area. Together with the ROW transit improvements, "*City planners are going to have a huge say on how St. Clair changes*" (Councillor

Assistant Interviewee CIC1, November 10, 2005). At this point, integrating the multi-ethnic groups in the area into the planning process seems to be important to minimize mistrust, achieve efficient and effective communication, and meet the cultural needs of the different groups.



## **CHAPTER 7**

# **SUBURBAN ASIAN THEME MALL: PACIFIC MALL**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter examines the suburban ethnic retail landscape; the Pacific Mall, a condominium Asian theme mall in Markham, is employed as a case study. The chapter introduces the history of the Town of Markham and the development site of the Mall. It then provides a business profile of the Mall, including its business composition, turnover, and changes in its ethnic composition. Major development issues, such as land uses, design, and ethnic expression are outlined, as well as social and cultural aspects of ethnic mall development. Finally, the chapter discusses key players' interventions versus market forces in the evolution of the Mall.

Table 7-1 highlights major events and key players involved in the development of the Pacific Mall, as well as interpretations of these interactions. This table will be referred to throughout the chapter.

Table 7-1: Major Events and Key Players' Involvement in the Case of Pacific Mall

Time Period	Major Events	Key Players					Interpretations
		Businesses	Politicians	Planners	EDO	Developers	
1993	Application for site plan approval	715 units pre-sold to business investors, residing both in HK and Canada		-Application conforms to existing zoning -Review site plan application		-Israeli background -foresee a growing Asian market and make profit by selling condo units	Developers seized the business opportunity in condo retailing catering an Asian-focused market.
1994	Site plan approval process		-Concern about the impact of the development on the area -careful consultations with various departments (e.g., planning, EDO, and Heritage Markham) -Town Council approves application based on economic impact of the development	-Focus on major land use issues (e.g., parking, traffic, and site access) -Work with the developers, engineers, and consultants to devise parking and traffic circulation solutions -Hold one public information meeting	-Evaluate economic impact of the development as requested by Council	Maximize lot capacity for parking requirements to gain approval	City officials were reactive to market forces, partially due to lack of experience in dealing with the new retail form that focuses on an ethnic market. Planners adopted a technical approach to deal with the development.
1995	The "Carole Bell incident"		-Deputy Mayor makes inflammatory comments about the concentration of Asian theme malls -A Mayoral Advisory Committee is set up to heal the community rift				The dispute over the social impact of Asian theme malls on the local community posed challenges to municipalities on how to integrate immigrants and allow them to express their values and cultural differences.
1997	Official opening of the Pacific Mall	Board of Directors and two property management companies supervise key business issues					No municipal interventions in business management.
2000	Heritage Town transformation					-Transform the second floor into a Heritage Town with overwhelming Chinese theme decoration	Developers promoted the Chinese theme as a business selling point.
2007	Proposal for Mall expansion					-compete with other condo retail complexes along Steeles Ave. retail corridor	Following market forces, City officials may play a reactive regulatory role again in the application review process.

## 7.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 7.2.1 A Brief History of the Town of Markham

The history of the Markham Township began in the late 1700s, when its deeply rooted rural tradition was cultivated. After World War II, Markham began to change rapidly with significant population growth, and it turned into one of Toronto’s bedroom communities (Priesnitz, 1990). In the past two decades, with the changes in immigration policy, the contemporary portrait of Markham has come to represent the multifaceted influences of the new waves of immigration to the Canadian metropolitan areas. “In 1976, Markham's population was approximately 56,000. Since that time, the population has more than tripled to 220,000” (Town of Markham, 2006a). These data reflect not only a tremendous population expansion, but also a diverse ethnic composition. According to 2001 Canadian Census (see Table 7-2 and Table 7-3), 52.9% of the population of Markham were foreign-born, and 55.5% were visible minorities (Statistic Canada, 2002). Chinese were the largest ethnic minority group, representing 30% of the population. South Asians were the second largest visible minority group (12.7%).

Table 7-2: Total Population by Immigration Status, Town of Markham  
Source: Statistic Canada, 2002.

<b>Total population</b>	207940	%
<b>Canadian-born</b>	96385	46.4
<b>Foreign-born</b>	109930	52.9
Immigrated before 1991	63860	30.7
Immigrated 1991 - 2001	46070	22.2
<b>Non-permanent residents</b>	1625	0.8

Table 7-3: Visible Minority Population, Town of Markham  
Source: Statistic Canada, 2002.

<b>Total population</b>	207940	%
<b>Visible minority</b>	115485	55.5
Chinese	62355	30
South Asian	26360	12.7
Black	7860	3.8
Filipino	5265	2.5
Latin American	1055	0.5
Southeast Asian	955	0.5
Arab	1660	0.8
West Asian	2305	1.1
Korean	2265	1.1
Japanese	670	0.3
Visible minority; n.i.e	2725	1.3
Multiple visible minorities	2005	1.0
<b>All others</b>	92465	44.5

Modern Markham has experienced unprecedented transformation, from a rural small town to the third most populated municipality in the Greater Toronto Area;

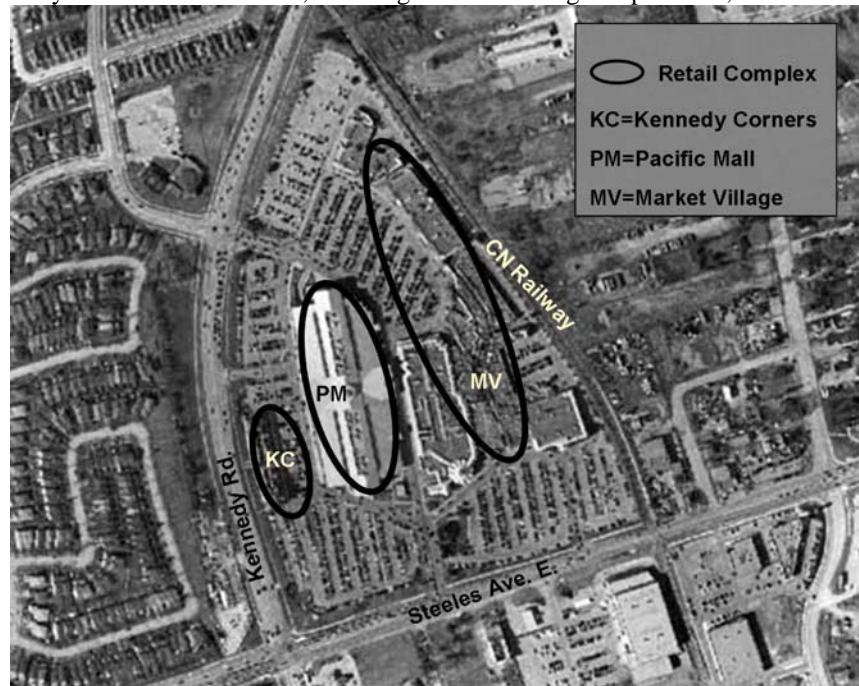
Markham is the second municipality with the highest proportion of visible minorities in Canada, and “one of the most affluent and fast growing municipalities in Canada” (Priesnitz, 1990, p. 16). On one hand, the rural roots of the township have endured by preserving fertile farmland and heritage areas; Neotraditional communities, such as the well-known residential development in Cornell, are being planned to respect Markham’s small town past. On the other hand, its commitment to growth attracts businesses and people. For instance, Markham brands itself as the “High-Tech” capital of Canada, and has attracted over 900 high-tech and life sciences companies, including world-famous names, such as IBM, Hewlett-Packard, Johnson & Johnson and Motorola who have located their offices in town. With the influx of capital and people, Markham also faces various challenges caused by its explosive growth. A notable example is the ever emerging Asian theme mall phenomenon and the issues it has triggered, including racial tensions and a new retail format. The Pacific Mall, self-proclaimed as North America’s largest indoor Asian mall, has drawn controversy over its built form, its condominium business ownership, and, most of all, its impact on both local and region-wide Chinese and non-Chinese communities.

### **7.2.2 Site Introduction**

The Pacific Mall is located at the major intersection of Steeles Avenue East and Kennedy Road bordering Markham and Scarborough; it is built on a large iron-shaped tract of land, with two other commercial properties, Market Village, to the east and Kennedy Corners to the west (Figure 7-1). During the past ten years, the three retail complexes have developed different specialty businesses: the Pacific Mall features apparel and electronic products, especially for trend-setting youth, Market Village provides more restaurants and grocery stores for family-oriented activities, and Kennedy Corners focuses on banking and other services. In a way, the complexes complement each other, and the commercial triangle works as an integrated site. This intense development vividly illustrates the way in which a small rural community has coped with large-scale suburban sprawl; it demonstrates how an Asian-centred society has transformed the urban landscape.

Figure 7-1: Aerial Photo of Pacific Mall Site

Source: Courtesy of Town of Markham, Planning & Urban Design Department, 2006. Edited by Author.



In the 1950s, this area was covered by farm fields (Chen, 2005). Residential subdivisions later took shape in the western part of this commercial-zoned land, as well as further east along Steeles Avenue. The first retail complex on the site, the Cullen Country Barns (“The Barns”), opened in 1983. The Barns was a popular Markham tourist spot, featuring a country market theme of bygone times. This theme was maintained in the later retail developments: the Market Village (1990) and the Kenney Corners (1992); they both extensively use the same architectural language to achieve an old town atmosphere. At the same time, Asian theme businesses are featured inside the commercial complexes to meet the changing demographics of the surrounding areas. Due to business decline, the Cullen Country Barns closed in 1994. In response to the growing Chinese population in the area and the booming Asian-oriented businesses, the Torgan Group, a long established Ontario-based developer, approached The Barns and proposed a retail replacement, later known as the Pacific Mall. The construction began in 1996 and the Pacific Mall officially opened in 1997.

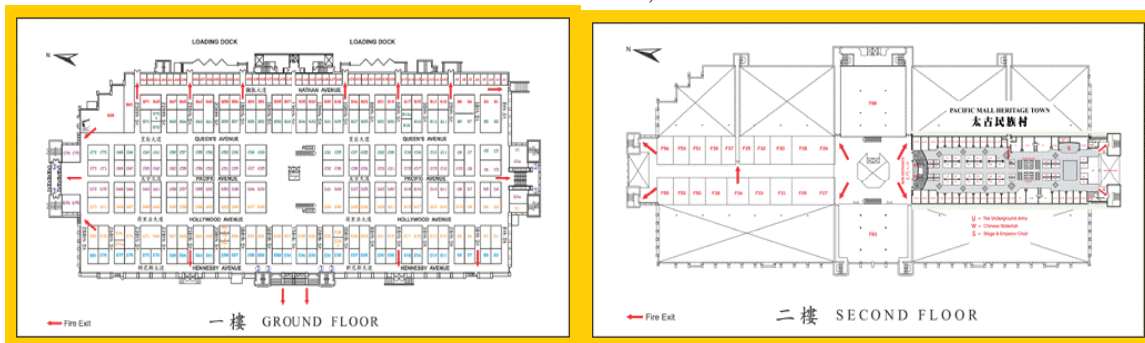
### 7.2.3 Store Size and Layout

The Pacific Mall features 270,000 square feet of retail space and over 300 stores with innovative condominium ownership. It mainly targets the Chinese community who

prefer to purchase or own properties for residential or business purposes. The presale of the condominium units drew investors residing both in Hong Kong and in Canada. The Mall was divided into 715 uniform units with an average size of 200 square feet, and allowed multiple unit purchases that “provide greater flexibility to re-configure stores in the future to respond to changing market conditions and retailing trends” (Town of Markham, 1995, p. 3). Store sizes (in terms of usable area) ranged from 13.5 m<sup>2</sup> (145 ft<sup>2</sup>) to 111.5 m<sup>2</sup> (1200 ft<sup>2</sup>). The selling price ranged from CA\$59,800 to \$249,800. On average, retail space was sold at \$200 per square foot of the gross floor area, which includes a share of the public use space. The developer retains ownership of about 7,500 square feet of the second floor; in 2000 the developer transformed this space into a “Heritage Town” and leased units to approximately 100 individual stores.

The stores are arranged on a back-to-back grid system (Figure 7-2). The ground floor is used mostly for retail and services, and the compact cubicle units are divided by tall glass walls (nearly 10 feet in height) that maximize window displays of merchandise and exposure to window shopping. The larger units on the second floor are occupied, for the most part, by restaurants, food courts, and entertainment centres.

Figure 7-2: Floor Plans of Pacific Mall  
Source: Pacific mall, 2004a.



The development of condominium retailing in the Pacific Mall is an adaptive approach in that it provides more flexibility and authorizes more ownership power to individual business owners and investors. However, as the planning report to council states, “the planning impact of the creation of a large number of small units is the possibility that as a result of staffing inefficiencies and generally more intense commercial activity, a greater number of parking spaces may be required” (Town of Markham, 1995, p. 3).

## 7.3 BUSINESS PROFILE<sup>1</sup>

### 7.3.1 Business Composition

The overall business composition of the Pacific Mall has remained more or less consistent over the past nine years; however, there is no control over tenant mix in this condominium shopping mall, and some sectors experience fluctuation. Table 7-4 illustrates the major business components of each year.

Table 7-4: Pacific Mall Business Composition from 1997 to 2005  
Source: CSCA. Data Analyzed by Author.

Business Composition (%)	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Ave.
<b>Food related</b>	13.3	11.4	11.8	13.9	13.1	13.4	15.1	14.7	15.6	13.6
Food stores	12.4	9.5	9.4	9.3	9.0	9.3	9.3	8.7	9.0	9.5
Food services	0.9	2.0	2.4	4.6	4.2	4.1	5.8	6.1	6.7	4.1
<b>Other retail</b>	69.8	73.6	72.2	70.1	69.4	70.0	67.4	66.9	64.5	68.1
Apparel	26.2	23.6	26.3	25.3	26.6	25.4	27.3	27.5	23.4	25.7
Gift, Novelty, Souvenir	11.5	11.8	12.2	10.5	9.6	9.6	8.1	6.9	5.8	9.6
Household & Appliance	8.3	10.6	9.4	7.4	8.1	9.9	8.7	8.7	9.0	7.7
Jewellery	6.4	7.1	5.9	6.5	6.9	7.0	6.1	6.7	8.7	6.8
<b>Other services</b>	17.0	15.0	16.1	16.1	17.6	16.6	17.4	18.5	20.0	17.1
Hair & Beauty	5.0	5.1	5.1	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.4	4.9	5.2	4.7
Telecom. Carriers	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3	1.8	2.6	2.9	3.2	3.2	1.7
Motion picture & Video distribution	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.6	1.2	1.5	2.0	2.3	3.2	1.5
<b>Total stores (excl. vacancy)</b>	218	254	255	324	335	343	344	346	346	307

Retail is the most prominent component, representing nearly 70% of the businesses in the Mall. This component mainly features apparel, gift, jewellery, and household and appliance stores. The apparel sector represents one quarter of the Mall businesses. The proportion of food related business and other services are, on average, only 13.6% and 17.1%, respectively. The high concentration of retail businesses compared to the much lower representation of food businesses and services indicates that the Mall targets a regional market rather than catering to local daily needs. This retail-oriented approach is quite different from the retail strips examined in the previous cases.

### 7.3.2 Business Turnover

Business turnover is an indicator of business performance (Table 7-5). Comparing the number of business openings and closures, the Pacific Mall exhibited new business

<sup>1</sup> Data in this section was retrieved from the Centre for the Study of Commercial Activity (CSCA). See Chapter 3 for more information on this data and its limitations.

growth between 1998 and 2004; business growth was particularly apparent in 1998 and 2000, due in part to the new opening of the Mall and later the “Heritage Town” on the second floor. In 2005 businesses experienced a sharp decline for the first time, and 89 stores closed while only 66 stores opened.

Table 7-5: Pacific Mall Business Turnover from 1997 to 2005  
Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author.

Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Openings</b>	218	65	41	101	73	46	68	27	66
<b>Closures</b>	N/A	27	40	32	62	38	67	25	89
<b>Vacant stores</b>	52	33	32	24	10	3	5	3	5
<b>Total stores (incl. vacancy)</b>	270	287	287	348	345	346	349	349	351
<b>Vacancy Rate (%)</b>	19.3	11.5	11.1	6.9	2.9	0.9	1.4	0.9	1.4

In terms of vacancy rate, the data support the Mall’s good business performance. After 1997, the vacancy rate continued to drop significantly year by year, from the highest rate of 19.3% (1997) to the lowest of 0.9% (2002/2004). The rate only fluctuated slightly in 2003 and 2005 from 0.9% to 1.4%.

How does the Pacific Mall’s business performance compare to that of mainstream shopping centres? Table 7-6 reveals the business turnover from 1996 to 2004 at the Toronto Eaton Centre, as well as at community shopping centres (100,000-399,000 square feet) and super-regional shopping centres (one million square feet) in the City of Toronto. Due to the differences in tenure structure between leasehold and condominium retailing, these centres may not be compatible for comparisons with Pacific Mall. For instance, although in terms of store numbers the Eaton Centre (330) and the Pacific Mall (350) are close, the Eaton Centre as one of the super-regional shopping centres has 1,600,000 square feet of retail area, almost six times that of the Pacific Mall (276,000 square feet).

Table 7-6: Business Turnover in Other Shopping Centres in City of Toronto  
Source: CSCA. Produced by Hopgood, 2005. pp. 54, 55, and 61. Table compiled by Author.

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>Toronto Eaton Centre</b>									
Openings : Closures	N/A	31:31	36:34	42:39	35:27	58:44	28:28	26:22	27:41
Vacancy Rate	6.8%	7.7%	5.5%	5.1%	4.7%	1.6%	3.5%	3.2%	6.5%
<b>Community shopping centres</b>									
Vacancy Rate	11.0%	12.5%	12.7%	12.0%	11.5%	10.2%	9.3%	8.2%	9.9%
<b>Super-regional shopping centres</b>									
Vacancy Rate	3.9%	3.6%	3.3%	2.4%	2.5%	3.9%	2.8%	2.7%	4.4%

Despite the difference in size, the Pacific Mall has more frequent business openings and closures than the Eaton Centre. This is mainly due to the small business



ownership and occupancy versus large chain stores. Since 2001, the Pacific Mall's vacancy rate of between 0.9% and 2.9% is far below other shopping centres in the GTA. This may suggest that there continues to be high demand for a share of the market in the Pacific Mall. Business people either purchase or rent store units because of the business potential they perceive there.

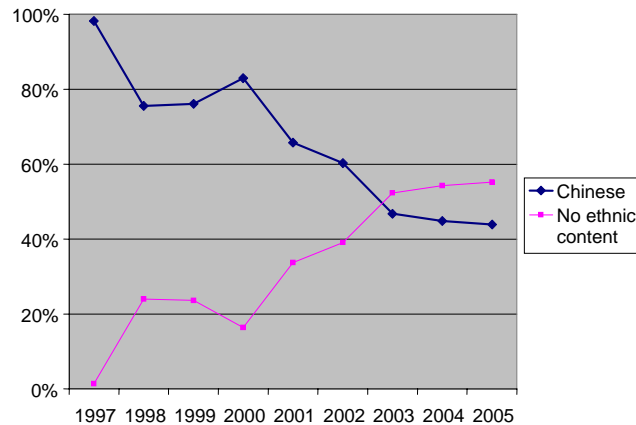
### 7.3.3 Changes in Ethnicity

Table 7-7 illustrates the ethnic content of the Pacific Mall businesses. Chinese businesses and businesses with no ethnic content are the two largest groups. Interestingly, they have opposite proportion tendencies (Figure 7-3).

Table 7-7: Ethnicity Content of Pacific Mall Businesses from 1997 to 2005  
Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author.

