

Neighbourhood Retail in East End Toronto

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Opportunity made here.

Neighbourhood Retail in East End Toronto:

A look back to look forward

This project was the final activity of an Inclusive Economies grant from the Metcalf Foundation, *Renew Commercial Districts* (2012 – 2018). The project led to many wider, shared learnings, a symposium and international speakers, partnerships with Toronto-area universities, toolkits, websites and social media.

This report takes a step back, looking at the wider environment and the historical, geographic, and policy factors which lead to strong neighbourhood retail and therefore stronger local economies.

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“It is from the smallest of scales that grand possibilities can be built up.” Marcus Westbury, Creating Cities

Table of Contents

Neighbourhood Retail in East End Toronto:	2
A look back to look forward	2
Renewing Commercial Districts: The Pop-Up Shop Project	4
A quick review:	4
Impact at the Provincial Level	5
Danforth Village as a secondary ‘lab’	6
Research Methodology	6
Limitations	7
Defining Commercial Revitalization	7
Small Business Locational Factors	8
Commercial Revitalization and Community Development Link on Danforth	9
Tax Credits	10
Increase attractiveness and viability of main streets	12
Strategies for Commercial Revitalisation based on Business Survey	13
Short-term Strategies	13
Long-term commercial revitalization Strategies	13
How Planning May Hinder or Promote	14
Beyond Danforth Village	15
Activating the Frontage for Small Businesses in the Danforth Village	17
A Historical Retrospective: The Changing Patterns	20
Business Categories	22
Location Patterns	22
References	31

Renewing Commercial Districts: The Pop-Up Shop Project

A quick review:

In 2012, WoodGreen Community Services applied for an Inclusive Economies grant with local resident group, the Danforth Community Association (DECA). DECA had spent the previous many months doing stake makeovers and running pop-up shops with local volunteers. The project deserved a lift, both financially and at the policy level. And so, was born the ‘neighbourhood lab,” where a range of stakeholders came together to renew a neighbourhood that had been in decline for decades. Landlords, residents, small entrepreneurs, nonprofits, university students and their professors, journalists and City of Toronto staff and politicians all played key roles in the effort.

In the end, we put ourselves out of business. The local vacancy rate dropped from 17% to 6% (while nearby neighbourhood retail strips still sit above 30%). Development arrived. Small businesses took long-term leases. Sidewalks became crowded with shoppers. Both City and Provincial governments changed policies and funded expansions of the learnings from our work.

The final year of the project focused on embedding these changes in government policy and institutions. Ryerson University’s School of Retail Management assumed the Toolbox we had developed and integrated the work into new coursework, available to its students and to the wider public. The City’s Economic Development division is funding work to support a Pop-Up program in other distressed neighbourhood.

This study, a final and more reflective piece of work, emerged from the opportunity to step back and consider the wider environmental factors which face neighbourhood retailers. It is a timely report as City staff continue to explore how local economic development can be further supported.

Impact at the Provincial Level

Part of the System Impact work focused on the elimination of the Commercial Vacant Unit Tax rebate. This rebate, created 20 years in different economic times by the provincial government, gave Ontario municipalities the ability to offer a refund on property taxes to landlords whose properties had been vacant for more than 90 consecutive days in a year. This rebate was a substantial 30% of taxes owed.

As we worked with local landlords, we found the Vacant Unit Tax rebate acted as a disincentive to short-term lease opportunities (and sometimes to longer ones by landlords who were happy to leave their buildings standing fallow as property values continued to climb). We advocated both at the City-level and at the provincial level for the elimination of the rebate. In 2017-2018, the Ontario government gave the power to municipalities across the province to discontinue their rebate programs and to retain the collected property taxes.

In Toronto, in 2018, the elimination of the Vacant Unit Tax Rebate was the only new source of revenue across its \$13 billion budget. The saved dollars were directed to bolstering its poverty reduction plan, TO Prosperity, local economic development efforts and to pay down the debt.

Our team did a scan of other municipalities. To date, Ontario municipalities will now save over \$35M annually by our calculations.

Danforth Village as a neighbourhood retail ‘lab’

Danforth Village is dotted with a number of minority owned businesses that are predominantly consumer oriented comprising of small retail, dry cleaning, auto shops restaurants and cafes to the north and south of Danforth Avenue. They are dependent on cheap and accessible business spaces located in or near residential areas, most of them legally “non-conforming uses”, a term planners use to describe a use of land or structure which was legally established according to the applicable zoning and building laws of the time, but which does not meet current zoning and building regulations. It is evident that residential neighbourhoods in East York were important incubation zones for small businesses, most of whom never left the area. Danforth Village is also has a mix of pre and post war neighbourhoods which to an extent may explain characteristics related to the built environment and the prevailing local regulations in creating an environment conducive for small businesses to thrive. Though we did not fully explore the built environment neighbourhood characteristics, we observed that these particular characteristics intervene in the matching processes between (aspiring) entrepreneurs and business opportunities. Further, we believe planning has had a huge influence in the demise of the once vibrant small merchants at the edges of the downtown core.