Ethnicity (%)	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Chinese</b>	98.2	75.6	76.1	83.0	65.7	60.3	46.8	44.8	43.9
<b>No ethnic content</b>	1.4	24	23.6	16.4	33.7	39.1	52.3	54.3	55.2
<b>Italian</b>	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.6	0
<b>Korean</b>	0	0	0	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.6
<b>Japanese</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.3
<b>Total stores (excl. vacancy)</b>	218	254	255	324	335	343	344	346	346

Figure 7-3: Proportion Tendencies of Chinese Businesses and Businesses with No Ethnic Content  
Source: CSCA. Data analyzed by Author.



Chinese businesses declined dramatically from 98.2% of the total businesses in 1997 to less than half (43.9%) in 2005. On the other hand, businesses with no ethnic content climbed from only 1.4% in 1997 to 55.2% in 2005. Since the definition of ethnicity refers only to store signage, product lines, and customers, the CSCA data does

not indicate the ethnicity of the storekeeper/owner.<sup>2</sup> This trend does not imply the changes of stores that are operated by Chinese or non-Chinese; rather, it suggests that businesses in the Pacific Mall are becoming more interested in broadening their customer base by providing both Chinese and English store signs, carrying more general merchandise, such as electronic products and apparel to attract clientele from other communities, and recruiting English speaking employees to meet the needs of non-Chinese customer. A Chinese herbal storeowner who opened his business in 1997 comments:

*One of the successful aspects of Pacific Mall is that businesses [try to] target mainstream customers and attract different groups of people. In my case, I sell Chinese herbs, which is supposed to be a Chinese customers-only business. But I also sell herbs to many westerners...because they like “natural stuff” ...and hey appreciate the price and quality. If I only target Chinese clientele, my business won’t last long. I think in order to survive, every store [in Pacific Mall] should open their business to all kinds of people...instead of limiting to certain groups of customers.... Chinese businesses also need to integrate into mainstream society.... For example, we need to use English more frequently...and hire English-speaking employees. (Business Interviewee PB12, May 19, 2006)*

There is also a small proportion (less than 1%) of Italian, Korean and Japanese businesses indicated by the CSCA data. Again, it does not refer to the ethnicity of the storekeepers. For example, data show that there have been one or two Korean businesses over the past nine years. But according to one Korean store operator (Business Interviewee PB9), there are actually at least ten Korean-run businesses operating in the Pacific Mall, including one snack store selling Chinese food, three photo shops, five fast-food, take-outs, and one clothing store. The so-called “Italian” businesses are all operated by Chinese retailers. Overall, based on my observations and the data I collected from information interviews at the Mall, there are more non-Chinese merchants operating businesses in the Pacific Mall than the CSCA data indicate; these include Koreans, Japanese, and South Asians.

### **7.3.4 Consumer Views**

I conducted an intercept survey with twelve shoppers of different ethnic origins, visiting from across the Greater Toronto Area. Respondents expressed great interest in

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 3 for CSCA’s definition of ethnicity.

the large variety of products provided by the Pacific Mall businesses, including clothing, novelties, and electronic products. Some respondents also commented that they were attracted by the shopping ambience in the Pacific Mall, its “Asian feel” or “Hong Kong feel”. Consumer views coincide with the business data demonstrating that the highly concentrated retail activities and diversity of goods at the Pacific Mall serve a strong market demand, a demand for not only typical products from Asia, but also general merchandise.

## **7.4 MAJOR DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

### **7.4.1 The Planning Approval Process**

#### **7.4.1.1 Zoning and minor variances**

The Pacific Mall property is zoned Special Commercial Two-Special (SC2-S) according to By-law 47-85, as amended, which permits a wide range of retail, restaurants and other commercial uses.<sup>3</sup> The Pacific Mall proposal complied with the development standards of the By-law (Heaslip, 1994), and there was no need to rezone the site in order to build the Mall. All that the Pacific Mall proposal required was a site plan approval and a building permit, except for one minor variance application in 1997.

The developer proposed the inclusion of a premium automobile cleaning and detailing facility, which was not listed as a permitted use in the zoning by-law. This auto service includes hand washing, towel drying, and interior cleaning; it normally takes more than two hours to serve each car, and the service is by appointment only to avoid line-ups. Auto service facilities tend to locate in larger shopping centres so that clients can shop and/or dine while their cars are being attended to. Since such facilities were becoming common in commercial developments that serve the Asian community, it was approved by the Committee of Adjustment (Heaslip, 1997).

#### **7.4.1.2 Major land use issues: parking, traffic, and site access**

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<sup>3</sup> In the later “Commercial Uses Policy Study” conducted by Hemson Consulting Ltd. and John Winter Associates (1994), and a planning report by Macaulay Shiomi Howson Ltd. (1994), these consultants argue that the “Special Commercial” designation should be changed to a “Major Commercial” designation in the commercial policy; this particularly applies to the Pacific Mall locale, in order to account for the significant concentration of commercial activities serving a large regional population. This change was eventually expressed in the 1999 Official Plan Consolidation under the commercial land use category.

Due to the condominium nature of the proposal, parking and traffic were the major issues that the Town of Markham raised and studied at the time of the site plan approval. The by-law, at the time, calculated parking space according to each use within the building; however, “certain characteristics of the Pacific Mall proposal, in particular, the small unit sizes and the resulting staffing inefficiencies, and a generally greater intensity of commercial activity” (Heaslip, 1994, p. 5), inevitably generate higher demand for parking and increase traffic. The Barns’ parking standard, based on use breakdown, and the Town’s “Shopping Centre” standard could not accommodate Pacific Mall’s expected parking demands. The developer, the Planning Development Department, and the Town of Markham hired external consultants to conduct parking studies. Table 7-8 provides the data from various solutions based on different parking standards. The Pacific Mall proposal provided the most adequate number of parking spaces (1,505), exceeding the by-law requirement, and the other consultants’ recommendations.

Table 7-8: Pacific Mall Statistics of Parking Standards  
 Source: Heaslip, 1994; Macaulay Shiomi Howson Ltd., 1994. Table compiled by author.

Sources	Parking Standards	Parking Spaces
<b>Previous Zoning (based on use breakdown)</b>	Bank: 1 space / 20 sq.m. GFA* (5 / 1,000 sq.ft.) Restaurant: 1 space / 9 sq.m. GFA* (10 / 1,000 sq.ft.) Rest: 1 space / 30 sq.m. GFA* (3 / 1,000 sq.ft.)	1,095
<b>Town Shopping Centre Standard</b>	1 space / 18.5 sq.m. GLA* (5 / 1,000 sq.ft.)	718
<b>B.A Group consultant</b>	1 space / 13.3 sq.m. GLA* (7 / 1,000 sq.ft.)	1,245
<b>John Winter consultant</b>	1 space / 9.3 sq.m. GLA* (10 / 1,000 sq.ft.)	1,428
<b>Cumming Cockburn Ltd.</b>	Undertook parking counts & parking survey at Market Village	1,375
<b>Pacific Mall developer</b>	N/A. Only maximized lot capacity & exceeded above standards to gain approval.	1,505

\* GFA: Gross Floor Area GLA: Gross Leasable Area

The condominium Asian theme mall is a new phenomenon. The current zoning by-law and other policies may not be relevant standards with which to judge the development application. In the Pacific Mall case, the Town of Markham managed to find alternative parking solutions by conducting several planning studies in advance. As one consultant suggested, “future developments of the same scale as Market Village or Pacific Mall would have to be supported by specific parking studies prior to approval” (Cumming Cockburn Ltd., 1994. p. 7). Technically, the proposal has solved the parking and traffic problems. But years after the development, these problems continue to exist and are larger concerns for future development, as this councillor and planner argue:

*[Pacific Mall] becomes a tourist attraction area.... I would just say it's a success, but it's a pay-off for that success, you know.... The residents had to suffer because*

*of the [traffic] problem.... It will be nice, you know, to have one focal point.... But if we have a traffic problem, you know, rather than people coming, they'll think twice if they wanna come or not. (Councillor Interviewee PC1, February 21, 2006)*

*As a tourist attraction, [Pacific Mall] is a big success to get more people in here.... The other side of the coin is that the more people come here, the greater the traffic issues.... I've heard...Pacific Mall described as "the victim of its own success".... There is a big traffic issue, and you don't have room.... There's existing developments all around, there's no room to do more roads or expand the roads. It's a question of how do you address traffic. Traffic is gonna be the biggest challenge...in the existing development and future expansions.... Is that going to impact their viability in that location? We have to wait and see. (Planner Interviewee PP1, January 19, 2006)*

The application was controversial in the eyes of the local community. Since site plan applications do not require public meetings (otherwise the Town would be criticized by the Courts for exceeding its jurisdiction), people in the community want to express their concerns can participate in a public information meeting.

On the advice of the Ward Councillor, invitations were sent out to all the ratepayers associations and notice was given in the newspapers of a public information meeting which was held on April 25, 1994. A full presentation was made at that meeting and answers were provided to all questions asked. No one has since made any inquiries with respect to the application. (Council Minutes, 1994)

At the meeting comments focused on parking, traffic, and design. A residents' group, the Alliance of Ratepayers, urged the Town and the York Region to reject the Pacific Mall project, since "the massive injection of retail commercial business into the area will seriously jeopardize plans for rejuvenating the Old Kennedy Rd. and Main St." (Dexter, 1993). Some did not like the idea of demolishing the Cullen Country Barns, since it had been a landmark of the Milliken area. Although the voices of the community were not fully heard in this matter, the implications of the application continue to be under inspection and scrutiny.

#### **7.4.1.3 Heritage designation**

Due to the uncertainty of this new development before it was approved in 1994, the Town Council "passed a resolution that the Cullen Country Barns building be referred to Heritage Markham to consider whether the building is worthy of designation as a property of architectural value or interest under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act"

(Council Agenda, 1993). The owner of The Barns argued that although the barn was constructed with old board beams from Pickering's barns, "the building is a fake, and that it is a modern building trying to look old" (Council Agenda, 1993).

Heritage Markham concluded that

the structure does not fall within guideline for heritage designation, but feel that the complex as a total (not just the one building, but the complex around it) is of significant value to the community; and further that it be recommended to council that if this building is to be demolished, an appropriate site plan for development be submitted which is compatible to the surrounding buildings prior to any proposed demolition of the Cullen Country Barns complex. (Council Agenda, 1993)

Heritage Markham's resolution implied that the redevelopment of The Barns site was underway. But the Town Council was not yet convinced that a large-scale condominium, Asian theme mall would be the right replacement of the long-time community landmark. No one had previous experience with a condominium mall or could predict the impact and the future of this new retail form; so the Town Council turned to the Economic Development Department for advice on how to evaluate the economic impact of the potential development.

#### **7.4.1.4 Economic impact**

Since the Economic Development Department had not played a role in the approval process for this site plan before, no one expected its economic impact assessment to have much bearing on the fate of the Pacific Mall application. The Economic Development staff compared certain economic aspects between The Barns and the new proposal, in terms of estimated property tax, processing fees and charges, construction value, projected sales, and estimated job opportunities. As Table 7-9 indicates, the projected redevelopment impact is very positive; it would generate greater revenues in property tax, building value, and sales, as well as create more job opportunities. One of the economic development officers recalls the role of the Economic Development Department at the time:

*We had a challenging opportunity of how do we present the information in such a way so that we can help council make an informed choice. Much like other parts of the department, our job is to provide the information.... And the decision actually is that of the Council. So our task was to, you know, show...potential economic generator.... We just, normally we don't really [deal with] the retail*

*component a lot. But in this specific instance, because we were asked or we were tasked to do research, so we did that. (EDO Interviewee PE1, February 21, 2006)*

Table 7-9: Economic Impact of Pacific Mall Proposal  
Source: Economic Development Department, 1993. Prepared by Sara Tam, November 15, 1993.

	The Barns	Pacific Mall Proposal	Redevelopment Impact
<b>1. Estimated Property Tax</b>			
Total	\$ 147,940	\$ 427,553	+ \$ 279,612
Municipal portion	\$ 21,599	\$ 62,423	+ \$ 40,824
<b>2. Estimated Processing Fees &amp; Charges</b> (e.g., site plan application, building permit application, & development charges)	N/A	\$ 785,502	No impact (cover municipal costs)
<b>3. Construction Value</b>	N/A	\$ 20.2 million	+ \$ 20.2 million
<b>4. Projected Sales</b> (per annum)	N/A	\$ 33.4 million	+ \$ 33.4 million
<b>5. Estimated Job Opportunities</b>	300	612 (full-time) 306 (part-time) 316,160 direct man hours during construction	+ 312 + 306 + 316, 160

The Town Council was very satisfied with the projected economic impact of the Pacific Mall proposal. With this pro-business attitude (Wallace, 1999), they recognized the economic contributions of an Asian theme mall, and perceived it as an economic engine for the area. In 1994 the site plan was finally approved, with objection from only two councillors' out of the total 13. One councillor recalls the vote clearly:

*It is a controversial issue cause, you know, we had...some council members supported it, cause they asked Economic Development...for comment, you know. The comment came back, you know, with high tax base and income for return.... A lot of my constituents, you know, objected it cause of the traffic problem. So that's what I brought to the Council.... I can't favour that humongous development in the area.... [I] opposed it for that reason. (Councillor Interviewee PC1, February 21, 2006)*

In summary, the approval process proceeded in a fair and considerate manner. Compared to other condominium retail proposals in Scarborough, Markham, Richmond Hill, and Richmond, as documented in the literature (Hemson Consulting, 1995; Hudema, 1994; John Winter Associates, 1994; Preston & Lo, 2000; Qadeer, 1998; Wang, 1996), the site plan approval process of the Pacific Mall (Table 7-1) was relatively short, and did not draw excessive objections from the local community that could have prolonged the process. The application was submitted in October 1993 and approved in July 1994, lasting only nine months, even though it was an exceptionally large scale project.

## 7.4.2 Ethnic Expression

The architectural design of the Pacific Mall features a large peaked roof and a glass, floor-to-ceiling main entranceway (Figure 7-4). As the mall stands in an ample parking space, the first impression it often makes is of an “airport hanger”. It is difficult to distinguish it as an Asian mall, except for its large outdoor signs in Chinese.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 7-4: Exterior of Pacific Mall



The Mall is also a contrast to the neotraditional surroundings. Perhaps the self-proclaimed largest Asian theme mall in North America requires another language to depict its flagship position more powerfully and in a more straightforward manner. A journalist referred to the built form of the Pacific Mall as the personification of the so-called “Hong Kong money”: “big, clean, imposing, coldly functional, and coldly detached” (Gillmor, 1998, p. 146). Its homogeneous modernist design blurs its ethnic orientation.

Ethnic expression is stronger in the interior of the mall. The interior attempts to create the atmosphere of a marketplace in Hong Kong (Figure 7-5).<sup>5</sup> Under an industrial roof is the Heritage Town in the southern section of the second floor (Figure 7-6). Here people can find Chinese traditional artifacts and bright and colorful decorations, mixed and matched, with different origins, styles, and regional characteristics.<sup>6</sup> It is like a

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<sup>4</sup> For Hong Kong immigrants, the Chinese translation of “Pacific Mall” is “Pacific Place”, the name of a famous commercial landmark in central Hong Kong. The name creates familiarity in their shopping experience.

<sup>5</sup> A large number of boutique stores are confined to small glass cubicles. Stores are divided by five shopping aisles with street signs, such as Queen’s Avenue, and Nathan Avenue, named after well-known shopping districts in Hong Kong, in an attempt to create a pseudo city, shopping environment. The intersecting aisles are numbered with lucky numbers, including eight, and irregularly from 18<sup>th</sup> to 288<sup>th</sup> street.

<sup>6</sup> The golden yellow glazed roof tiles which originally “were restricted only for the imperial court and for the few monasteries and temples appointed by the Emperor” (Pacific Mall, 2004b), are largely used at the entrance but not in traditional proportions. A ridge with two dragon heads on both ends resting at the top of



miniature theme park with a collage of fragmented pieces of Chinese art and architecture. But it seems kitschy and absurd.

Figure 7-5: Pacific Mall Interior



Figure 7-6: Heritage Town Entrance



The Mall developers are originally from Israel. Obviously, they use the Chinese theme as a selling point to attract customers. Some merchants and customers prefer an expression of cultural identity in the design features of the Mall:

*Many westerner customers come to visit [the Heritage Town]. They feel very interested in everything (Business Interviewee PB7, February 22, 2006).*

*[I'm originally from the Caribbean]. I like the atmosphere and decorations here [in Heritage Town]. Its style, store layout, street names, all in all, create an Asian feel. That's why I come here (Shopper Interviewee PS5, February 23, 2006).*

*Mainstream malls are all the same. No big difference. Chinese malls can add the cultural elements to create their own characters (Business Interviewee PB4, February 22, 2006).*

*[It helps to] promote harmony, understand different cultures from each other, and reduce misunderstanding from each other (Business Interviewee PB1, February 16, 2006).*

However, there was overall criticism of the small-sized stores and the low-end business atmosphere in Heritage Town that does not conform to the cultural image it attempts to convey. Merchants argue that the developer-landlord should have more control of tenant mix, and maintain the traditional cultural atmosphere of the area, instead of creating a “flea market” or “old Chinatown”. Other respondents had reservations or

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the entrance is a replica of a decoration in the Forbidden City in Beijing. Two dragon walls with bas-reliefs made of glazed clay are constructed at both sides of the entrance, each representing the Northern and the Southern art styles in China. The roofs covering the walls are of an unusual curvy shape. A group of Chinese gardening elements from Southern China are set up unexpectedly under the imperial-palace-like entrance, which include a moonshaped door, leading to the inside stores, connected by a small bridge with rose wood handrail panels; under the bridge is a golden fish pond designed with waterfall and stone landscaping assembled by a Japanese artist.

resisted to the expression of Chinese identity altogether; they argue that the products and services merchants provide are more important than how the Mall is decorated:

*I don't care about the cultural expression. People come to buy things they need in their daily life, rather than looking for cultural goods.... The Chinese business people like to concentrate together [to do business]...and the selling of condominium [units] attracted them, not because of the "Chinese theme" or the Heritage Town, which didn't even exist at the very beginning.... We don't need cultural characters; instead, we need to create an everyday life [environment], where people can buy Asian goods, especially specific products with Hong Kong style.*(Business Interviewee PB2, February 16, 2006)

A number of questions arise here: Who are the active agents selling ethnicity? Whose identity are we talking about? Who is this ethnic expression attractive to? Developers sold condominium units to business investors, primarily from Hong Kong, and used the Chinese cultural theme as a major attraction to draw tourists and customers. The developers are the major forces behind the scenes who promote the Asian theme and earn profits by selling a synthesized Chinese identity. Culture is a commodity, and so is ethnicity. Meanwhile, the majority of Chinese merchants provide products and services to both Chinese and non-Chinese customers. Unintentionally, they are maintaining a Chinese tradition of business operation. If the static physical or architectural forms are the means for developers to materialize a commodified ethnicity, then everyday life experience, through their interactions with diverse customers, is the conduit for business people to reinforce the dynamics of a fluid Chinese identity. Hence, the expression of Chinese ethnicity in the Pacific Mall is multi-layered, and conveys authentic and genuine, yet fluid and synthesized meanings.

### **7.4.3 Social and Cultural Issues in Asian Theme Malls**

#### **7.4.3.1 Public controversy: the "Carole Bell incident"**

In the past couple of decades, the Town of Markham has experienced tremendous demographic change and has undergone intensive social and cultural transformation.<sup>7</sup>

Within this social context, the Asian theme mall phenomenon in Markham goes far

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<sup>7</sup> One of the most noticeable trends is the concentration of an ever-increasing Asian population in this long-time Anglo-Saxon community. Specifically, since the early 1990s, Markham has become an attractive destination for thousands of wealthy immigrants from Hong Kong, who fled their homeland in fear of China's take-over of the British colony in 1997. It was the so-called "Hong Kong money" that created new suburban Chinatowns and changed the city's skyline significantly (DeMont & Fennell, 1989; Wong, 1996).

beyond issues of land use planning. The most publicized social and political dispute regarding the Asian theme mall was the controversial “Carole Bell incident”. In June 1995, the Deputy Mayor Carole Bell made inflammatory comments on the concentration of Asian theme malls in York Region that cater to the Chinese community alone, and cause Markham residents to move away.

*The growing concentration of ethnic groups is causing social conflict.... Everything's going Chinese.... The weakness of it comes when there's a concentration, when you're getting only one group of people.... This is racial monopoly (Bell's remarks at the Regional meeting as quoted in the Toronto Star, 1995).*

Bell’s comments deeply offended many people in the community who later accused her of racism. They argued that the malls were developed in areas zoned for such use, and it was a free market of demand and supply. In addition, “it is against the law to restrict population growth or a business development, or the customer composition of a mall, by race or colour” (Toronto Star, 1995). Bell clarified that what really bothered her was that the two million square feet of retail space were devoted exclusively to Asian theme malls, either in existence or in the planning stages. She “not only wants to limit further development of such malls, she wants to see restrictions put on merchants whose signs display Chinese characters far more prominently than English” (Murray, 1995).

Bell’s comments regarding the overrun of the theme malls reflected some of the community’s concern, and not necessarily only among non-Chinese residents<sup>8</sup>. At the same time, protesters argued that it was unfair to link a land use development issue with ethnicity, and point a finger at a particular group. From a planning perspective, as the chair of the Town’s planning committee noted, restricting developers from building something that caters to a specific group is unfair and would restrain trade. It is also beyond the function of planning to determine whether the market can bear the development or not (Krivel, 1995).

A group of 12 mayors from across the Greater Toronto Area signed a statement condemning Bell’s offensive remarks, and stating that they “share the outrage and disappointment of Chinese-Canadians” (DeMara, 1995). The Mayor of the Town of

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<sup>8</sup> As Murray reported, “the Chinese language Ming Pao Daily News took a straw poll in which about 60% of the nearly 700 respondents indicated development was occurring too quickly”. However, “70% considered the manner in which Bell raised the issue to be racist” (Murray, 1995)

Markham initiated the creation of a Mayoral Advisory Committee in order to heal the growing rift in the community.<sup>9</sup> Prompted by the “Carol Bell incident” the Advisory Committee asked whether this racial dispute over Asian theme malls and Chinese signage was a matter of cultural misunderstanding or a matter of Markham’s growing pains.

The answer is both. A decade ago, Markham experienced intense transformation, socially, culturally, and economically. The municipality, politicians and the community were not prepared to cope with these fast-paced changes. The influx of newcomers changed not only the social composition but also the physical environment of the previously homogeneous neighbourhoods. On the one hand, the Hong Kong immigrants, who were primarily affluent and well educated professionals, had higher expectations and more resources to create a comfort zone for themselves, consistent with their Hong Kong lifestyle; this is reflected in the highly visible ethnic theme mall retail environments. While they adjust to the social norms and community life in their new homeland, they prefer this new type of quasi Chinatown enclave.

On the other hand, the noticeable rise in the numbers of affluent Chinese immigrants and the subsequent Chinese commercial activity in Markham has exceeded the comfort level of some of the long-time residents and triggered their fear that a miniature Hong Kong is being built next door. Furthermore, these Hong Kong newcomers altered the stereotype of immigrants, who were expected to settle in less desirable neighbourhoods as their predecessors had. With sufficient capital and strong market demand and supply, the Chinese community is the only ethnic group to capitalize on a series of large-scale retail developments. It is no surprise that the Chinese group drew attention to their different business culture as a result. Perhaps it is also a chance for the Chinese business community to understand Canadian social norms and learn how to integrate with the local community. After all, it takes time for both newcomers and long-established residents to adjust to the new situation, and build harmonious relationships.

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<sup>9</sup> More than one hundred local residents applied for the committee position; eleven were selected based on their good interpersonal and communication skills, experience in community activity, and representation of Markham’s diversity. Together with the Mayor and three council members, the committee identified five general concerns: demographic changes caused by rapid growth in Markham, race issues, cultural integration, communications and cultural sensitivity, and non-English signage (Krivel, 1996). The Committee also sought public input to involve the community and promote cultural reconciliation at the neighbourhood level. It provided a public forum for the community to open discussions on how to cope with the multicultural diversity in Markham.

#### **7.4.3.2 Cultural sensitivity over signage language**

Perhaps Chinese signage is the easiest target for criticism in the Asian theme malls, which raises questions regarding cultural sensitivity. Opponents may not be aware that their views against the exclusive use of foreign languages in store signs are untenable, because there are no language laws in Canada except in Quebec. A municipality has no authority to force a business to use certain language. Accordingly, the sign by-law in Markham contains no language restrictions.<sup>10</sup> In the case of the Pacific Mall, at the draft plan approval stage, the Town required that “all signs shall include an English language portion at least as prominent, as to size and type of lettering, as the non-English portion of the sign” (Heaslip, 1995, p. 4).<sup>11</sup>

People who are alienated by a foreign language may be oversensitive. It is also possible that the language issue has been exaggerated. As a report of the Mayoral Advisory Committee notes, “complaints about the exclusive use of Chinese on mall signs may be inaccurate, as almost all the signs also have English on them” (Krivel, 1996). However, no matter how true this statement is, the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs should also increase their sensitivity to local social norms and business culture, as well as the different needs of people in the community. This may contribute to their integration with the local society, broaden their customer base, and provide equal access to their businesses for all groups.

Today, the Town of Markham is a highly diverse ethno-cultural community. The political scene has changed along with the social transformations. A Race Relations Committee was re-instated after it resigned due to the Carole Bell incident; the committee “is committed to taking a proactive role in promoting harmony within Markham's diverse communities” (Town of Markham, 2006b). Ten years after the racial tensions, although

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<sup>10</sup> Prior to the Carole Bell incident, “Councillor J. Jones advised of his intent to bring forward a motion to request the Town Solicitor to prepare an amendment to the sign by-law requiring that all signage in the Town of Markham be in one of the two official languages in addition to any other language desired by the property owner and/or tenant” (Council Minute, 1993). The reason behind this motion was that in a retail environment, the use of the official languages is beneficial to both customers and retailers of all backgrounds in that it promotes integration and creates cultural harmony. It is also a consideration of safety for police, firemen, and customers in emergency situations (Belgrave, 1993). However, this motion failed to carry at the council meeting.

<sup>11</sup> This requirement was well enforced in the Pacific Mall. Based on the data retrieved from the CSCA, only 6 out of the total 830 businesses in the past nine years exclusively used Chinese store names.

many of the Asian theme malls in Markham, including the Pacific Mall continue to face different challenges, they have proven to be a business success.

## **7.5 KEY PLAYERS' INTERVENTIONS VS. MARKET FORCES**

### **7.5.1 The Business Community**

Unlike the business communities in the retail strip cases of inner city, merchants of the Pacific Mall had little or inefficient involvement in the larger business matters, especially regarding long-term development and sustainability, even though they owned the property. The reasons for this are twofold. First, the condominium program offers a clear structure of management, but also poses challenges for business leadership and community participation. Similar to a residential condominium, the Pacific Mall is under the supervision of a Board of Directors, with seven Board members that are elected by the store-owners. Two separate property management companies undertake activities, such as common elements improvement, maintenance, advertising, and promotion; one of management companies is committed exclusively to managing Heritage Town.

Unlike a conventional leasehold retail mall, where a corporation makes consistent decisions on business strategies, management styles, improvement plans, and other important issues associated with future developments, the individual, small-business owners of the Pacific Mall lack the resources and leadership to provide a vision for the condominium mall. Rather, they are more likely to be focused on their own businesses. It is difficult to reach consensus and give a clear direction for the future, as a member of the Board of Directors indicates:

*The Board of Directors comes up with a decision, and owners vote for the decision. Normally issues like expansion or changes in common areas need 80% votes from owners.... It isn't easy to have one voice to stand for a group of people with different backgrounds, knowledge, ways of thinking, and personal interests.... With so many owners, sometimes it's very hard to reach consensus to do a thing.... That's why we can't start the expansion right away like Market Village, where [it's on a leasehold basis and] one owner makes all decisions. This is also one of the downsides of condominium malls. (PB12, May 19, 2006)*

In addition to the issue of business leadership, the condominium structure also limits the participation of many of the business tenants, who do not have voting rights on matters that actually affect their businesses directly. The Condominium Act authorizes only

property owners to vote. This imbalance may result in disconnections between individual business behaviours and the holistic development efforts of the mall.

Second, the business immigrant program has caused an unsettled business controversy in condominium malls that may lead to low participation rates.<sup>12</sup> The program is very attractive to people who want to trade in their business experience and a significant amount of capital for permanent residency in Canada. The design of the condominium mall is partially tailored to these potential investors or entrepreneur immigrants. However, if the entrepreneurs only care about obtaining their resident status and not about their business, this could cause adverse effects on other businesses in the mall. A town councillor comments on this issue:

*I think [investing a business] is the fastest way of getting your permanent residency.... I see a lot of them, you know, come and go.... As soon as they get the residency, they just sell the business, and they move out. (Councillor Interviewee PC1, February 21, 2006)*

A shopkeeper also reveals that:

*Those business immigrants only open their businesses for about a year [to fulfill the immigration requirement]. They just don't care the business.... Before they leave, they sell everything at unbelievably low prices, even they're losing money. They would pay more from their pockets and claim it as business income. This actually affects the whole [shopping] environment of the mall, and affects those entrepreneurs who plan to do long-term business. (Business Interviewee PB5, February 22, 2006).*

In summary, the structural deficiencies of the condominium program limit the participation of many business tenants, and cannot prevent the adverse effects caused by some of the business investors. As a result, the business community does not show motivation or commitment to the long-term development of the mall. Minding one's own business and leaving the mall to market forces seems to be the norm among most of the business operators. However, there are creative ways to bring business owners on board; these require municipal intervention, one member of the Board of Directors argues. There

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<sup>12</sup> Introduced in the 1980s by the federal government, this immigrant category includes three classes of business immigrants: the self-employed, entrepreneurs, and investors. Entrepreneurs are required to have a minimum net worth of \$300,000 and commit to managing a business of a defined size, creating at least one full-time job for one year, within the three years of landing in Canada. The investors are expected to have a minimum net worth of \$800,000 and make an investment of \$400,000 in order to be administered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). CIC will return the investment, without interest, after five years.

is need for more cooperation and communication between the business community and the Town:

*It's very important that the Town cooperates with [owners of the] Pacific Mall, and pay more attention to its future development.... For example, there are more new condos being planned and built on Kennedy Road, which is a good thing to bring more customers to the mall. I think we need more communication with the Town [on how to plan for the future]. (PB12, May 19, 2006)*

## **7.5.2 Municipal Interventions**

### **7.5.2.1 Town Council**

The Town Council demonstrated large degrees of uncertainty with regards to the Asian theme mall development (Table 7-1); and they were careful in their decision-making. In order to reach their final decision the Town Council employed the expertise of town planners and engineers; they also consulted Heritage Markham and the Economic Development Department on the associated impacts of the new development. Meanwhile, with a pro-business attitude and an economic driven agenda they were open to new ideas and new development opportunities. The approval of the Pacific Mall development was based largely on its projected economic impacts, which outweighed social, cultural, or technical aspects.

The Town Council employed a socially and culturally neutral stance in evaluating the application of the Pacific Mall plan, regardless of its ethnic nature. This approach is well known in other municipalities, such as the former City of Scarborough and the Town of Richmond Hill; in these municipalities the focus is mainly on the physical and technical dimensions of the applications, such as zoning, site plan, architectural design, parking, and traffic circulation (Preston & Lo, 2000; Qadeer, 1998; Wang, 1996, 1999). There is no council policy to reflect the ethnocultural diversity of the community and accordingly address the need for a pluralistic planning approach. The Town Council and staff prefer to follow market forces in search of a signal whether to proceed with an ethnic-oriented development or not, as an Economic Development Officer describes:

*[Instead of] incorporating certain types of ethnic whatever policy on paper, we rely on the marketplace to make that determination themselves. Because we find that it's actually a better...use of resources in the sense that they come together, they see an opportunity, and if there's a demographic sort of population to support it, it would happen, right? So therefore...in a local government we do not specify the ethnic side of it. Knowing that if we've done our job well in terms of*



*setting up the institutions, such as planning and such, people will knock on the door and they'll go "Hey, I have this new innovative idea.".... Several years back, then we're talking about in terms of Pacific Mall, the knock on the door was about, you know, the condominium retailing. In future, who knows what that is.... I think the role of the government is to be able to be approached and be able to review those ideas under, either a certain set of criteria or a changing set of criteria. (Economic Development Interviewee PE1, February 21, 2006)*

However, when the Asian theme mall phenomenon has developed far beyond land use or technical issues, and entered a socially and culturally embedded controversy; the Town Council could not simply leave things to market forces to work out. The council were forced to take action and respond to the "Carol Bell incident" with strong pressure from the community.

The ethnic mall is a new and multifaceted phenomenon that responds to the emerging demands of an ethnic-oriented market. Its development reflects the interplay of social and cultural values and economic activities. The Town Council, as the decision makers, must consider these factors and think beyond technicalities. Municipal intervention should be in place before and after such developments, including initiatives such as, collecting ethnocultural data, compiling community profiles, conducting special area studies, monitoring ethnic mall development, and setting a vision for the future development of the community as a whole.

#### **7.5.2.2 Town Planners**

In the case of the Pacific Mall, Town planners were involved only in the site plan approval process (Table 7-1). The planners led a team, a joint effort with the Engineering Department and outside planning and engineering consultants, to review the site plan. Their main tasks were project coordination and finding technical solutions for parking space and traffic congestion, as two planners explain:

*The Planning Department's role would be to review the plans, and find solutions, and address the issues like parking.... Aside from the core issues we deal with, land use compatibility, urban design, those kind of things, we also deal with the issues,...or address the issues raised by other departments and external agencies.... Almost all these departments and external agencies provide comments from their perspectives, and the planning department's job is [to] take all those perspectives, read through them, try to make sure they fit well, and [if] any issues they have conflict with each other. It's a leading role; it's a co-ordinating role. (Planner Interviewee PP1, January 19, 2006)*

From planners' perspective, the Asian theme mall development was no different from other shopping mall developments. No special attention was given to the ethnic component of the proposed mall, although it was well known that Asian theme malls target an ethnic market. All shopping mall developments are treated in the same manner, except in situations that may require another set of technical criteria (e.g., parking standards). Planners do not view the development from an ethnic perspective, as two planners and an Economic Development Officer demonstrate:

*We look at it from what's going into the ground, what kind of impact it would have on the community, the neighbourhood, the traffic patterns, and so on. That's really what we need to address, Okay. Now, from the fact that this is a Chinese theme mall, in fact there is a lot of Chinese population in the area, we knew it's going to be very popular. So that right away tells you it's gonna be a lot of traffic. So from that perspective we might've been aware that this is gonna need extra attention. But generally speaking we don't look at the ethnic nature,... Looking from that way is discrimination. (Planner Interviewee PP2, January 19, 2006)*

*Technically we can't look at it from that [ethnic] perspective, but...if it helped us to figure out potential solutions, then we would look at it (Planner Interviewee PP1, January 19, 2006).*

*I don't think there's much difference between planning an indoor [Asian] theme mall or a big-box store, or even a regular typical mall. I think any time when you look at the site plan application, or re-zoning application, and so on, you wanna try to...look at how to resolve all the impacts on site. (Planner Interviewee PP2, January 19, 2006)*

*The work of the Planning Department is [to] lay out the structure for that of the community in terms of, you know, the various components including the commercial or the retail component. It does talk about, for instance...the size, the proper units of certain types of retail.... It does not speak to the ethnicity of it, nor do we have expectation as municipality or community to address the ethnicity side of it. (Economic Development Officer Interviewee PE1, February 21, 2006)*

Overall, the approval process of the Pacific Mall proceeded within the planning regulatory framework, and had no special reference to ethnicity. A planner who was involved in the approval process, neutrally comments:

*It's just a site plan application. We went through the by-laws.... Condominium tenure is the thing we want to understand, [that's why] we hired the consultant.... Commercial space is always evolving.... We were not certain if the ownership is a right thing to do.... [After all, Pacific Mall] is a big success. (Planner Interviewee PP3, February 7, 2006)*

This culturally neutral stance and technical approach is prevalent in planning practice. In this case, planners followed market forces in a reactive manner and focused on finding a parking formula suitable to the condominium retailing. In fact, planners can do more to incorporate this new retail form within the existing urban fabric. Many issues other than parking and traffic need to be considered, for example: Since ethnic malls have become a community focal point, how do they link to the residential parts of the community and other community services, such as places of worship? How can planners promote a higher density, mixed-use, and pedestrian friendly environment in the ethnic mall area that can serve as local community centre? What functions and land use will serve the community in the future? How can planners collaborate with business owners to recreate and redevelop the community? These questions remained unanswered in the Pacific Mall case; however this case suggests a more proactive role for city planners in ethnic retail development.

#### **7.5.2.3 Economic Development Officers (EDOs)**

Economic Development Officers (EDOs) played an ad hoc and limited role in the ethnic mall development (Table 7-1). They are generally involved in development approval matters only when they are consulted with during the process. As an interviewee comments, *“if it’s a planning application, it’s pretty much a combination of the Planning Department’s sort of call to consult with the Economic Development Office”* (Economic Development Interviewee PE1, February 21, 2006). However, the EDOs, in providing an economic impact assessment of the development plan, carried much weight in the Town Council’s final decision.

Although the EDOs were not involved in the retail development, their expertise in business development and knowledge of the community they serve allowed them to view the project beyond parking and traffic issues. EDOs are intuitive with regards to market force movements and how to tackle some of the business challenges. One EDO analyzes the Pacific Mall as follows:

*Right now looking at the demographic, the Asian market is still a strong population group in the Town of Markham.... It certainly has the potential to be a stronger draw in that area.... The challenge becomes of if you want to reach a broader than your own specific market, how do you make it comfortable for the other people to come through.... So for retailers, they have to understand if you’re*

*going for that “ethnic brand”, what are some of the downsides and what can you do about it. (Economic Development Interviewee PE1, February 21, 2006).*

The challenges the Asian theme mall development has posed were not all present at the stage of site plan approval; rather, these issues relate to the long-term sustainability of the community and emerged over time. Thus, ethnic mall development requires joint efforts and collaborations among all key players. Planners cannot work alone, neither can politicians and other City staff. EDOs must be involved as well, especially when municipal intervention is necessary to prevent potential problems in advance.

### **7.5.3 Developers and Market Forces**

The development of the Pacific Mall basically followed the direction of its developers (Table 7-1). It seems that developers, who are generally profit driven, have an instinctive sense regarding the rapidly changing ethnic market and they have seized the opportunity for profit. New condominium Asian theme malls and plazas have sprung up or are under construction, along Steeles Avenue right across from the Pacific Mall (within the boundaries of the City of Toronto). These are mega complex developments with larger massing, higher density, multiple functions, and distinct designs, for example the “Splendid China Tower” and the “Landmark” developments. The Pacific Mall is also proposing an expansion plan in collaboration with Market Village to double their retail spaces. These new development projects suggest that developers have created a trend that has completely transformed the urban and social landscape of the local community of Markham—whether these developments are a piece of urban Hong Kong or Asian transplants in suburban Ontario or an imitations of mainstream suburban big-boxes.