We also tested some of our findings with small business owners and landlords through semi-structured interviews. The interviews focused on the entrepreneurs themselves, their motivations, their firms, the locational aspects and how they rate the quality of these aspects at their current firm location.

Research Methodology

This study utilizes a primarily qualitative and descriptive multiple case study research design. It also examined small businesses in the Danforth Village neighbourhood using a quantitative data from business directories registers of east York/Former East York, geo-spatial mapping and time analysis that looked at the changing face of the businesses from, reviewing neighbourhood zoning regulations and conducting a survey/individual interviews with neighbourhood experts and entrepreneurs. The interdisciplinary team that crafted the research design the proposed components of the Revitalization Action Plan was highly skilled in the use of a wide range of

quantitative and qualitative research methods, which enabled them to generate highly reliable and valid data upon which to base their final recommendations. One benefit made possible by our interdisciplinary team has been the mapping of current land use, building conditions, and site maintenance data over time. Community researchers also took the lead in explaining the rationale of the project and eliciting business owners' views on the challenges they face and possible solutions. They also took detailed notes on business building conditions, neighbourhood cleanliness and business spatial expansion possibilities.

Another benefit of drawing from multiple data sets was revealed during a preliminary survey on parking spaces and if this was impacting small businesses. As we sought to validate if parking was an issue in this particular neighbourhood, we quickly discovered that a very significant number of businesses did not view that as a major barrier. Most of their customers live within walking distance of these shops. However, a number of these businesses have frontage that is actually City property that can better be used to support small businesses but they legally do not have access to this space. In this situation, the interview data made a strong argument for the need for proactive City planning to support small businesses. As these examples suggest, by using a mixed-method data collection strategy and triangulating data across typical disciplinary boundaries, we were able to produce a plan backed by rich and reliable data.

Limitations

Due to time and resource constraints, this study was not concerned with numerical representativeness, but with the deepening of understanding of challenges small business face in former commercial districts of Toronto. We are not able to make general and sufficiently comprehensive projections on the entire population of small business but we believe this is a useful starting point to start to get an understanding some of the challenges these businesses face and charter a comprehensive plan that supports Toronto's "Program to Promote Economic Revitalization in Distressed Retail Areas."

Defining Commercial Revitalization

Stacey Sutton (2010) defines the term commercial revitalization as the resurgence of retail activity in neighborhoods previously considered moribund and perilous areas to

avoid. However, she warns that theories of inner-city neighborhood commercial revitalization cannot be neatly articulated through one body of literature because they are located at the intersection of three distinct yet overlapping fields: neighborhood revitalization, retail development, and minority entrepreneurship. Policy makers are increasingly promoting the concept as part of sustainability and revitalization strategies as it is strongly believed that this will help to achieve a whole range of social, economic, and environmental goals.

For purposes of this study, we are concerned with economic opportunities for small businesses and how these intersect with social conditions, physical infrastructure, civic capacity, and local community development. We propose that well-established principles of neighborhood revitalization that underscore progressive community-based planning, inclusive City planning that builds on local decision-making, and equitable distributive effects are the logical starting point for reclaiming commercial revitalization.

Small Business Locational Factors

The small business survey looked at how the following factors affect the choice of location for entrepreneurs and firm success:

- 1. Local social embeddedness (contacts with local residents and ethnic population mix);**
- 2. Cost-saving potential (Low-cost business space);**
- 3. Convenience (firm closeness to entrepreneurs' home);**
- 4. Market potential (closeness to customers)**
- 5. Neighbourhood cleanliness;**
- 6. Neighbourhood safety;**
- 7. Firm accessibility and availability of parking space**
- 8. Firm spatial needs (firm spatial expansion possibilities).**

While local social embeddedness scores high on the choice of location, the ethnic mix of a number of pockets in the Danforth Village has undergone some changes. Most business owners who set up more than 20 years ago initially started where they are because of the dominant ethnic mix at the time (as immigrant owned businesses).

With time, that inertia has been lost but the business now has what one owner called “Canadian” roots. These are also the types of business likely to be owner operated from the primary place of residence, making convenience a priority for the owners who liked the idea of being closed to their home.