What are the implications of the growing Asian theme mall developments that primarily target the Chinese community? Does the Chinese community have the capacity to absorb these spaces? Are they viable in the long term? What if they reach a saturation point? If so, what can municipalities do in response? Do collaborations exist between the City of Toronto and the Town of Markham?

To answer these questions, planning professionals must go beyond their role in facilitating urban developments, and envision what is viable and what is not. Other than dealing with the technicalities of planning approval, planners’ role involves guiding

future development, leveraging market forces, and monitoring the impacts of new urban forms on existing neighbourhoods. The goal of municipalities should be to exert more control on the free market in order to help nurture and sustain the emerging ethnic market that can, in turn, be a lucrative tool for the larger economy and contribute to community building.

## **7.6 SUMMARY**

This chapter illustrated the development process of the Pacific Mall. It discussed the challenges and the related social and cultural issues the new condominium retail form has raised. It also analyzed the involvement of key players that actually followed market forces rather than direct interventions in this development.

The case of the Pacific Mall reflects minor municipal intervention, especially after its development; the private ownership of the mall draws little public interest. The Town played a role only in the site plan approval process and focused on parking and traffic issues. When the Town entrusts a large-scale retail facility, such as the Pacific Mall, to market forces, the fast changing ethnic market may bring additional and unforeseen challenges to the community, such as a saturated market, neighbourhood tensions, retail blight, and area decay. By the time they arrive, it will be too late for the Town to mend the new situation.

Ethnic condominium retailing poses challenges for municipalities; other than planning approval, what is the role of municipalities in planning ethnic retail in the long run, especially in terms of community sustainability? The findings in this research suggest that planners and other city authorities should adopt a proactive and collaborative role to intervene and involve all key players and consider the social and cultural aspects of ethnic retail development. Cultural sensitivity must reach through the different levels of major decision-making, so as to meet the diverse needs of the community, and, more importantly, to guide the future.

## Chapter 8 Discussion

As the four case studies in this thesis illustrate, ethnic retailing contributes to the integration of immigrants, both economically and culturally, and plays an important role in generating diversity and choice in the general market. In addition, ethnic retailing utilizes urban spaces and redefines the identities of neighbourhoods. Yet, our knowledge of the dynamics and complexities of ethnic retailing is limited, especially in terms of its relationship with and implications for city planning. The multicultural planning theory advocates cultural sensitivity in planners' practice based on a limited number of empirical studies, and is regularly disregarded in practice. The disconnection between planning theory and practice, results in an insufficient understanding of the complexity of the multicultural reality and planning's mandate has often been overlooked.

This study is based on a multi-group and multi-case setting and contributes empirical data to the current literature, which lacks in empirical comparative studies in the area of ethnic retail development (see Buzzelli, 2001; Chen, 2005; Hackworth & Rekers, 2005; Lai, 1988; Preston & Lo, 2000; Qadeer, 1997, 1998; Wang, 1999). In this thesis I use four cases to demonstrate what planners have done and should have done when dealing with ethnic retail developments. What is ethnic retailing and what are planners' roles in its development? These two major questions are considered throughout the thesis. This chapter discusses the findings of the four case studies in relation to the dynamics of ethnic retailing, the municipal responses reflected in policy-making, and the roles of city officials and community outreach. Furthermore, it examines the constraints inherent in the planning system and planners' practice, and explains the reasons behind these constraints. More importantly, template planning approaches to ethnic retailing are rejected in light of the diversity presented in the case studies; I suggest new measures for planning practitioners to both integrate immigrants at the city-wide level and allow them to express their cultural differences at the local level. In conclusion, I offer a summary of recommendations for planning practice and municipal governance.

### 8.1 THE DYNAMICS OF ETHNIC RETAILING

The findings in this study reveal that ethnic retail development is fluid in nature.

There is no clear growth pattern to follow, due to the large spectrum of diversity among ethnic groups, and between inner city and suburban cases. The following sections discuss the commonalities and differences among the four cases and their relationship to planning.

### 8.1.1 Inter-group and Intra-group Differences

The four cases present a large spectrum of inter-group and intra-group differences in terms of ethnicity, class, group characteristics, period of immigration, and business profiles. In general, each ethnic group has distinct identities, cultural preferences, and immigration histories, resulting in profound group differences. The entrepreneurs' social and economic status indicate how ethnic and class resources come into play in their businesses, and lead to the development of different business niches, performances, and market sizes. These findings echo the current literature about the multifaceted nature of ethnic entrepreneurship. Table 8-1 provides background information on the entrepreneurs and their business profiles in each retail precinct, and sets the context for understanding the differences among the cases.

Table 8-1: Comparing Ethnic Entrepreneurs and Their Business Profiles

	<b>East Chinatown</b>	<b>Gerrard India Bazaar</b>	<b>Corso Italia</b>	<b>Pacific Mall</b>
<b>Composition of Entrepreneurs</b>	old generation immigrants from HK (1960s-1970s), boat people from Vietnam (1980s), and new immigrants from mainland China (1990s)	South Asian origins not only from Indian Subcontinent countries, but also from other parts of the world; much shorter immigration history than Chinese and Italians	many old generation Italian immigrants moved to the suburbs; second or third generations run family businesses; more Portuguese businesses established; new immigrant entrepreneurs from Latin America and Asia	new types of skilled worker immigrants or business investors; originally most from HK; now many from mainland China
<b>Group Characteristics</b>	Group solidarity; bottom-up initiatives; rely on political support; English language barriers	Religious and linguistic differences within the group; previous business background or experience; English language proficiency; independent; rely less on group resources	High level of institutional completeness and group solidarity within the Italian community; strong public involvement; well organized; businesses use English, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish	higher education levels; have sufficient capital; low level of public involvement; loosely organized; businesses use Cantonese, Mandarin, and English
<b>Business Composition</b>	Food: 40%; Retail: 25%; Services: 35%; low-end, low variety	Food: 40%; Retail: 40%; Services: 20%; large variety of South Asian specialty goods	Food: 25%; Retail: 50%; Services: 25%; high-end fashion stores and European styles	Food: 14%; Retail: 70%; Services: 17%; highly specialized in retail; very large variety; Asian theme
<b>Vacancy Rate</b>	Higher than city average	Lower than city average	Much lower than city average	Much lower than city average
<b>Customer Base</b>	Local co-ethnic	Regional co-ethnic & mainstream	Local & regional co-ethnic & mainstream	Regional co-ethnic & mainstream

In the development of the retail areas, the entrepreneurs of the three ethnic groups represented in this study are differentiated by their cultural preferences, business behaviours, and the way in which they mobilize their social capital. For example, the South Asian entrepreneurs adopt an independent business strategy, while the East Chinatown Chinese merchants rely more on group solidarity and social capital and utilize political resources; the Italian community has a high level of institutional completeness and public participation in both economic and political life. These inter-group differences affect the business profile, business performance (e.g., vacancy rate), and market size of each of the studied areas (Table 8-1).<sup>1</sup>

Intra-group differences are reflected among Chinese business communities. Compared to the older generation of Chinese immigrants in East Chinatown, the Chinese entrepreneurs in the Pacific Mall represent the new type of immigrants who have higher education levels and capital. The development of Asian theme malls specifically targets the latter group of Chinese immigrants. These two sub-groups significantly differ from each other in the ways in which they conduct business and in the physical retail formats they develop, that is, the “old” Chinatown versus the “new” Asian mall developments.

These inter-group and intra-group dynamics confirm that ethnic differences have a role in determining the development processes and physical outcomes of ethnic retail areas. Different ethnic groups leave different imprints on urban spaces. When ethnic succession occurs, the demographic composition, business profile, and identity of the neighbourhood change accordingly. Ethnic transformations, such as this, are typical of the studied cases, proving that ethnic retailing is fluid, dynamic, and complex in nature. From a municipal policy making and implementation perspective, it is important to gain better understanding of the local dynamics and the diversity of each ethnic community on different levels within the neighbourhoods.

### **8.1.2 Inner-city Shopping Strips vs. the Suburban Mall**

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<sup>1</sup> Among the three retail strips, Chinatown and the India Bazaar specialize more in food related businesses, while Corso Italia features more retail businesses, such as high-end clothing stores. The Pacific Mall has the highest proportion of retail businesses, covering a large variety of merchandise. East Chinatown has the lowest percentage of retail businesses, and is the only area with a higher vacancy rate than the City average, partially due to its low-end market and lack of retail variety; its market is also limited to the local co-ethnic clientele, while the other cases have a broader regional and mixed-ethnic audience.



The diversity of the cases is also present in the differences between inner-city shopping strips and the suburban mall. The following comparisons focus on ethnic entrepreneurs' location preferences, unplanned and planned development processes, and municipal involvement.

There are several common explanations for the preference of many ethnic entrepreneurs in East Chinatown, the India Bazaar, and Corso Italia for a main street business location in the inner city over a suburban shopping mall location. First, the spatial concentration of co-ethnic businesses maximizes ethnic resources and promotes one-stop shopping among the ethnic communities. This supports the literature on the positive role of spatial concentration in ethnic businesses (Kaplan, 1998b). Second, the main street setting serves not only a specialty retail function, but also a social function, which seems to be an important element in ethnic retail activities. The variety of businesses and the street life attract people far and near to shop, eat, and meet. This type of social gatherings may not occur when an ethnic business is individually located in a shopping mall. Third, the inner city locations are close to the downtown and can be accessed conveniently with public transit. Fourth, the main street configuration provides flexibility in business operation, such as varied store hours that are normally regulated in a shopping mall.

The Pacific Mall and other Asian theme malls provide alternatives for combining both the retail and social functions of ethnic retail in a highly concentrated and desirable manner that caters to suburbanized immigrants. The suburban shopping mall configuration with condominium ownership seems to be a successful new trend in ethnic retailing; yet, the Chinese are the only ethnic group to develop this retail form due to its market demand and supply. No other group has followed the Chinese model despite their sizable populations, such as Italian and South Asian immigrants.

In terms of their development processes, the four study areas have been through various stages of development, presented different development issues, and reflected different levels of key players' involvement (Table 8-2). The inner-city shopping strips were mainly unplanned and incrementally developed over long periods of time. The organic manner in which they grow allows room for businesses to change and for continuous development in the area. Ethnic entrepreneurs who own businesses on the

strips are, to a large degree, involved in the development processes of the areas over time; their involvement ultimately accounts for the changes in the areas. In contrast, the suburban mall was planned and established within a much shorter timeframe. Once built, physical changes to the mall are infrequent. Developers have control over the mall's development and long-term issues, that is, what can or cannot be built, while individual business owners or operators are less involved in these matters.

Table 8-2: Development Processes of Four Areas

	<b>East Chinatown</b>	<b>India Bazaar</b>	<b>Corso Italia</b>	<b>Pacific Mall</b>
<b>Development Stages</b>	- incrementally developed ethnic enclave - struggle to survive	- accidentally developed business incubator - at a crossroads	- maturely developed community - fight for its future	- market-driven development - victim of its success
<b>Development Issues</b>	- China Gate project - proposed streetscape capital work - strategic plans	- general BIA initiatives - conceptual ideas of streetcar advertising and cultural centre - tourism development strategy	- general BIA initiatives - revitalization strategy plans and new identity - Environmental Assessment - Right-of-Way dispute	- zoning and minor variance - studies on parking standards - site access and traffic circulation - mall expansion
<b>Level of Key Players' Involvement</b>	- business leaders highly involved; relied much on politicians and city staff - community agencies actively participated - politicians, EDOs fully supported	- businesses highly involved in BIA matters - partnership between businesses and community agencies - less communication between businesses and the City	- business community highly involved in BIA matters and ROW dispute; allied with other stakeholders, e.g., residents, local councillor - transportation planners dedicated to public consultation	- developers set the vision - land use planners worked closely with developers, internal and external stakeholders - city council gave green light to the development based on EDO's evaluation on economic benefits - businesses barely involved

The cases imply a strong contrast between main street and suburban mall retailing in terms of the City's involvement. In inner city main street cases, there are active dialogues between the City and the business community, because the public space draws multiple interests from the municipality and the public. Within this context, planning and other municipal departments can become involved in many ways, such as providing urban design guidelines, BIA programs, funding, or staff support. In the suburban case, planners and the Town had limited interactions with the development, because of the mall's private ownership status. Municipal intervention only occurred in the site plan approval process.

In summary, both the traditional strip format and the new Asian theme mall model are the result of location choices of ethnic entrepreneurs. Yet, the involvement of both the entrepreneurs and the City in the development of unplanned strips and planned shopping malls are very different. From a planning perspective, the needs of these retail developments differ. For example, the development of retail strips requires more

attention to the improvement of public spaces, while the privately-owned shopping mall indicates the need for monitoring the impact of this type of large scale retail facility on the surrounding neighbourhood.

However, the ethnic retail phenomenon raises one major question common to both the urban and suburban settings: How can planning ensure the long-term viability of these areas, while maintaining healthy community building on a city-wide scale? The following sections continue to explore these dimensions.

### **8.1.3 The Retail Function and Community Building**

The four cases demonstrate that ethnic retailing benefits and contributes to ethnic communities by creating destinations for shopping and social activities. For many immigrants, this retail function is an important part of their community life. How does ethnic retailing perform beyond its ethnic boundaries? Can ethnic retailing contribute to the building of the community at large? What is the current relationship between ethnic retail areas and the surrounding neighbourhoods?

The four cases show varying degrees of disconnection with the existing neighbourhoods, such as the isolated business enclave setting in East Chinatown, the regional draw of customers and its adverse effects (e.g., parking, traffic, noise, garbage) in the other three cases, separated retail use without a clear vision of the community as a whole in the India Bazaar, and conflicts between retail development and other urban projects (e.g., transit, housing) in Corso Italia. These disconnections have affected, directly or indirectly, the long-term sustainability of the communities in these areas.

In particular, issues of access to the ethnic businesses and parking have different implications for cases where retailing is patronized mainly by the local community, and those where the customer base is city or metropolitan-wide. For example, parking capacity for regional customers has been a key land use issue in the cases of the India Bazaar (concern about vehicles being towed away because of illegal parking), Corso Italia (loss of on-street parking due to the right-of-way transit use), and the Pacific Mall (the victim of its own success due to parking constraints). Another related issue is neighbourhood tension caused by traffic congestion and parking overflow to adjacent residential areas. There may not be easy solutions for these problems, and they could affect the viability of both the businesses in these areas and the community as a whole.

Given these circumstances, however, planners can exercise effective planning tools, such as intensified developments in these areas and improved transit uses, in order to stimulate local shopping and recreate community focal points that can help sustain these neighbourhoods. This can be achieved through secondary planning that focuses on the commercial and social functions of the areas and their links to residential areas and community services within walking distances. Higher density, mixed uses, and pedestrian designs are desirable add-on features to recreate a sustainable community with a strong local focus. Ethnic retailing should be treated as an avenue for immigrant integration and community building.

#### **8.1.4 City Vision vs. Local Diversity**

At times the City's vision coincides with local interests. This is demonstrated in the building of the China Gate as a multicultural symbol of the City and in the development of the Pacific Mall as the promotion of the Town's economic development. Other times, the City's vision and local interests conflict leading to community dispute, as occurred in the streetcar right-of-way controversy in Corso Italia.

Furthermore, the implementation of municipal policies or programs at the local level encounters difficulties due to the local diversity and differences. For example, the conventional shopping centre parking standard did not apply to the development of the Pacific Mall. The municipal zoning and building permits were disregarded by businesses in the India Bazaar. The BIA program was rejected by some of the Chinese and South Asian merchants due to cultural differences. These examples indicate that the diversity and the complexity of local dynamics cannot be overlooked in the creation of a city's vision and its city-wide applications. City staff must be sensitive in planning for multicultural communities and proactive in educating newcomers about the City vision and municipal regulations and programs.

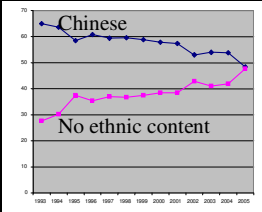
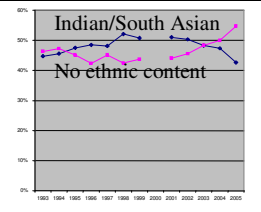
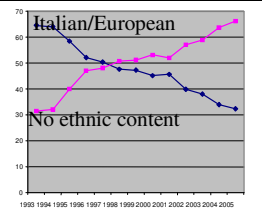
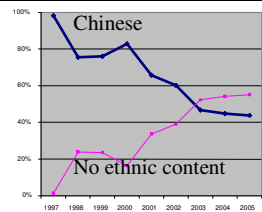
A city's vision generally sets its ultimate goal to serve the public good and its interests. However, when planning for "multiple publics" (Sandercock, 2000, p. 13), what is the vision for a healthy community that includes diversity? To address this question City officials must consider local diversity in the creation of city-wide approaches. They must understand what the local interests are when implementing municipal policies and

initiatives. Furthermore, the findings in this research demonstrate that there can be no template planning approaches to ethnic retailing. One plan does not fit all. Planners must respect this local diversity and reject universal or standardized treatment of the ethnic retail areas.

### 8.1.5 Ethnic Expression: Maintenance or Integration?

The diversity of the four cases is also present in the way the businesses express their cultural differences and identities. As Table 8-3 shows, the three ethnic groups have various spatial needs that are reflected in the different business practices and consequent uses of public spaces. For example, the vertical signboards and sidewalk display in East Chinatown, the cornstands and window displays in the India Bazaar, the café windows, outdoor patios, and European streetscape in Corso Italia, the “Hong Kong feel” shopping cubicles in the Pacific Mall are the typical trademarks of these ethnic areas and distinguish them from the general urban landscape.

Table 8-3: Ethnic Expression in the Four Cases

	East Chinatown	India Bazaar	Corso Italia	Pacific Mall
<b>Spatial Needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- vertical signboards</li> <li>- sidewalk sale for fresh produce</li> <li>- street &amp; public park space for festivals</li> <li>- the China Gate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sidewalk cornstands selling corn and sweets</li> <li>- window apparel displays</li> <li>- public space &amp; street furniture for social gatherings</li> <li>- street space for festivals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- patios, outdoor cafés, storefront café windows</li> <li>- trees on the street</li> <li>- street space for festivals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- outdoor Chinese signs</li> <li>- HK market style</li> <li>- Chinese theme decorations</li> </ul>
<b>Ethnic Expression</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- prominent Chinese theme reflected in China Gate, wall murals &amp; the proposed streetscape improvement design</li> <li>- Chinese business activities &amp; features (e.g., sidewalk sales, signs, co-ethnic customers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- large variety of merchandise conveys a strong “South Asian” identity through store signs, sidewalk sales and window displays</li> <li>- proposed streetcar advertising and cultural centre use a common South Asian theme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- toned-down ethnic expression &amp; wider audience oriented</li> <li>- European style shopping ambience</li> <li>- considering name change of “Corso Italia”</li> <li>- Spanish word <i>fiesta</i> replaced Italian /Portuguese word <i>fiesta</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Israeli developers promoted the Chinese theme</li> <li>- a collage of fragmented architectural motifs represents “Chinese heritage” &amp; creates a synthesized identity</li> </ul>
<b>Changes in Ethnicity<sup>2</sup></b>	 <p>Chinese: dropped from 65% to 48.4% No ethnic content: grew from 27.6% to 47.7%</p>	 <p>Indian/South Asian: dropped from 44.7% to 42.6% No ethnic content: grew from 46.3% to 54.7%</p>	 <p>Italian/European: dropped from 64.6% to 32.4% No ethnic content: grew from 31.5% to 66.2%</p>	 <p>Chinese: dropped from 98.2% to 43.9% No ethnic content: grew from 1.4% to 55.2%</p>

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 4, 5, 6, and 7 for details of the diagrams.

The cases also show divergent tendencies towards stronger maintenance of ethnic identity or towards a diluted version of ethnic expression targeting wider audiences. In some cases the ethnic identity of the retail area is intensifying (Table 8-3). In East Chinatown, the India Bazaar, and the Pacific Mall, collective images with ethnic characteristics are strengthened through the proposed China Gate and a South Asian cultural centre, and the Heritage Town. At the same time, superficial changes and symbolic images are insufficient to revitalize the areas and address their problems. In the case of Corso Italia, in contrast, the ethnic identity of the area is in transition, as new groups are entering the scene. Businesses tend to tone down expressions of the Italian identity by changing the Italian names of the area and its festival, and providing a more neutral European appeal to attract a broader customer base from multi-ethnic groups.

The maintenance or integration of ethnic expression in retail areas is associated with different stages of ethnic succession. For instance, when Asian-oriented businesses succeeded the area of the former Cullen Country Barn site and its adjacent properties in Markham, due to demographic changes, the original Caucasian style complexes made way for an Asian themed development, and the area was transformed with an intensified Asian identity. At different stages of ethnic succession, ethnic businesses have varied spatial needs and different degrees of ethnic expressions. Standardized programs or template approaches will not work in this context.

Another interesting finding, based on the quantitative data retrieved from CSCA, is that these retail areas may have less ethnic characteristics, no matter what stage of ethnic succession they are at.<sup>3</sup> The diagrams in Table 8-3 show a trend towards a smaller proportion of business establishments with ethnic content in all four study sites over the years, which indicates a shift from ethnic markets to universal markets. However, this does not mean that less ethnic entrepreneurs own businesses in these areas; rather, according to interviewees' accounts and my own observations, most of the entrepreneurs in the areas studied are of ethnic minority backgrounds.

As previously noted, according to CSCA's definition "ethnicity" is based only on the ethnic component of store signage, merchandise, and customers, regardless of the

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 3 for information about CSCA data.

ethnic backgrounds of the storekeepers/owners.<sup>4</sup> CSCA's definition of ethnicity differs from the definitions, employed throughout the rest of the thesis, of "ethnic business" or "ethnic retail", that is, businesses owned or operated by ethnic minority entrepreneurs.<sup>5</sup> Despite this bias in the CSCA data, the data remain valid in their implication that ethnic businesses in these areas have a propensity to reduce their appeal to one specific group of customers, and try to enlarge their clientele base, by carrying more general merchandise for wider audiences. Ethnic expression in these areas seems to be diluted as a result and there is a tendency to integrate with the mainstream market.

The findings may also suggest that, with a higher degree of globalization, differentiations between the definitions of "ethnic" and "mainstream" have become blurred. For instance, the use of patio space for an outdoor café was treated as an "ethnic" practice in the 1960s when the City of Toronto issued the first outdoor café permit. Now, it has become the norm for any kind of business, that is, "mainstream". Another example is that the mainstream big chain stores, such as Wal-Mart, Loblaws, and No Frills, have begun to target the "ethnic" market, in particular, the Chinese or Asian market. Customers now can choose from a large variety of Asian foods and products, including sushi, soya sauce, rice cookers, and Cantonese barbequed meat, to name a few. Some store aisles even provide Chinese translations. All in all, the ethnic retail sector is not segregated from the general economy; instead, a two-way penetration between both "ethnic" and "mainstream" markets seems to be the trend in urban retail activities.

It is not an easy task to promote integration with the mainstream market while maintaining the ethnic distinctness of the retail areas. Yet, seeking a balance can help support the multicultural richness of the city. Planning cannot initiate ethnic retail activities nor manifestations of ethnic identity in urban space; these initiatives should come from within the business community. However, planning can operate in ways that allow immigrant groups to express their cultural and life styles. This requires planners understand local dynamics and the diversities of each neighbourhood and each ethnic community.

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 4 for the definition of "ethnicity" in CSCA data.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 2 for the definition of "ethnicity".

## 8.2 THE MUNICIPAL RESPONSES

To answer the research questions regarding the key players' involvement in the development of ethnic retail areas, we must examine the municipal involvement. The literature concerning municipal responses to ethnic retail activities focuses on policy factors or the roles of politicians or planners in general (Preston & Lo, 2000; Qadeer, 1997, 1998, 2005; Wallace, 1999; Wang, 1999). Other key players, such as Economic Development Officers and community agencies, draw little attention. This study considers these factors and players, in order to portray a full picture of the issues related to municipal planning and the management of ethnic retailing. As summarized in Table 8-4, this section first provides the policy context of the four study areas. Then it elaborates the roles of politicians, City planners, and Economic Development Officers in terms of what they have done to help shape the ethnic retail areas. It also discusses the roles of participants in community outreach, including the roles of community agencies and their interactions with City officials and business communities.

Table 8-4: Municipal Responses in Four Ethnic Retail Areas

	<b>East Chinatown</b>	<b>India Bazaar</b>	<b>Corso Italia</b>	<b>Pacific Mall</b>
<b>Policy Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mixed-use zoning converted from residential use</li> <li>- Employment Revitalization Area</li> <li>- no secondary plan, community improvement plan or site and area specific policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mixed-use zoning converted from residential use</li> <li>- BIA program</li> <li>- no secondary plan, community improvement plan or site and area specific policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mixed-use avenue designated as transit priority corridor for intensification</li> <li>- BIA program</li> <li>- EA &amp; Avenue Study</li> <li>- no secondary plan, community improvement plan or site and area specific policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "special commercial" zoning (later designated as "major commercial")</li> <li>- minor variance &amp; new parking standard</li> <li>- Traditional shopping centre hierarchy becomes irrelevant.</li> </ul>
<b>Politicians' Role</b>	<p><b>Instrumental, Proactive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- close relationship with the business community.</li> <li>- councillor's assistant from Chinese background ensured efficient communications</li> <li>- City council's approval determined political &amp; financial support</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reactive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Businesses relied less on politicians.</li> <li>- Local councillors assisted businesses when needed.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Responsive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- high level of public involvement influenced politicians' decision making</li> <li>- local councillors opposed the ROW project in response to the desire of the local people</li> <li>- City council approved the ROW project based on a city-wide planning consideration</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reactive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local councillor opposed the development due to concerns related to traffic problems.</li> <li>- Town Council approved the development because of the positive economic impact.</li> <li>- Town Council handled the later dispute over Asian theme malls and Chinese signage.</li> </ul>
<b>Planners' Role</b>	<p><b>Absent, Inactive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- barely involved in retail strip development except for building permit approvals</li> <li>- beyond Planning Department's jurisdiction</li> </ul>	<p><b>Absent, Inactive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- small scale BIA matters beyond Planning Department's jurisdiction.</li> <li>- requires interface between planning &amp; EDO (e.g., urban design)</li> <li>- requires interdepartmental</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reactive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "planning for land use, but not land users" mantra</li> <li>- legislatively bound with city-wide perspective</li> <li>- cultural insensitivity (e.g., to communication styles, English language skills, and the cultural preferences of various ethnic groups) led to inefficient communication</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reactive, Regulatory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- led site plan approval and parking &amp; traffic studies before development</li> <li>- neutral to ethnic component of the development</li> <li>- no involvement after development</li> </ul>



		collaboration & establishment of a multicultural department	- lack of experience in dealing with ethnic issues; left it to market forces or to community pressure	
<b>EDOs' Role</b>	<b>Proactive, Leading</b> - initiated Employment Revitalization Area program - internal & external communication - project management & implementation	<b>Supportive</b> - streamline of BIA program regardless of ethnic component - not legislatively bound; can be more proactive, flexible and creative than planners to initiate programs and do outreach in the business community		<b>Limited but Influential</b> - economic impact assessment made council approve the development - not involved before & after development
Lack of collaboration between EDO & Planning				
<b>Participants in Community Outreach</b>	- EDO initiated & facilitated community consultations for revitalization & capital improvement plans - EDO supervised & collaborated w/ CCCET - partnerships between EDO & community agencies	- EDO designated Commercial Area Advisor - community agency & academics brought research expertise to the area	- EDO designated Commercial Area Advisor - EDO facilitated liaison body between community & the City - transportation planners dedicated to EA public consultation - citizen group allied residents & businesses to battle the city in court	- City staff had no interactions with the business community before & after development. - Planners held only one public information meeting before development. - no community agency involved

### 8.2.1 Lack of Policy Support

Clearly, there are no specific municipal policies in place to govern the development of the four case areas, except the Official Plans and zoning by-laws (Table 8-4). Ethnic retail develops either as unplanned strips or as planned centres, and generally speaking, they are governed by similar policies to their non-ethnic counterparts. There is no explicit policy with specific attention to ethnic retail. For example, the City of Toronto's Official Plan, newly consolidated in August 2007, only acknowledges that "ethnic shopping malls have developed" (City of Toronto, 2007, p. 79), and that "recognizing the ethno-racial diversity of the community" promotes fair public process to effectively implement the Plan (City of Toronto, 2007, p. 118). Neither did the policies in the Official Plan of the Town of Markham provide much weight to the large scale ethnic mall developments. In the Pacific Mall case, the only acknowledgement was the change in its zoning designation from "Special Commercial" to "Major Commercial", years after its development because of its broader regional market size.

In the three retail strip cases, the Employment Revitalization Area program, the BIA programs, and the transit development project are in place only because shopping strips are part of the public urban space; as such they undoubtedly draw public interest and require the City's attention, and not necessarily because of their ethnic component. As for the Pacific Mall case, other than undergoing zoning review, minor variances and

new parking requirements were applied. A higher parking standard is always the most significant difference in ethnic mall developments, as other cases in the literature illustrate (Preston & Lo, 2000; Qadeer, 1998; Wang, 1999). This proves that since the traditional shopping centre hierarchy is becoming irrelevant to ethnic malls, current zoning by-laws may be incompatible or invalid, requiring careful pre-planning and site-specific modifications.

The findings in this study echo the literature on the absence of municipal policy statements with regards to ethno-cultural diversity and its impacts on social and economic development; the study further demonstrates the disconnection with the national multiculturalism policy at the local municipal level (see Edgington & Hutton, 2002; Germain & Gagnon, 2003; Qadeer, 1997, 2005; Wallace & Frisken, 2000; Wallace & Moore Milroy, 2001). Without an overarching municipal policy that acknowledges ethno-cultural diversity, the development of ethnic retail areas is normally treated by municipalities in a reactive and ad hoc way. Despite the ethno-cultural dynamics of these areas and the continuous retail activities over the years, no secondary plans, community improvement plans, or site and area specific policies are applied to these areas in response to the various spatial needs, identity constructions, and physical developments. The role of municipal policies in directing the development of ethnic strips or ethnic malls is limited.

Without explicit policy statements regarding ethno-cultural diversity, planning practice remains disconnected with the multicultural reality. As planners must fulfill their mandates with a broader city-wide perspective, it is difficult for them to focus on local retail area development without specific policies to follow.

### **8.2.2 The Importance of Utilizing Political Resources**

Local councillors most likely stand by the wants and desires of their constituents, because that is how they secure votes and electoral support. They are generally supportive, to varying degrees, of the ethnic businesses' needs, depending on how much and how hard the business community demands and pushes. This may result in differences in the approaches that the local councillors of the four cases adopt, being proactive, responsive, or reactive (Table 8-4).

The East Chinatown case provides a typical example of how politicians play a proactive and instrumental role in the promotion of the China Gate project. The close relationship that developed between the Chinese businesses and the local councillors was the synergy that allied other stakeholders, including City staff from different departments and various community agencies. Local councillors advocate for the project not only because of the strong push from the Chinese businesses, but also because of the potential social and economic benefits the project could contribute to the City. The situation in the Corso Italia case was far more complex. Because of conflicting views between merchants' and the City, there was no middle ground and local councillors had to take sides. The citizen group businesses and residents formed was able to articulate clearly what and how they want to share and use the urban space, and thus had strong influence on local elected officials' decision-making. Local councillors played a responsive role in addressing the local outcry, but were unable to alter the council's final decision that was based on a city-wide consideration.

In the cases of the India Bazaar and the Pacific Mall, politicians played a similarly reactive role in dealing with the ethnic retail developments, despite large differences between the urban and suburban contexts. The South Asian businesses in the India Bazaar were more independent, and relied far less on politicians than their Chinese counterparts. Local councillors responded only when problems arose or when businesses needed assistance. This loose or even distant relationship may hinder the development of the area in the long run, because it affects the motivations of both merchants and elected officials to shape and improve the area together. In the suburban case of the Pacific Mall, politicians were more involved in the site plan approval process, but hardly have had little say in development matters since, due to the Mall's private ownership. Being inexperienced in dealing with Asian theme malls, Town councillors made decisions based on consultations with City staff (of various departments), and in part, local community responses. They reacted in an ad hoc manner. Only when the Deputy Mayor triggered a fierce debate over the ethnic mall phenomenon, did the council react to the political incident and try to ease the tensions among members of the community (Qadeer, 1997; Wallace, 1999; Wallace & Frisken, 2000; Wang, 1999).

All in all, the cases reveal that politicians are the decision-makers who determine

the final outcome of urban spaces. They play a key role in reflecting communities' needs, optimizing various resources, and realizing the physical environment. Depending on the degree of their intervention, the developments of the ethnic retail spaces may vary. Ethnic groups and their businesses must learn how to utilize these political resources and make their voices heard, in order to fulfill their needs and sustain their business environment, regardless of challenges or disadvantages they may face (e.g., cultural differences, language skills, Canadian business experiences, financial capital, market size, etc.). They must decide first what it is they want and pursue their needs through political negotiation, and then through the municipal administration of various departments.

### **8.2.3 The Limited Role of Planners**

In all four cases, planners were either absent and inactive in the ethnic retail area development, or only played a reactive and regulatory role (Table 8-4). Compared to other major actors, planners play a minor role at the frontline of ethnic retail development. What are the constraints that hinder planners from being more active in ethnic retail matters? Is it the planning system's lack of compatibility with a multicultural society? Or is it planners' lack of preparedness for the multicultural challenges? Perhaps the answer is both. The constraints inherent in the planning system and the reasons for planners' limited role are summarized as follows.

First, the planning system is legislatively bound, which is reflected in universal policies and regulations with no specific acknowledgement of any group of people. The Ontario Planning Act sets out the ground rules for land use planning across the province. Municipalities prepare planning documents, such as Official Plans and zoning by-laws to regulate and guide land developments with a city-wide perspective. These planning legislations do not differentiate people or the public according to their ethno-cultural backgrounds nor is there explicit planning for multicultural communities. When dealing with ethnic retailing, "the planning system faces a dilemma: it cannot plan or zone by the characteristics of persons, yet it has to acknowledge the cultural bases of an enclave's economy" (Qadeer, 1997, p. 489). In practice, it is the mandate of the planning profession to follow set rules and policies within legislative boundaries. Planners must abide by the Ontario Planning Act and their decisions must be sanctioned, not only by elected

representatives but also, occasionally, by the Ontario Municipal Board, an adjudicative tribunal that hears appeals on land use disputes.

Planners must play a regulatory role to implement city plans with a city-wide vision, “despite the planning ideal of a holistic, proactive vision” (Campbell & Fainstein, 1996, p8). In many of the study cases, planners made efforts to balance city-wide developments with local issues. This was notable in the cases of the St. Clair streetcar right-of-way, the need to respect zoning and building permits in the India Bazaar, and parking issues related to the Pacific Mall. Planners must, by nature of their work, deal with these issues within a broader city-wide perspective: the need for a transit priority corridor; avoiding the creation of dangerous precedents in the India Bazaar that could spread and cause unexpected problems across the city; and finding a parking solution to condominium retailing. Obviously, under these circumstances, planners do not appear as sympathetic interlocutors at the local level, easily causing frictions with local groups.

Second, the Planning Department has limited jurisdiction and lacks interdepartmental collaboration. For example, in the case of the Pacific Mall, other than site plan approval, planners’ intervention was limited compared to the market forces directed by developers. As Qadeer (1998, p4) describes, “The market is a significant determining factor, and the planning system comes into play mostly at the time of initial development. Operational changes and turnover of stores are largely beyond the influence of planning system”. This limited role is also reflected in the retail strip cases, where community planners assigned to the study areas only deal with building permit approval, information provision, and larger scale area development. Issues in small-scale retail pockets are left to the market or the Economic Development Office to handle. Planning interviewees argued that it is beyond their jurisdiction. The planning mandate results in a lack of collaborations between municipal departments, such as economic development, urban design, and transportation. This explains, in part, why planners were not involved in the retail matters in these areas, although the business issues were closely associated with various planning functions, such as urban design, housing, transportation, neighbourhood design, and community services.

Third, is the typical “planning for land use but not land users” mantra. This technocratic approach is deeply rooted in planning tradition and practice, and aims to

provide “one size fits all” planning solutions to serve diverse people, regardless of their cultural differences. Based on interviewees’ narratives, planners tend to avoid mentioning the ethnic components of a development or the cultural preferences of a specific group during legislative planning procedures, such as the environmental assessment, zoning review, and site plan approval processes. Planners argue that being culturally neutral is important, because they do not want to discriminate any group of people. They adopt this approach to focus on technicalities rather than on the cultural aspects of the issues.

Finally, respondents indicate a lack of experience, among both planning professionals and municipalities, in dealing with ethno-cultural diversity and related developments. Evidence of their uncertainty in this regard can be traced in each of the case studies. For instance, City officials tried to understand what a traditional gate means to the Chinese community and why they chose not to form a BIA. Merchants of the India Bazaar continued to confront planning because of cultural differences and City officials were not prepared to help them solve their issues. During the EA process in Corso Italia, inefficient communications between transportation planners and various ethnic groups deepened the community’s mistrust of the City. In the Pacific Mall case, the ethnic mall phenomenon forced the municipality to think beyond retail land uses and reconsider the social and cultural aspects of economic developments. These municipal responses were applied on a case-by-case basis, and there was no comprehensive planning model to follow.

In summary, planning policies and the legislative structure have restrained planners’ flexibility, creativity, authority, and capacity to deliver custom-made services and programs to serve multiple public interests at both the city and the local levels. Within the legal framework, planners are in an awkward position; they cannot initiate ethnic retailing, which is up to ethnic retailers, yet, they are being accused of passivity. This indictment may also be attributed to other factors, such as practitioners’ technocratic approach and their inexperience in planning amidst diversity. More concrete examples of how the planning system could be improved to better integrate ethnic communities, and the degree in which planners could become involved with ethnic retailing are discussed later (Section 8.3).

#### **8.2.4 The Involvement of Economic Development Officers**

In contrast with planners' inactive or reactive role, the findings show that EDOs are more active players and are in a position to advocate for businesses and influence decision-making (Table 8-4). The EDOs' mandate aims to promote business success and advocate for business development; their focus on business performance and economic benefit is the major force in their involvement in retail area developments. Furthermore, without the strict legislative restrictions planners are bound to, EDOs have the capacity to be more flexible and creative in initiating programs (e.g., Employment Revitalization Area and BIA programs) that are designed to help sustain businesses and direct their future growth.