With the exception of Ethiopian restaurants that have sprouted up in the East end of the commercial main street, businesses that have been set up in the last 5 years have predominantly targeted a non-ethnic mix, with the most important reason for location being market potential (closeness to customers) and cost saving potential. The cost saving potential has also pushed some businesses further east and to the north of the district.

Businesses set up in the last 10 years seem to enjoy a mix of the benefit of the ethnic mix (social embeddedness ranked high) and market potential.

Firm accessibility and parking space ranked low on the importance spectrum. While a few businesses noted the declining walkability of the neighbourhood, most do not see that as a major factor as they rely on their neighbours as the primary customer base. Parking space ranked even lower as it seems to be an accepted reality that there is little or no parking space for customers, save for the green parking spots on the main districts.

Neighbourhood safety and cleanliness ranked high on the importance scale with an overwhelming majority of business owners still considering the neighbourhood as safe. However, an increased closure of small businesses and aging building infrastructure with little support from the government for renovations coupled with an aging owner profile has led to a decline in the vibrancy of some parts of the commercial district.

Commercial Revitalization and Community Development Link on Danforth

In recent decades, the concept of social capital has been broadly used to explain neighborhood dynamics, particularly its deep connection to neighborhood revitalization issues. This link between social capital and neighborhood-level social and economic conditions was evident in our interactions with residents and small business owners in the Danforth Village. There are high levels of trust, reciprocity and mutuality in most areas of the neighbourhood. Residents consider the neighbourhood as

generally safe and clean and want to keep it that's way. There is a shared commitment and belonging to the neighbourhood and the businesses in the area which can be better harnessed to support local economic development. However, this neighbourhood is also faced with both an aging population and aging infrastructure. Most of the owners of corner stores we spoke to are older and reluctant to invest in major renovations for their businesses. It is exactly for this reason that we believe the existing social capital should be preserved through a community development approach. As these social networks disappear and the corner stores close down, there is the risk of a spiralling decline. Putnam (1993) showed that decreasing levels of social capital induces negative impacts for the overall quality of life within communities (e.g., ethnic tension, lower political efficacy, less collective action, lower confidence and trust in government, perception of lower quality of life of residents). Putnam's theory of social capital seems to validate the potential of community development for improving distressed neighborhoods and encouraging social networks and norms characterized by trust and mutual responsibility. Small businesses have both a civic and commercial purpose that brings communities together.

Tax Credits

The most mentioned assistance that small businesses mentioned is a reduction in taxes. Almost every business interviewed said the City should be working with other levels of government to offer tax rebates or tax incentives. The scope of this study did not allow us to assess the potential impact of tax relief to small businesses in the Danforth Village. One of the challenges of assessing the performance and results of these tax incentives is the difficulty in accessing detailed tax data. There are some lessons though that can be drawn from other jurisdictions. One of the most documented examples of a tax intervention is that for the City of Georgia in the US. Bruhn, M., & Loeprick, J. (2016) examined how the introduction of preferential tax regimes for Georgian micro- and small businesses in 2010 affected formal firm creation and tax compliance. An important distinction needs to make is that for Danforth Village, we did not consider new firm creation in our survey but rather sought to find out what assistance small businesses need to survive and find the Georgian study insightful. The policy objective of these measures was to foster a culture of compliance and to provide businesses with certainty through registration, particularly for micro-entities. Policy makers recognized that actual tax liabilities of small businesses could

also be reduced under the new regime, depending on profitability levels. The new tax code came into force retroactively for the tax year 2010. In the study, micro-businesses were defined as those with turnover of less than \$18 225 a year and were tax exempt. As a safeguard, only physical persons that operate a business without employees are eligible for the “micro” status. Those with turnover between US\$18 225 and US\$60 850 designated as “small” businesses and the option to be taxed based on turnover at a rate of 3 or 5%. The results showed that the new tax regime for micro-businesses increased the number of newly registered firms by 27–41% below the eligibility threshold during the first year of the reform, but not in subsequent years. There was no conclusive information on whether the increase in firm registrations was due to previously informal firms registering or new firms being created.

There was no significant effect of the new tax regime on new formal business creation for small businesses. The study reached the conclusion that this could be due to abuse risks stemming from differentiated tax treatment of micro- and small businesses, resulting in those on the margins of the threshold underreporting their revenues. For micro-businesses, the effect on tax compliance appears to be short-lived and, similar to the effect on firm registration, lasts only for the first year after the new regime was introduced. The analysis also found reduced tax compliance among small taxpayers for multiple years after the reform but this coincided with a bunching of these businesses just below the \$60,850 threshold in the two years following tax reform and evidence of underreporting by previously registered small businesses suggesting that higher evasion risks may justify higher thresholds.