However, questions arise when considering the application of a standardized program, the BIA program in particular, to ethnic retail areas. The ethnic communities prioritize various business issues and do not follow the existing beautification and improvement templates; also, their needs for support and assistance may vary from group to group. For instance, businesses in the India Bazaar continually confronted City rules, due to cultural differences and lack of communications with the City. They require more information and guidance about how the municipal system works. In Corso Italia, merchants, especially older generation immigrants, want to learn basic business skills, such as the use of computers and the internet. They require more business training and consultation. In East Chinatown and the India Bazaar, those who have concerns about joining or extending BIA memberships due to cultural differences, require help in becoming familiar with the program. These examples suggest that economic development programs must take the ethno-cultural dimensions of retail activities into consideration in their applications. Tailor-made approaches may be needed to promote the expression of ethno-cultural diversity in business development.

In addition to EDOs' commitment to retail development, another aspect of their active involvement is outreach in the community. Because of their outreach efforts, EDOs seem to have better working relationships with the business communities and the community agencies than other City officials. By working at the street level, EDOs normally have more efficient two-way communication with the people they are working for/with. A better understanding of local needs ensures effective service delivery and

direct assistance. For instance, in the three ethnic retail strip cases, the EDOs' working experiences prove that they have a better knowledge of the actual users of the ethnic retail areas and their spatial needs than other City staff. This knowledge, in turn, has helped them work closely with the ethnic communities and offer their professional assistance, as in the case of the China Gate project.

In summary, EDOs have expertise in business development and community outreach. They should be more involved in ethnic retail developments by collaborating with other municipal departments, especially with City planning. Interviewees reported a gap between these two core functions in all four cases. Also, information sharing should be the first step in this interdepartmental collaboration, including business data, urban design solutions, and economic development strategies.

### **8.2.5 Participants in Community Outreach**

As Table 8-4 demonstrates, EDOs were the most active City staff participating in community outreach in all four cases. In the case of Corso Italia transportation planners were dedicated to the public consultation process of the Environmental Assessment. But again, planners in general had very little interaction with the community.

Another active party in community outreach are community agencies. Their role is crucial in linking communications between ethnic communities and municipalities and helping in service delivery. Yet, despite the importance of community agencies, the City has found it difficult to sustain long-term support due to funding constraints, as was the case in East Chinatown and the India Bazaar. Research in other municipalities across the Greater Toronto Area reveals similar issues (Wallace & Frisken, 2000). Municipalities are faced with the challenge of finding ways to support community agencies for the long-term stability and sustainability of ethnic communities.

## **8.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR MUNICIPAL PLANNING**

The implications of these four case studies are profound. A significant similarity across all cases is their difficulty in dealing with the planning system. The findings indicate that City planners have been unable to intervene and play a supportive role in ethnic retail and direct its development and growth. In each case, planners have played a



limited role, virtually doing nothing in response to ethnic retail activities, except for dealing with technicalities. Planners' "socially value free" philosophy in land use decision-making may be a reflection of the constraints inherent in the planning system. The planning system has its own legislative structure and planning procedures for the community at large, on a city-wide scale. Planners must, by the nature of their profession, make land use decisions with a broader city-wide perspective, without consideration of specific groups at the local level. Unlike EDOs who work outside of a legal framework, planners cannot initiate ethnic retailing. It is also difficult for them to decide when and to what degree they should become involved. These issues explain, in part, the limited role planners play when dealing with ethnic retailing. Sometimes planning is helpful; sometimes it is not.

I borrow from the advocacy planning model to suggest that planners can be more proactive in a mission to both integrate immigrants with the society at large and allow them to express their cultural differences through retail activities. The first step planners must take is to gain a thorough understanding of ethnic retailing. The diversity of the four cases reveals the fluid and complex nature of ethnic retailing, where constant changes and various players are involved, and different physical outcomes are expected. The dynamics of ethnic retailing bring forth significant community changes and raise questions for planners in terms of the functions and land uses that will serve the community in the future. Planners do provide for the variety in community life and they often deal with change. They should not be absent in ethnic retail developments, which offer an opportunity to help stabilize and sustain these areas along with city-wide developments.

Meanwhile, planning can rule out template planning approaches to ethnic retailing. The case studies demonstrate that spatial needs vary from group to group. In addition, ethnic communities have different ways of using urban space and interacting with other stakeholders at different stages of the retail development. Hence, there can be no "plan" to dictate various aspects of ethnic retail development, in terms of location, functions, access, traffic patterns, design features, use of public space, and identity expressions. One plan cannot not fit all. Rather, planners must reinvent the planning profession to promote multiculturalism and integrate immigrant settlement. This requires a new mindset, a new institutional structure, and sharpened planning tools so that City

planners can play a leading role not only in retailing, but also in other major parts of community life, such as housing and places of worship. Practicing this leadership also requires support from policy and other key players, such as politicians, City staff and the community.

### **8.3.1 Reinventing the Planning Profession**

#### **8.3.1.1 A proactive & holistic approach**

Planners as leaders must be proactive. The four case studies did not report stories of planning success in relation to ethnic retailing; rather, planners' reactive or inactive role has left the development issues of these areas to market forces. Planners must think beyond the technical dimensions of ethnic retail development. Standing still or using the "planning for land use but not land users" approach restricts the capacity and flexibility of the planning profession.

A proactive planner will have greater awareness of the social and cultural factors of urban developments, and acknowledge diversity in his/her everyday planning practice. This cultural sensitivity and new mindset can eventually increase the influence of a "planning for all" approach. After all, planning "is about pre-emption, not reaction" (Burayidi, 2003, p. 270). Planners must also adopt a holistic approach and consider various aspects of community life. Retail activities are not only about business development, but are actually connected to many other functions in a community. Ethnic retailing, especially, acts as community focal points for ethnic groups, and plays multiple social and economic roles. Planners should see the bigger picture and recognize how ethnic retailing connects with other aspects of community life, as well as the surrounding neighbourhood.

If planners could intervene appropriately and at the right moment, employing a holistic approach, ethnic retailing would be better able to integrate with other functions of the surrounding communities. Planners could follow several directions of intervention, such as housing intensification, improved transit use, pedestrian design to promote local shopping and recreate community focal points. These initiatives will not only help prevent possible retail decay and blight, but also guide the economic and physical revitalization of the areas for long-term sustainability. Otherwise, as Simmons's (1966)

study of Toronto's changing intra-urban retail system indicates, four types of blight, namely physical, functional, frictional, and economic blight can potentially affect both ethnic retailing and the general economy.

### **8.3.1.2 Effective planning tools**

The following planning tools, including compiling community profiles, secondary planning, and public consultation are not new, but they have yet to be effectively introduced and applied to ethnic retail developments. This study calls for the reconsideration and reapplication of these planning tools to help direct the future growth of ethnic retail areas at the local level.

First, collecting ethno-racial and business data, and compiling community and neighbourhood profiles can help planners take appropriate action in advance. In the City of Toronto, the Planning Department only produces Ward profiles, which are too broad to be applied to local neighbourhood planning. A series of neighbourhood profiles based on census tract data were prepared by other departments.<sup>6</sup> These micro level ethno-racial data help to foresee and monitor social and economic changes in the community, based on demographic information. In the Town of Markham, the Economic Development Department, and not the Planning Department, provides demographic maps and links to Statistics Canada to access the community profiles of Markham.

The Planning Department, in general, can either set up its own data-base or share resources with other municipal departments or external agencies (e.g., CSCA) in order to obtain all-round ethno-racial and business data to fit the local community context. The data can be census data or results from surveys or research studies. Information related to demographic change, business composition, and customer base of retail developments will provide implications for planning functions, forms, access, parking, and spatial uses of the retail areas. In this manner, planning practitioners will be better able to cope with local demands and transitions, along with the changing diversity of the ethno-cultural population at the neighbourhood level.

Second, providing secondary planning is also an effective planning tool that can be applied to recreate the ethnic retail areas. The cases in this study as well as the literature show that traditional ethnic retail strips face various challenges and new

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 3 for data information.

development opportunities at the neighbourhood level, such as issues related to an aging population, ethnic succession, tourism development, and gentrification (see Buzzelli, 2001; Collins, 2005; Collins & Kunz, 2005; Hackworth & Rekers, 2005). The redevelopment potential of these areas, generally includes convenient locations and public transit services that connect with downtown areas, well-connected infrastructure, large building stocks, low density, distinct neighbourhood histories, and multicultural characteristics.

The ethnic retail areas present redevelopment and revitalization opportunities, such as more housing for seniors and new immigrants, more mixed uses of retail and offices in higher density (e.g., retail at-grade level and offices and residences above) to promote local living, working, and shopping. With Secondary Plans in place, focusing on ethnic retail areas, planners can set a clear vision of how to most efficiently stabilize and sustain the aging and changing community and serve its needs. This secondary planning approach can also be applied in suburban ethnic mall areas. The current Asian theme malls have already become community focal points, but continue to require the addition of functions to connect with surrounding residential areas and other community services, such as places of worship. A secondary plan can be applied to provide mixed-use and high density complexes with housing and retail uses and facilities for programmed activities, combining public transit services and pedestrian-scale design to discourage automobile usage. In summary, planners can focus on the ethnic retail areas as community focal points and then find ways to add functions to intensify and recreate the community. Special area studies and community improvement plans are also possible policy outcomes, which can be adopted in these areas.

Finally, planners must learn creative and effective ways to encourage multicultural public participation and communication. The traditional means of surveys, focus groups, and public meetings may not be effective in obtaining public information and opinions, since many ethnic communities may not be accustomed to or comfortable with these methods due to lack of language skills or cultural differences. In addition, planners require skills and knowledge to communicate with ethnic groups who may prefer different communication styles, methods, and settings. Education and training for ethno-cultural diversity is important not only for planners but also other public servants.

Hiring co-ethnic planners is also helpful to build trust in the community, as would have been suitable in the Corso Italia case.

### **8.3.1.3 A Multicultural Planning Office**

This study argues that planning practitioners have yet to take ethno-cultural diversity into account in their practice when dealing with ethnic retail developments. To a large degree, this is due to the constraints inherent in the planning system; planners also find it difficult to balance both city-wide and local interests. However, assuming reactive or inactive roles prevents the advancement of the planning profession. Planners must be proactive and pre-empt issues, so that they can transform multicultural challenges into new opportunities. An innovative change would be to redesign the planning system and incorporate a Multicultural Planning Office in the municipal institutional structure. This office or working unit would be highly visible to all internal departments and external stakeholders, and would recruit multicultural planners from diverse ethnic backgrounds, dedicated to the following tasks:

1. To advise council on policy matters involving ethno-cultural diversity issues.
2. To recommend effective ways for the council and city staff to deal with ethnic-focused development projects.
3. To work as a core unit that links all internal and external stakeholders concerned with multicultural issues and related developments.
4. To compile neighbourhood profiles that provide demographic information and data on social, cultural, and economic characteristics. To identify emerging trends and predict community changes.
5. To monitor the impacts of ethnic-oriented developments on the local community.
6. To launch multicultural initiatives that can better ensure the delivery of community services.
7. To act as mediators when development conflicts occur on the basis of ethno-cultural differences.
8. To provide community outreach to minority communities in order to address their needs and liaise with municipal functions.
9. To share information and build partnerships with community agencies, citizen groups, and other stakeholders.

Had the Multicultural Planning Office been in place in the four cases in this study, many issues that had occurred at the local level would have been handled in a much more appropriate and effective manner. For instance, the East Chinatown merchants have spent nearly ten years on the yet unfinished China Gate project; they could have sought help from this Office, instead of relying on the efforts of its business organization. In the India Bazaar, this Office could have played a proactive role in educating merchants about the planning system and how it is represented in land use decisions. The Office might also have worked with the business community on the potential cultural centre project and set up a planning vision for the area. In Corso Italia, a multicultural planner from a co-ethnic background could have established better communication with the local community with regards to the City's transit improvement vision. It would have been more effective to hire this planner to mediate between the city and the local community. In the case of the Pacific Mall, the Office could have advised the Town Council on how an Asian theme mall would impact the local community, such as issues related to access and parking.

The staff of the Multicultural Planning Office should be well trained and possess the required knowledge and skills to tackle development issues related to ethno-cultural diversity; they should work at the local level and provide one-stop assistance to ethnic communities and other related parties. The Office should deal not only with ethnic retail developments, but with a wide range of community development issues in terms of housing, places of worship, parks and leisure spaces, community facilities and services, and ethnic relations. Although planners cannot initiate ethnic retailing, the establishment of the Multicultural Planning Office can provide planners with legislative power and ensure their capacity to deal with ethno-cultural issues. This would, in part, help planners to decide when and to what degree they should intervene, before potential problems occur.

### **8.3.2 Multicultural Policy and Political Backing**

Planners cannot work alone to build multicultural cities. They need support from municipal policies and City councils in order to gain authority to include multicultural issues in the planning process. Both the City of Toronto and the Town of Markham lack explicit municipal policy statements with regards to the federal policy of multiculturalism

or the promotion of ethno-cultural diversity in urban development strategies. Neither do many other municipalities explicitly recognize the multicultural diversity of the local population in their official plans, strategic plans, municipal council policies, and statements; this general lack of acknowledgement exists despite the sizable ethno-racial communities and the increasing growth of the immigrant populations in their jurisdictions, as the literature documents (Hoernig, 2006; Qadeer, 1997, 2005; Wallace & Frisken, 2000, 2004; Wallace & Moore Milroy, 2001).

Successful proactive planning practices in Vancouver, Australia, and the US have established a series of legislative policy frameworks (e.g., City Plan, Multicultural Social Plan, and Cultural Plan) that make specific reference to ethno-cultural diversity. Meanwhile, city councils appoint institutionalized organizations (e.g., Special Advisory Committee on Cultural Communities, Multicultural Advisory Committee, and Cultural Commission) to supervise the implementation of these diversity-focused policies. Recruiting a dedicated multicultural staff (e.g., multicultural outreach workers, community workers for multicultural services, and cultural planners) ensures the delivery of community services to diverse groups (Burayidi, 2003; Edgington & Hutton, 2001; Lee, 2002; Thompson, 2003).

Planners require the authority of strong and explicit policy statements in support of ethno-cultural diversity, in order to take the lead in building cities amidst diversity, to advocate for the preservation of the cultural characteristics of ethnic communities, to plan for all, and serve multiple public interests. In addition, planners require political backing from City councillors who can offer support and validate the direction for “good” city-building. Without appropriate overarching policies and political backing, it will be difficult for planners to adopt a holistic and proactive approach and apply effective planning tools in ethnic retail developments as well as other ethnic-oriented urban projects. Meanwhile, the establishment and operation of a Multicultural Planning Office depends on policy and political backing as well.

### **8.3.3 Interdepartmental Collaboration**

Based on the findings in the case studies, I argue that in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of ethnic retail districts, the role of municipal planning must be more

collaborative. Support of ethnic retail sustainability requires the interdepartmental collaboration of City officials, including, but not exclusively, local politicians, planners (e.g., community planners, transportation planners, social planners, and urban designers), Economic Development Officers, and other City staff in service delivery functions.

The term “municipal planning” refers to a broader sense of planning, governance, and management. Here, planning is not merely confined to conventional land use planning, or other physical and technical dimensions of city-building, such as transportation planning or urban design. Municipal planning also integrates other functions, such as policy and research, municipal management, and economic development. The perspective of “municipal planning” signifies the importance of internal coordination within the municipal government. No single function can work alone to tackle complex urban issues, such as retail development. Ethno-cultural diversity adds another layer of complexity to urban issues.

The two core municipal functions that deal with ethnic retail development are the Planning Department and the Economic Development Office. The study findings show a lack of collaboration between them, and interviewees argued that the two departments should share more information and work together in order to make good use of the expertise of both. Indeed, ethnic retail areas, as the four cases illustrate, demand more attention from social, economic, cultural, and physical perspectives. Simply applying standardized beautification templates, such as the BIA program, or reviewing development proposals is far from sufficient to ensure the long-term sustainability of these areas. A joint task force of planning and economic development experts can offer comprehensive community redevelopment, intensification or improvement plans that take these aspects into consideration, as well as provide guidance and monitoring of business developments in these areas.

#### **8.3.4 Community-based Partnerships**

The findings of the case studies show the importance of building community-based partnerships. These include outreach to ethnic communities and alliance with community agencies. Planner partnerships with the community require a better understanding of community needs and dynamics to better deliver municipal services,



implement City initiatives, and realize long-term City visions. Community outreach is an effective way to achieve two-way communication with the community at the local level. It would be more efficient to hire co-ethnic outreach planners who can speak the same language and understand the cultural backgrounds and preferences of the particular ethnic group.

Community agencies can play an important role in linking municipalities and ethnic communities, as the study demonstrates. They can work as conduits providing and delivering information, resources, services, and assistance. The agencies often have better access to the community and do more outreach work than City staff, and even achieve better results because of their positions as advocates or partners of the community. This study points to the financially strained status and instability of these agencies. To secure partnerships, municipalities must seek ways to provide funding and support to community agencies. The Multicultural Planning Office could take more responsibilities in this regard.

## **8.4 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter compared the four case studies and illustrated the dynamics of ethnic retailing. The municipal role was examined, by analyzing the policy context and the roles of other players, such as politicians, planners, and economic development officers. The study reveals that there is no template for planning approaches to ethnic retailing due to its diversity. Yet, the findings also suggest that planners can play a more proactive role in integrating immigrants and allowing them to express cultural differences through their retail activities at the local level. Furthermore, this chapter outlined the implications of this study for municipal planning, and suggested the reinvention of the planning profession, as well as collaborating and building partnerships with other internal and external stakeholders. A summary of recommendations are listed as follows:

### **1. Ethnic Retail Neighbourhood and Business Profiles**

The ethnic retail neighbourhoods present profound dynamics and opportunities. There is a need to gain a better understanding of community composition and change, and anticipate future development trends. Municipalities, especially their planning functions, should compile neighbourhood business profiles that include demographic information,

business data, and, possibly, survey and research results. These social, economic, and cultural profiles would be the foundation for City officials' understanding of local dynamics and demands.

## **2. Ethnic Retail Area Secondary Plans**

Municipalities should consider the long-term sustainability of ethnic retail areas and encourage local shopping, mixed-uses of housing, workplaces, worship and leisure space, and pedestrian-scale designs that discourage automobile uses. Secondary Plans for intensification or improvement should be laid out for these areas. Effective tools may include housing intensification for seniors and immigrants, old building stock revitalization with mixed-use (e.g., retail at-grade level, and offices and residences above), and public transit improvement. Special area studies, strategic plans, urban design guidelines, or comprehensive community improvement plans could be the policy results to fine-tune the future development of these areas. The Secondary Plans will contribute to the recreation of ethnic retail areas as local community focal points that attract not only ethnic populations far and near, but also serve the needs of the community as a whole. Thus, these areas will achieve stability and be sustained in the long-run.

## **3. Condominium Asian Theme Mall Development Policies**

Municipalities must establish explicit approval criteria for condominium Asian theme mall developments. Particular attention should be given to land use, site access, parking standards, traffic capacities, signage language, landscaping and urban design. In addition, a set of evaluation standards for the post-development phase must be established in order to monitor the growth impacts of these mall developments on adjacent areas.

## **4. Economic Development Strategies and Programs**

Municipal economic development strategies should consider ethnic retail activities as an important component of the general economy, and design tailor-made programs to maximize their social and economic contributions. More incentives and programs should be initiated to encourage the recreation and preservation of ethnic community characteristics and identities. The current BIA program structure could be further enhanced by adding cultural elements to its existing beautification and improvement templates.

## **5. Establishment of a Multicultural Planning Office**

City Council should support the establishment of a Multicultural Planning Office within the existing planning system. An institutional commitment to raise cultural sensitivity would create a supportive working environment for planning multicultural communities. This office should include a multicultural workforce representing the diversity of the community they serve; staff should be highly educated and possess cultural knowledge and sensitivity. Setting up a multicultural office and recruiting culturally inclusive and sensitive planners would be a proactive approach to multicultural challenges, with a pre-emptive capacity to deal with potential problems.

#### **6. Planning and Economic Development Joint Task Force**

Municipalities should constitute a joint task force to include the Planning Department and the Economic Development Office when they work on ethnic retail development projects or neighbourhood improvement strategies. Representatives from both departments should work on creating comprehensive plans, focusing on the economic and physical aspects of the retail development. The optimization of planning and economic development expertise would contribute to the development of a better designed and more sustainable retail environment.

#### **7. Community Outreach**

Municipalities should find ways to incorporate community participation in the planning and decision-making process. Community outreach would provide a better understanding of diverse community needs and perspectives. The Multicultural Planning Office could be in charge of assigning multicultural community outreach workers, who are ideally from the appropriate ethnic group, to work with the community in the field.

#### **8. Partnership with Community Agencies**

Municipalities should acknowledge the importance of building partnerships with diversity-focused community agencies, such as immigrant agencies, resident associations, research institutions, and other NGOs. City budget should consider providing and ensuring funding, or another kind support, for these community agencies. The Multicultural Planning Office would be the key player in keeping close working relationships with these agencies.

## Chapter 9 Conclusion

The recent waves of immigration have had a dramatic impact on urban economies and the landscapes of the largest Canadian metropolitan regions; this impact occurs by means of immigrants' social, economic, and spatial settlement. One of the most noticeable phenomena in immigrant settlement is ethnic retailing, which manifests in the developments of ethnic retail strips and centers, as multicultural markers. The dynamics of ethnic retailing pose various challenges for municipalities, including: how to support ethnic businesses and maximize their social and economic contributions; how to integrate ethnic retail areas with existing communities at the local level; how to incorporate ethno-cultural diversity into a planning process that sets a goal of "planning for all"; and how to manage ethnic retailing and provide guidance for its long-term sustainability.

Current literature on multicultural planning advocates for cultural sensitivity and inclusion in planning practice. Theorists urge planners to adopt a proactive role that can incorporate ethno-cultural issues in the planning process. This theoretical approach is driven mainly by good intentions to celebrate multiculturalism. However, it generally overlooks planners' professional mandate and the constraints inherent in the planning system that hinder planners' capacity to be proactive. Furthermore, few empirical studies examine the complexity of multicultural planning in practice. Without the support of empirical data, the literature is insufficient to demonstrate how planners can fulfill their professional mandate, with a city-wide perspective, while dealing with issues related to ethno-cultural differences at the local level. Although multicultural planning theory provides several guidelines for practitioners, it cannot offer concrete solutions for planners to apply in their daily practice, since it does not fundamentally improve deficiencies in the planning system.

This research focuses on the phenomenon of ethnic retailing and provides empirical data to bridge the research gaps in the area of municipal planning in a multicultural context. Several research objectives have been pursued in this thesis, including: the exploration of ethnic retail activities among different ethnic groups in different commercial settings, the examination of the ethnic retail development process and key players in the production of ethnic retail spaces, and the identification of the role

of municipal planning in ethnic retailing. The study targets the Chinese, South Asian, and Italian business communities; four case studies were conducted, including three retail strips in the inner city of Toronto, namely East Chinatown, the Gerrard India Bazaar, and Corso Italia, and one suburban Asian theme mall, the Pacific Mall in the Town of Markham.

The research was conducted using multiple data collection methods, including secondary documents and archival records reviews, site observations, informal information interviews, key informant semi-structured interviews, and a consumer intercept survey. Two sets of quantitative data were analyzed to compile and portray the community and business profiles of the four cases. In addition, the study identified three groups of people as key players in the developments of the ethnic retail areas: ethnic entrepreneurs, City officials (City councillors, City planners, and Economic Development Officers), and community agency representatives; people from these groups were recruited for in-depth investigation, and 55 semi-structured individual interviews were conducted. Combined with additional information collected in 59 informal interviews with informants and ethnic retail customers, the qualitative data provided a wide spectrum of perspectives on the development process of ethnic retailing and the roles of the key players in this process.

The four case studies do not report stories of success in municipal planning practice; rather, they demonstrate that planners play an inactive or a reactive role in the context of ethnic retail area development. The major reason for their limited role is that planners must abide by the legislative structure and the procedures of the planning system. They must, by the nature of their profession, focus on city-wide issues. The planning profession's mandate confines planners' capacity and flexibility in dealing with the multicultural challenges presented by local ethnic communities. Planners must respect the balance between the local and the city-wide levels. In so doing, planners can play a more proactive role that will contribute to the integration of immigrants in mainstream society and allow them to express their cultural differences, values, and life styles at the local level; this will eventually lead to the incorporation of ethno-cultural issues in the planning process.

In addition to the role of municipal planning, another major area this research

explores is the nature of ethnic retailing. There are important inter-group and intra-group differences among the case studies. There are also significant differences between the inner-city retail strips and the suburban shopping mall. The relationship of the dynamics of ethnic retailing and urban planning is explored, with particular focus on community building, the relationship between the City vision and local diversity, and ethnic expression. The findings demonstrate the dynamic, fluid, and complex nature of ethnic retailing that constantly changes and evolves.

Considering these dynamics, the findings indicate that there can be no templates in planning approaches to ethnic retailing. Planners must respect the local diversity and reject universal treatments of ethnic retail areas; a standardized plan cannot dictate the various aspects of ethnic retailing, in terms of location, function, access, traffic patterns, design features, uses of public space, and identity expressions. Planners do not have authority to initiate ethnic retailing, nor is it possible for them to create a universal template to regulate the development of ethnic retail areas. One plan does not fit all. Yet, there are other innovative ways for planners to balance city-wide and local interests, helping to recreate community focal points and serve the ultimate goal of “planning for all”.

This study provides several recommendations for municipal planning: First, planners must reinvent themselves by adopting a proactive and holistic planning approach. Being proactive means that planners must think beyond the technical dimensions of urban development and consider the social and cultural aspects, especially the ethno-cultural elements, of the community, and incorporate them in the planning process. Ethnic retailing is part of community life and deserves more attention; ethnic retail areas could benefit from support and guidance in linking them with other functions of the community at large.

Several conventional planning tools, including ethno-racial and business data collection at the neighbourhood level, Secondary Plans that recreate community focal points, and (multicultural) public participation can be effectively applied to ethnic retail development. Planners must be fully aware of the impacts of ethno-racial diversity on local community building. Another important step in reinventing the planning profession is to establish a Multicultural Planning Office to deal with ethnic-oriented development

projects and the consequent multicultural challenges. This office can play a crucial role in linking planners and the local ethnic communities in order to balance both city-wide and local planning objectives. Its establishment would contribute to improving the structural constraints of the planning system that prevent planners from being proactive multicultural advocates.

Second, the study suggests developing strong and explicit policy statements in support of ethno-cultural diversity. Securing political backing from City councillors is as important in providing planners with the authority they need to contribute to ethnic retail development. Third, municipal planning requires interdepartmental collaboration. Planners cannot work alone. The two core municipal functions, the Planning Department and the Economic Development Office should set up a joint task force to work together in dealing with ethnic retail challenges. Finally, building community-based partnerships is an effective and efficient means to involve all stakeholders boarding the process. This includes outreach to the ethnic communities and alliance with community agencies.

This study contributes to bridging the gaps in the planning literature. First, its in-depth investigation—with three different ethnic groups in four different urban and suburban settings—enriches empirical knowledge and contributes to building a foundation for further theoretical insights in this area. The comparison studies it provides supplement the understanding of inter-group differences that the literature seldom touches upon. Second, it explores the spatial and physical dimensions of ethnic retail activities through various development processes, and offers substantial evidence for planning practitioners; it sheds light on the proactive role planners can play in response to the dramatic physical and social changes in the urban landscape. Third, and more importantly, the study provides clear directions that can be applied in planning practice and related policy formation. These new measures include the reinvention of the planning profession, to be equipped with sharpened planning tools (e.g., data collection, Secondary Plan, and public participation), structural changes with the establishment of a Multicultural Planning Office, and building partnerships among multiple stakeholders (e.g., politicians, Economic Development Officers, and community agencies).

Further empirical studies of different ethnic groups are needed; inter-group comparisons would augment empirical understandings of the ethnic retail phenomenon.

Another area that deserves more attention is the rapid expansion of suburban ethnic retail activities. New trends of large-scale and mixed-use retail complexes have been pointed to in this study; their local and regional impacts on the urban retail environment and multicultural community life are worthy of further investigation. In addition, two key players, the consumers and the developers, who represent the demand and supply sides of the suburban ethnic market, are absent in current literature, and further research should be pursued in that direction.



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# Appendix I: Interview Guides

## Case I: East Chinatown

### Group I: Ethnic Entrepreneurs

#### Business profile

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you run your business here? Are you also the property owner?
3. In what area of the city do you live? How far is it from your business location?
4. Were you born in Canada? If not, where were you originally from? How do you describe yourself, Canadian, Chinese, or Chinese-Canadian?
5. If you were not born in Canada, when did you immigrate to Canada? What immigrant class did you apply for when immigrating to Canada, e.g. family class, skilled worker, entrepreneur, or investor?
6. How many employees do you have? Are they of Chinese origin? What is the breakdown of employees of Chinese origin and non-Chinese origin?
7. What is the breakdown of customers of Chinese origin and non-Chinese origin? Do you know where they are from? Are they living far from or close to your business? Do you notice any changes in the composition of your customers over time (e.g. over last 10 years)?

#### Location preference

8. Why did you open this business?
9. Was this business located in another area before?
10. What is your major reason to locate your business here? Did any of the following factors contribute to your decision: rents, parking, TTC access, proximity to Chinese community, volume of traffic, store condition (size, interior decoration, storefront), tourist attraction, etc.?
11. Do you prefer to be close to other Chinese businesses? Why?
12. Have you ever considered locating your business in other areas? Or in a suburban shopping mall?

#### Design issues

13. How do you like the “Chinese theme” expressed in East Chinatown (e.g. Chinese goods, Chinese signs, façade decoration featuring Chinese culture, and the proposed China Gate project, etc.)? Do you think it is a major attraction to your customers? Is it beneficial to your business? Why and in which specific way?
14. Would you be happy to add more cultural expressions on your store façade, like Chinese traditional symbols or architectural motifs? If so, how? Do you expect you could receive municipal funding for this? What would be your concerns about the upgrade project, e.g., the building permit application, sidewalk occupation, etc.?
15. In your opinion, what would be the ideal expression of the “Chinese theme” in East

Chinatown? What are the possible ways we can achieve this (e.g. funding, business association, advertising, tourism development, etc.)?

### Needs assessment

16. Will the designation as a Business Improvement Area of value to your business? How about the façade upgrade program?
17. Do you think East Chinatown being a Chinese business hub is good for the Chinese community? Why and how? Is it also beneficial to the general population? What is the contribution to the city? Should more of such business areas be encouraged?
18. Are there other initiatives or assistance programs you could suggest that would be beneficial to not only your business, but also the overall business environment of East Chinatown?
19. What are the major concerns when running your business in East Chinatown? Would any of the following be one of them: safety, parking, façade design, store hour, signage, sound and smell, sidewalk sale, TTC access, etc.?
20. Have you ever dealt with planners or planning department? In what circumstances? How would you rate your experience?
21. What is your perspective on the future of East Chinatown? What would you suggest the city planning authorities do in order to improve the overall business environment?

### **Group II: Planners / Politicians**

#### Development process

1. From your point of view, how did East Chinatown start to grow? When did it become recognized as a specialized shopping district?
2. What are the major changes over time (e.g. since 1970s) that happened to this area?
3. How much value will it add to East Chinatown if it is designated as a Business Improvement Area or tourist spot?
4. What was the role of your organization, department, and local council in the actualization of East Chinatown?

#### Attitudes towards ethnic retail

5. What are the major differences in planning ethnic retail areas vs. mainstream retail areas? What are the pros and cons of developing ethnic retail on inner city's main streets, and in suburban shopping centres? Which retail form do you prefer? Why?
6. Do you agree that today's ethnic retail serves not only the co-ethnic community, but also a larger population, including the general public and tourists?
7. Do you think ethnic retail also has the potential to promote the economic vitality of our cities? If so, has the current planning system and policy recognized this potential? Should it be encouraged? How?
8. As far as East Chinatown is concerned, what aspects do you think are workable solutions that can maximize the economic potential of ethnic retail?
9. What would be the major challenges regarding ethnic retail? What aspect is not workable specifically referring to East Chinatown?

Physical expression of ethnicity

10. Do you think the expression of ethnicity in physical form is a good strategy to revitalize the local economy of the neighbourhood? Should it be encouraged? Why and how?
11. Do you think planning authorities can help achieve the above goals? If so, in what specific way?

Policy and vision statement

12. Canada is a multicultural society. Should planning policy reflect multiculturalism? Why and how? Could you give some examples?
13. How much attention to ethnic retail is there in current planning policy? Could you give some examples?
14. In your opinion, how can policy accommodate ethnic retail? Do you think there is sufficient flexibility in our current planning policy in meeting the diverse needs of ethnic entrepreneurs?
15. What is your vision of ethnic retail in the next 10 to 20 years? How would the current planning policy be adjusted to reflect this vision?

Collaboration with Economic Development Office

16. What is the working relationship between the city planning department and the economic development office?
17. Specifically referring to ethnic retail development, how much information would be shared between the two offices before a project is approved? Would planners be involved in the economic development decision making process?
18. To help develop ethnic retail, which department should exert most influence on policy and decision making? Or do you think both departments should work together in order to achieve the economic goals?

**Group III: Economic Development Officers**

Retail development

1. Is there any reference to retail development in your current economic development statement? How much attention has been drawn to it?
2. Is ethnic business included in this statement? Could you refer to some documents?

Attitudes towards ethnic retail

3. What are the major differences in planning ethnic retail areas vs. mainstream retail areas? What are the pros and cons of developing ethnic retail on inner city's main streets, and in suburban shopping centres? Which retail form do you prefer? Why?
4. Do you agree that today's ethnic retail serves not only the co-ethnic community, but

- also a larger population, including the general public and tourists?
5. Do you think ethnic retail also has the potential to promote the economic vitality of our cities; hence, it should be encouraged? If so, has the current economic development policy recognized this potential?
  6. Among different methods of promoting economic development, how important is ethnic retail?
  7. As far as East Chinatown is concerned, what aspects do you think are workable solutions that can maximize the economic potential of ethnic retail?
  8. What would be the major challenges regarding ethnic retail? What aspect is not workable specifically referring to East Chinatown?

Effective LED approach

9. Today's ethnic business is generally associated with cultural/tourism development. (Take East Chinatown as an example.) In your opinion, is there a strong relationship between the two? Is it good to combine both ethnic business and tourism development for the well-being of the local economy?
10. Is there any other effective LED approach that would be helpful to maximize the economic contribution of ethnic business?

Collaboration with planning

11. What is the working relationship between the economic development office and the city planning department?
12. Specifically referring to ethnic retail development, how much information would be shared between the two offices before a project is approved? Would the economic development officer be involved in the planning decision making process?
13. To help develop ethnic retail, which department should exert most influence on policy and decision making? Or do you think both departments should work together in order to achieve the economic goals?

**Group IV: Community Agency Representatives**

Development process

1. What was the role of your organization in the revitalization of East Chinatown (e.g. SRRP, China Gate project, mural project in the parking lot)?
2. From your point of view, how did East Chinatown start to grow? When did it become recognized as a specialized shopping district?
3. What are the major changes over time (e.g. since 1970s) that happened to this area?
4. How much value will it add to East Chinatown if it is designated as a Business Improvement Area or tourist spot?
5. Today's ethnic business is generally associated with cultural/tourism development. (Take East Chinatown as an example.) In your opinion, is there a strong relationship between the two? Is it good to combine both ethnic business and tourism development for the well-being of the local economy?



Attitudes towards ethnic retail

6. As far as East Chinatown is concerned, what aspects do you think are workable solutions that can maximize the economic potential of ethnic retail?
7. What would be the major challenges regarding ethnic retail? What aspect is not workable specifically referring to East Chinatown?

Physical expression of ethnicity

8. Do you think the expression of ethnicity in physical form is a good strategy to revitalize the local economy of the neighbourhood? Should it be encouraged? Why and how?
9. Do you think planning authorities can help achieve the above goals? If so, in what specific way?

Collaboration between planning and economic development

10. What is the working relationship between the economic development office and the city planning department?
11. To help develop ethnic retail, which department should exert most influence on policy and decision making? Or do you think both departments should work together in order to achieve the economic goals?

## **Case II: Gerrard India Bazaar**

### **Group I: Ethnic Entrepreneurs**

Business profile

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you run your business here? Are you also the property owner?
3. In what area of the city do you live? How far is it from your business location?
4. Were you born in Canada?  
If not, where were you originally from? How do you describe yourself, Canadian, Indian, or Indian-Canadian?
5. If you were not born in Canada, when did you immigrate to Canada? What immigrant class did you apply for when immigrating to Canada, e.g. family class, skilled worker, entrepreneur, or investor?
6. How many employees do you have? Are they of Indian origin? What is the breakdown of employees of Indian origin and non-Indian origin?
7. What is the breakdown of customers of Indian origin and non-Indian origin? Do you know where they are from? Are they living far from or close to your business? Do you notice any changes in the composition of your customers over time (e.g. over last 10 years)?

Location preference

8. Why did you open this business?

9. Was this business located in another area before?
10. What is your major reason to locate your business here? Did any of the following factors contribute to your decision: rents, parking, TTC access, proximity to Indian community, volume of traffic, store condition (size, interior decoration, storefront), tourist attraction, etc.?
11. Do you prefer to be close to other Indian businesses? Why?
12. Have you ever considered locating your business in other areas? Or in a suburban shopping mall?

### Design issues

13. How do you like the “Indian/South Asian theme” expressed in Indian Bazaar (e.g. specialty goods, signs, façade decoration featuring Indian/South Asian culture, etc.)? Do you think it is a major attraction to your customers? Is it beneficial to your business? Why and in which specific way?
14. Have you ever applied for the façade upgrade program? If yes, what was your proposal for the façade design? Did you get the upgrade funding? If yes, was any modification required to your original idea? If no, why?
15. Would you be happy to add more cultural expressions on your store façade, like Indian/South Asian traditional symbols or architectural motifs? If so, how? Do you expect you could receive municipal funding for this? What would be your concerns about the upgrade project, e.g. the building permit application, sidewalk occupation, etc.?
16. In your opinion, what would be the ideal expression of the “Indian/South Asian theme” in India Bazaar? What are the possible ways we can achieve this (e.g. funding, business association, advertising, tourism development, etc.)?

### Needs assessment

17. Is the designation as a Business Improvement Area of value to your business? How about the façade upgrade program?
18. Do you think India Bazaar being a business hub is good for the South Asian community? Why and how? Is it also beneficial to the general population? What is the contribution to the city? Should more of such business areas be encouraged?
19. Are there other initiatives or assistance programs you could suggest that would be beneficial to not only your business, but also the overall business environment of India Bazaar?
20. What are the major concerns when running your business in India Bazaar? Would any of the following be one of them: safety, parking, façade design, store hour, signage, sound and smell, sidewalk sale, TTC access, etc.?
21. Have you ever dealt with planners or planning department? In what circumstances? How would you rate your experience?
22. What is your perspective on the future of India Bazaar? What would you suggest the city planning authorities do in order to improve the overall business environment?