The design of the Georgian system deviates from commonly used presumptive regimes (i) by fully exempting micro-businesses (instead of requiring a lump sum payment) and (ii) by offering the option to small businesses to reduce the applicable turnover rate from 5% to 3%, in case of sufficient documented expenditures. One concern with this design is that the full exemption of micro-businesses, using a comparatively high threshold (US\$18 00 in the case of Georgia) risks creating a strong disincentive to business growth and/or a strong incentive to underreport turnover. Given these concerns on one hand and the wide call for tax cuts by small businesses interviewed, we would encourage more research in this area.

Increase attractiveness and viability of main streets

Is Danforth Village a commercial neighbourhood with a strong core and a weak periphery surrounded by a weak frame? Talking to an Ethiopian business owner it would seem so.

“We had to move from the West-end of Danforth to the East-end. We couldn’t afford the rent increases. Moreover, there has been an agglomeration of Ethiopian and Somali businesses in this part of town. However, we have had no support from the City. We believe it would help local businesses to designate this Little Ethiopia or even Little Africa. That is how some ethno-specific districts of Toronto manage to attract customers. That simple designation would go a long way.”

Danforth Avenue still remains for the most part the celebrated corridor where the commercial, professional and leisure classes live, work and play. The other main streets of this commercial neighbourhood are a hodgepodge of aging, distressed businesses where closed and boarded corner stores, former book stores, run-down art galleries and blight are increasingly the norm. The increasing agglomeration of certain ethno-specific businesses such as Ethiopian eateries and bars has not been met with a commensurate increase in the customer base. One suggestion is to designate and celebrate certain parts of the neighbourhood. Toronto has already committed to increasing the attractiveness and viability of main streets through its “Agenda for Prosperity”. Danforth Village needs an “inclusive and sustainable vision” for it to survive as a commercial district. People matter. Citizens should retain some choice about how their neighbourhood looks and feels physically, and should be invited to participate in the renewal of these commercial districts. While Danforth Village still boasts a smattering of Greek, Bengali, Somali and Indian restaurants on the main street, the periphery is dying, with most small businesses either closed or at the verge of closing down. Thus strategies should seek to create conducive environments for existing businesses but also make inner-city areas appealing to new entrants. Striking equitable balance is a perennial dilemma.

Strategies for Commercial Revitalisation based on Business Survey

Short-term Strategies

- *Use a community development approach* that brings together students, small businesses, local residents and community organisations to determine what small business-support services, such as technical assistance, access to small business capital, corridor beautification, and area marketing might be needed in the Danforth Village. Kings Street project currently underway in Toronto is a good example.
- *Consider role of BIAs:* Most small businesses echoed the sentiment that BIAs are only there for the “big fish” and have never been engaged in any dialogue on how they can benefit as small businesses. An alternative strategy is to organise for survival through some informal business association(s) but small businesses lack the know-how on how these could work. There is potential for community organising that brings small businesses together to discuss strategy.

Long-term commercial revitalization Strategies

- *Consider the structure and politics of neighborhood retail:* specifically, information coordination with regard to the confluence of citywide and local factors that affect the viability of neighborhood enterprises, including commercial lease options, access to capital, the impact of capital projects on patronage, land-use decisions and zoning, and the municipal regulatory environment and agency norms. Most small businesses say they have never heard of the City’s’ Economic Development Unit nor have they had any contact with the Planning Division.
- *Support small e-business:* Improve the capacity of entrepreneurs to form and grow small businesses by expanding e-services offered to the business community, making it easier to find information and make applications on line.
- *Facilitate next stage growth:* Establish a network of colleges, universities, retired executives, business services professionals, angel investors, government and others to provide advice to small businesses planning to expand to next stage operations. Most start-up owners do everything themselves and can be overwhelmed.

How Planning May Hinder or Promote

- Pressure to seek the highest economic use of urban real estate threatens resident merchant businesses' sustainability and can undermine commercial revitalization.
- Planners and policy makers concerned with inner-city retail should explore the underutilized potential of merchant associations such as the Danforth Village Business Improvement Area.
- Partner with small businesses adjacent to City property on best use of frontage that may benefit both the community and the business.