### **Group II: Planners / Politicians**

### Development process

1. From your point of view, how did India Bazaar start to grow? When did it become recognized as a specialized shopping district?
2. What are the major changes over time (e.g. since 1970s) that happened to this area?
3. How much value does it add to the ethnic businesses when India Bazaar is being designated as Business Improvement Area?
4. What was the role of your organization, department, and local council in the actualization of India Bazaar?

### Attitudes towards ethnic retail

5. What are the major differences in planning ethnic retail areas vs. mainstream retail areas? What are the pros and cons of developing ethnic retail on inner city's main streets, and in suburban shopping centres? Which retail form do you prefer? Why?
6. Do you agree that today's ethnic retail serves not only the co-ethnic community, but also a larger population, including the general public and tourists?
7. Do you think ethnic retail also has the potential to promote the economic vitality of our cities? If so, has the current planning system and policy recognized this potential? Should it be encouraged? How?
8. As far as India Bazaar is concerned, what aspects do you think are workable solutions that can maximize the economic potential of ethnic retail?
9. What would be the major challenges regarding ethnic retail? What aspect is not workable specifically referring to India Bazaar?

### Physical expression of ethnicity

10. Do you think the expression of ethnicity in physical form is a good strategy to revitalize the local economy of the neighbourhood? Should it be encouraged? Why and how?
11. Do you think planning authorities can help achieve the above goals? If so, in what specific way?

### Policy and vision statement

12. Canada is a multicultural society. Should planning policy reflect multiculturalism? Why and how? Could you give some examples?
13. How much attention to ethnic retail is there in current planning policy? Could you give some examples?
14. In your opinion, how can policy accommodate ethnic retail? Do you think there is sufficient flexibility in our current planning policy in meeting the diverse needs of ethnic entrepreneurs?
15. What is your vision of ethnic retail in the next 10 to 20 years? How would the current planning policy be adjusted to reflect this vision?

### Collaboration with Economic Development Office

16. What is the working relationship between the city planning department and the economic development office?
17. Specifically referring to ethnic retail development, how much information would be shared between the two offices before a project is approved? Would planners be involved in the economic development decision making process?
18. To help develop ethnic retail, which department should exert most influence on policy and decision making? Or do you think both departments should work together in order to achieve the economic goals?

### **Group III: Economic Development Officers**

#### Retail development

1. Is there any reference to retail development in your current economic development statement? How much attention has been drawn to it?
2. Is ethnic business included in this statement? Could you refer to some documents?

#### Attitudes towards ethnic retail

3. What are the major differences in planning ethnic retail areas vs. mainstream retail areas? What are the pros and cons of developing ethnic retail on inner city's main streets, and in suburban shopping centres? Which retail form do you prefer? Why?
4. Do you agree that today's ethnic retail serves not only the co-ethnic community, but also a larger population, including the general public and tourists?
5. Do you think ethnic retail also has the potential to promote the economic vitality of our cities; hence, it should be encouraged? If so, has the current economic development policy recognized this potential?
6. Among different methods of promoting economic development, how important is ethnic retail?
7. As far as India Bazaar is concerned, what aspects do you think are workable solutions that can maximize the economic potential of ethnic retail?
8. What would be the major challenges regarding ethnic retail? What aspect is not workable specifically referring to India Bazaar?

#### Effective LED approach

9. Today's ethnic business is generally associated with cultural/tourism development. (Take India Bazaar as an example.) In your opinion, is there a strong relationship between the two? Is it good to combine both ethnic business and tourism development for the well-being of the local economy?
10. Is there any other effective LED approach that would be helpful to maximize the economic contribution of ethnic business?

#### Collaboration with planning

11. What is the working relationship between the economic development office and the city planning department?
12. Specifically referring to ethnic retail development, how much information would be shared between the two offices before a project is approved? Would the economic development officer be involved in the planning decision making process?
13. To help develop ethnic retail, which department should exert most influence on policy and decision making? Or do you think both departments should work together in order to achieve the economic goals?

#### **Group IV: Community Agency Representatives**

##### Development process

1. What was the role of your organization in the development of India Bazaar?
2. From your point of view, how did India Bazaar start to grow? When did it become recognized as a specialized shopping district?
3. What are the major changes over time (e.g. since 1970s) that happened to this area?
4. Today's ethnic business is generally associated with cultural/tourism development. (Take India Bazaar as an example.) In your opinion, is there a strong relationship between the two? Is it good to combine both ethnic business and tourism development for the well-being of the local economy?

##### Attitudes towards ethnic retail

5. As far as India Bazaar is concerned, what aspects do you think are workable solutions that can maximize the economic potential of ethnic retail?
6. What would be the major challenges regarding ethnic retail? What aspect is not workable specifically referring to India Bazaar?

##### Physical expression of ethnicity

7. Do you think the expression of ethnicity in physical form is a good strategy to revitalize the local economy of the neighbourhood? Should it be encouraged? Why and how?
8. Do you think planning authorities can help achieve the above goals? If so, in what specific way?

##### Collaboration between planning and economic development

9. What is the working relationship between the economic development office and the city planning department?
10. To help develop ethnic retail, which department should exert most influence on policy and decision making? Or do you think both departments should work together in order to achieve the economic goals?

### **Case III: Corso Italia**

#### **Group I: Ethnic Entrepreneurs**

### Business profile

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you run your business here? Are you also the property owner?
3. In what area of the city do you live? How far is it from your business location?
4. Were you born in Canada?  
If not, where were you originally from? How do you describe yourself, Canadian, Italian, or Italian-Canadian?
5. If you were not born in Canada, when did you immigrate to Canada? What immigrant class did you apply for when immigrating to Canada, e.g. family class, skilled worker, entrepreneur, or investor?
6. How many employees do you have? Are they of Italian origin? What is the breakdown of employees of Italian origin and non-Italian origin?
7. What is the breakdown of customers of Italian origin and non-Italian origin? Do you know where they are from? Are they living far from or close to your business? Do you notice any changes in the composition of your customers over time (e.g. over last 10 years)?

### Location preference

8. Why did you open this business?
9. Was this business located in another area before?
10. What is your major reason to locate your business here? Did any of the following factors contribute to your decision: rents, parking, TTC access, proximity to Italian community, volume of traffic, store condition (size, interior decoration, storefront), tourist attraction, etc.?
11. Do you prefer to be close to other Italian businesses? Why?
12. Have you ever considered locating your business in other areas? Or in a suburban shopping mall?

### Design issues

13. How do you like the “Italian/European theme” expressed in Corso Italia (e.g. specialty goods, signs, façade decoration featuring Italian/European culture, etc.)? Do you think it is a major attraction to your customers? Is it beneficial to your business? Why and in which specific way?
14. Have you ever applied for the façade upgrade program? If yes, what was your proposal for the façade design? Did you get the upgrade funding? If yes, was any modification required to your original idea? If no, why?
15. Would you be happy to add more cultural expressions on your store façade, like Italian/European traditional symbols or architectural motifs? If so, how? Do you expect you could receive municipal funding for this? What would be your concerns about the upgrade project, e.g. the building permit application, sidewalk occupation, etc.?
16. In your opinion, what would be the ideal expression of the “Italian/European theme” in Corso Italia? What are the possible ways we can achieve this (e.g. funding, business association, advertising, tourism development, etc.)?

### Needs assessment

17. Is the designation as a Business Improvement Area of value to your business? How about the façade upgrade program?
18. Do you think Corso Italia being a business hub is good for the Italian community? Why and how? Is it also beneficial to the general population? What is the contribution to the city? Should more of such business areas be encouraged?
19. Are there other initiatives or assistance programs you could suggest that would be beneficial to not only your business, but also the overall business environment of Corso Italia?
20. What are the major concerns when running your business in Corso Italia? Would any of the following be one of them: safety, parking, façade design, store hour, signage, sound and smell, sidewalk sale, TTC access, etc.?
21. Have you ever dealt with planners or planning department? In what circumstances? How would you rate your experience?
22. What is your perspective on the future of Corso Italia? What would you suggest the city planning authorities do in order to improve the overall business environment?

### **Group II: Planners / Politicians**

#### Development process

1. From your point of view, how did Corso Italia start to grow? When did it become recognized as a specialized shopping district?
2. What are the major changes over time (e.g. since 1970s) that happened to this area?
3. How much value does it add to the ethnic businesses when Corso Italia is being designated as Business Improvement Area?
4. What was the role of your organization, department, and local council in the actualization of Corso Italia?

#### Attitudes towards ethnic retail

5. What are the major differences in planning ethnic retail areas vs. mainstream retail areas? What are the pros and cons of developing ethnic retail on inner city's main streets, and in suburban shopping centres? Which retail form do you prefer? Why?
6. Do you agree that today's ethnic retail serves not only the co-ethnic community, but also a larger population, including the general public and tourists?
7. Do you think ethnic retail also has the potential to promote the economic vitality of our cities? If so, has the current planning system and policy recognized this potential? Should it be encouraged? How?
8. As far as Corso Italia is concerned, what aspects do you think are workable solutions that can maximize the economic potential of ethnic retail?
9. What would be the major challenges regarding ethnic retail? What aspect is not workable specifically referring to Corso Italia?

#### Physical expression of ethnicity

10. Do you think the expression of ethnicity in physical form is a good strategy to revitalize the local economy of the neighbourhood? Should it be encouraged? Why and how?
11. Do you think planning authorities can help achieve the above goals? If so, in what specific way?

#### Policy and vision statement

12. Canada is a multicultural society. Should planning policy reflect multiculturalism? Why and how? Could you give some examples?
13. How much attention to ethnic retail is there in current planning policy? Could you give some examples?
14. In your opinion, how can policy accommodate ethnic retail? Do you think there is sufficient flexibility in our current planning policy in meeting the diverse needs of ethnic entrepreneurs?
15. What is your vision of ethnic retail in the next 10 to 20 years? How would the current planning policy be adjusted to reflect this vision?

#### Collaboration with Economic Development Office

16. What is the working relationship between the city planning department and the economic development office?
17. Specifically referring to ethnic retail development, how much information would be shared between the two offices before a project is approved? Would planners be involved in the economic development decision making process?
18. To help develop ethnic retail, which department should exert most influence on policy and decision making? Or do you think both departments should work together in order to achieve the economic goals?

### **Group III: Economic Development Officers**

#### Retail development

1. Is there any reference to retail development in your current economic development statement? How much attention has been drawn to it?
2. Is ethnic business included in this statement? Could you refer to some documents?

#### Attitudes towards ethnic retail

3. What are the major differences in planning ethnic retail areas vs. mainstream retail areas? What are the pros and cons of developing ethnic retail on inner city's main streets, and in suburban shopping centres? Which retail form do you prefer? Why?
4. Do you agree that today's ethnic retail serves not only the co-ethnic community, but also a larger population, including the general public and tourists?
5. Do you think ethnic retail also has the potential to promote the economic vitality of our cities; hence, it should be encouraged? If so, has the current economic



- development policy recognized this potential?
6. Among different methods of promoting economic development, how important is ethnic retail?
  7. As far as Corso Italia is concerned, what aspects do you think are workable solutions that can maximize the economic potential of ethnic retail?
  8. What would be the major challenges regarding ethnic retail? What aspect is not workable specifically referring to Corso Italia?

Effective LED approach

9. Today's ethnic business is generally associated with cultural/tourism development. (Take Corso Italia as an example.) In your opinion, is there a strong relationship between the two? Is it good to combine both ethnic business and tourism development for the well-being of the local economy?
10. Is there any other effective LED approach that would be helpful to maximize the economic contribution of ethnic business?

Collaboration with planning

11. To achieve economic well-being of our cities, what is the working relationship between the economic development office and the city planning department?
12. Specifically referring to ethnic retail development, how much information would be shared between the two offices before a project is approved? Would the economic development officer be involved in the planning decision making process?
13. To help develop ethnic retail, which department should exert most influence on policy and decision making? Or do you think both departments should work together in order to achieve the economic goals?

**Group IV: Community Agency Representatives**

Development process

1. What was the role of your organization in the development of Corso Italia?
2. From your point of view, how did Corso Italia start to grow? When did it become recognized as a specialized shopping district?
3. What are the major changes over time (e.g. since 1970s) that happened to this area?
4. Today's ethnic business is generally associated with cultural/tourism development. (Take Corso Italia as an example.) In your opinion, is there a strong relationship between the two? Is it good to combine both ethnic business and tourism development for the well-being of the local economy?

Attitudes towards ethnic retail

5. As far as Corso Italia is concerned, what aspects do you think are workable solutions that can maximize the economic potential of ethnic retail?
6. What would be the major challenges regarding ethnic retail? What aspect is not workable specifically referring to Corso Italia?

Physical expression of ethnicity

7. Do you think the expression of ethnicity in physical form is a good strategy to revitalize the local economy of the neighbourhood? Should it be encouraged? Why and how?
8. Do you think planning authorities can help achieve the above goals? If so, in what specific way?

Collaboration between planning and economic development

9. What is the working relationship between the economic development office and the city planning department?
10. To help develop ethnic retail, which department should exert most influence on policy and decision making? Or do you think both departments should work together in order to achieve the economic goals?

## **Case IV: Pacific Mall**

### **Group I: Ethnic Entrepreneurs**

Business profile

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you run your business here? Are you also the property owner?
3. In what area of the city do you live? How far is it from your business location?
4. Were you born in Canada?  
If not, where were you originally from? How do you describe yourself, Canadian, Chinese, or Chinese-Canadian?
5. If you were not born in Canada, when did you immigrate to Canada? What immigrant class did you apply for when immigrating to Canada, e.g. family class, skilled worker, entrepreneur, or investor?
6. How many employees do you have? Are they of Chinese origin? What is the breakdown of employees of Chinese origin and non-Chinese origin?
7. What is the breakdown of customers of Chinese origin and non-Chinese origin? Do you know where they are from? Are they living far from or close to your business? Do you notice any changes in the composition of your customers over time (e.g. over last 10 years)?

Location preference

8. Why did you open this business?
9. Was this business located in another area before?
10. What is your major reason to locate your business here? Did any of the following factors contribute to your decision: condominium ownership, rents, parking, public transportation access, proximity to Chinese community, volume of traffic, store condition (size, interior decoration, storefront), tourist attraction, etc.?
11. Do you prefer to be close to other Chinese businesses? Why?

12. Have you ever considered locating your business in other areas? Or on an inner city main street?

### Design issues

13. How do you like the “Chinese theme” expressed in Pacific Mall (e.g. Chinese goods, Chinese signs, decoration featuring Chinese culture, and the Heritage Town on second floor, etc.)? Do you think it is a major attraction to your customers? Is it beneficial to your business? Why and in which specific way?
14. Would you be happy to add more cultural expressions at your storefront, like Chinese traditional symbols or architectural motifs? If so, how?
15. In your opinion, what would be the ideal expression of the “Chinese theme” in Pacific Mall? What are the possible ways we can achieve this (e.g. advertising, tourism development, etc.)?

### Needs assessment

16. Is the designation as a tourist spot of value to your business?
17. Do you think Pacific Mall being a Chinese business hub is good for the Chinese community? Why and how? Is it also beneficial to the general population? What is the contribution to the city? Should more of such shopping malls be encouraged?
18. Are there other initiatives or assistance programs you could suggest that would be beneficial to not only your business, but also the overall business environment of Pacific Mall?
19. What are the major concerns when running your business in Pacific Mall? Would any of the following be one of them: safety, parking, traffic volume, design issue, store hour, signage, sound and smell, public transportation access, etc.?
20. Have you ever dealt with planners or planning department? In what circumstances? How would you rate your experience?
21. What is your perspective on the future of Pacific Mall? What would you suggest the city planning authorities do in order to improve the overall business environment?

## **Group II: Planners / Politicians**

### Application and decision making process

1. From your point of view, how did the surrounding ethnic business area of Pacific Mall start to grow? When did it become recognized as a specialized shopping district?
2. What are the major changes over time (e.g. since 1980s) that happened to this area?
3. How much value does it add to the ethnic businesses when Pacific Mall is being designated as a tourist spot?
4. What was your professional relationship with the Pacific Mall development back to the time it was proposed?
5. How was the development application approved? Was any zoning amendment, or specialized area zoning applied?
6. What were the obstacles related to the development at that time?
7. What was the role of your organization, department, and local council in the

actualization of Pacific Mall?

Attitudes towards ethnic retail

8. What are the major differences in planning ethnic retail areas vs. mainstream retail areas? What are the pros and cons of developing ethnic retail on inner city's main streets, and suburban shopping centres? Which retail form do you prefer? Why?
9. Do you agree that today's ethnic retail serves not only the co-ethnic community, but also a larger population, including the general public and tourists?
10. Do you think ethnic retail also has the potential to promote the economic vitality of our cities? If so, has the current planning system and policy recognized this potential? Should it be encouraged? How?
11. As far as the development of Pacific Mall is concerned, what aspects do you think are workable solutions that can maximize the economic potential of ethnic retail?
12. What would be the major challenges regarding ethnic retail? What aspect is not workable specifically referring to the development of Pacific Mall?

Physical expression of ethnicity

13. Do you think the expression of ethnicity in physical form is a good strategy to revitalize the local economy of the neighbourhood? Should it be encouraged? Why and how?
14. Do you think planning authorities can help achieve the above goals? If so, in what specific way?

Policy and vision statement

15. Canada is a multicultural society. Should planning policy reflect multiculturalism? Why and how? Could you give some examples?
16. How much attention to ethnic retail is there in current planning policy? Could you give some examples?
17. In your opinion, how can policy accommodate ethnic retail? Do you think there is sufficient flexibility in our current planning policy in meeting the diverse needs of ethnic entrepreneurs?
18. What is your vision of ethnic retail in the next 10 to 20 years? How would the current planning policy be adjusted to reflect this vision?

Collaboration with Economic Development Office

19. What is the working relationship between the city planning department and the economic development office?
20. Specifically referring to ethnic retail development, how much information would be shared between the two offices before a project is approved? Would planners be involved in the economic development decision making process?
21. To help develop ethnic retail, which department should exert most influence on policy and decision making? Or do you think both departments should work together in

order to achieve the economic goals?

### **Group III: Economic Development Officers**

#### Retail development

1. Is there any reference to retail development in your current economic development statement? How much attention has been drawn to it?
2. Is ethnic business included in this statement? Could you refer to some documents?

#### Attitudes towards ethnic retail

3. What are the major differences in planning ethnic retail areas vs. mainstream retail areas? What are the pros and cons of developing ethnic retail on inner city's main streets, and suburban shopping centres? Which retail form do you prefer? Why?
4. Do you agree that today's ethnic retail serves not only the co-ethnic community, but also a larger population, including the general public and tourists?
5. Do you think ethnic retail also has the potential to promote the economic vitality of our cities; hence, it should be encouraged? If so, has the current economic development policy recognized this potential?
6. Among different methods of promoting economic development, how important is ethnic retail?
7. As far as the development of Pacific Mall is concerned, what aspects do you think are workable solutions that can maximize the economic potential of ethnic retail?
8. What would be the major challenges regarding ethnic retail? What aspect is not workable specifically referring to the development of Pacific Mall?

#### Effective LED approach

9. Today's ethnic business is generally associated with cultural/tourism development. (Take Pacific Mall as an example.) In your opinion, is there a strong relationship between the two? Is it good to combine both ethnic business and tourism development for the well-being of the local economy?
10. Is there any other effective LED approach that would be helpful to maximize the economic contribution of ethnic business?

#### Collaboration with planning

11. What is the working relationship between the economic development office and the city planning department?
12. Specifically referring to ethnic retail development, how much information would be shared between the two offices before a project is approved? Would the economic development officer be involved in the planning decision making process?
13. To help develop ethnic retail, which department should exert most influence on policy and decision making? Or do you think both departments should work together in order to achieve the economic goals?