Destination Shops:

The Case of the Old Cool Store

Retail shops are highly sensitive to a critical mass of surrounding shops to remain viable. A sufficient cluster of shops will attract enough foot traffic to become a destination. This axiom holds especially true with regard to non-daily comparison goods stores, which rely on enticing passersby to view their merchandise and make a purchase, often serendipitously. Without a cluster of businesses, comparison is not possible, and solitary stores have to rely on destination trips. Enter The Cool Store. Located at 150 Westlake, this old school grocery store themed has come up with some creative programming that includes social action planning/activism, book reading club and a variety of other activities. It also features eclectic food items sourced from all over the world that makes it a destination of choice for some customers from far afield. Still, this has not been without some struggles. As the owner put it “you can build it but they might not come. Parents have kids’ events, there is not much space for child minding when we have events and we have to reach out hard to get people to come”. It still might be a model for the City’s proposed Toronto Visitor Economy and Experience.

Beyond Danforth Village

This section looks at some of the lessons that neighbourhood commercial neighbourhoods such as Danforth Village can benefit from in the quest for revitalisation, and what can go wrong if planners do not get their priorities right.

Renewal of Commercial Districts: Departmental Stores Vs Small Retailers

New Haven, Connecticut, and Boston:

One of the debates around commercial districts revitalisation has been around the investment in Big Box stores at the expense of small businesses in and around the downtown core.

A study that looked at New Haven and Boston by Lizabeth Cohen (2007) describes how small businesses are impacted when planners rebuild downtowns around dynamic retail with large, well-established department stores at its core at the expense of local small businesses. In both cities department stores were deemed essential to the viability of the central business district. That priority ultimately limited the success of downtown revitalization, given the department store sector's growing suburban orientation and steady economic concentration from the 1960s on. What became known as New Haven's "Church Street Project" was the first federal urban renewal project to focus on a commercial district. It was trend-setting in using federal dollars to restructure land use, parking, and traffic circulation in order to recentralize a region's retail activities in its major city's downtown core, pretty similar to the Toronto Eaton Centre situation.

The thinking overlooked the true base of New Haven retail: the small stores, personal services, restaurants, and professional offices downtown that created bustling sidewalk traffic and urban ambiance. It ignored local consumption and its effect on the vitality of neighbourhoods. The New Haven's project's planners had vaguely assumed many small stores would come into the Chapel Square Mall when it was finished, but they made no allowance for how they would survive or find the capital to relocate in such expensive real estate, even with the 10 percent rental discount promised after the merchants protested. "Their unwavering vision for saving

downtown by putting suburban-style, department-store-dominated retail at the center ignored—and ultimately destroyed—the true base of New Haven commerce, the small shops that an observer at the time noted were often loyally supported by particular ethnic and racial groups.” Lizabeth Cohen (2007)

Today, Boston’s old central business district, now known as “Downtown Crossing,” remains home to only one traditional department store, the national chain of Macy’s. In New Haven’s, the closest thing today to a department store is the Yale Co-op. Poor and moderate-income consumers without easy access to suburban discount stores and unable to afford the high-end shops in the downtown core stayed at home.

Here are some key takeaways from these experiments at commercial renewal:

- Big departmental stores are a vulnerable horse in the fridges of the downtown core.
- Small businesses have both a civic and commercial purpose that brings communities together.
- Smaller merchants who managed to survive the lack of interest and support of urban renewers in the 1950s and 1960s are struggling against the rapid expansion of specialty chains in recent years.
- The cases of downtown New Haven and Boston testify to the importance of preserving a mix of commerce and a diversity of consumers to protect cities from falling victim to the internal restructuring of any one commercial sector or the shifting loyalties of any particular group of consumers.
- People matter. First, the demographic characteristics of neighbourhoods partly shape both the potential supply of small entrepreneurs as well as the demand for their products. Secondly, in a more indirect way, neighbourhoods may influence businesses through the make-up of their built environment. Thirdly, differences in local policies, rules, business regulations, support regimes and, very importantly, zoning regulations, may affect small businesses at a neighbourhood level.

Activating the Frontage for Small Businesses in the Danforth Village

A little studied part of the built form and how it can revitalise neighbourhoods that is significant for the Danforth Village is “frontage”. Throughout the years, frontage uses have changed at a much more rapid pace than buildings, corroborating and deepening existing studies on urban transformation.

A walk through the former commercial districts of East York shows that the frontages for most former or legally non-conforming commercial uses have deactivated their frontage over the past century. Danforth Village contains a core of densely built up, active commercial blocks along Danforth Avenue, surrounded by a frame of less dense and/or commercially active blocks to the north and to the south. Therefore, the narrative presented in this section describes the history of both urban core along Danforth Avenue as we know it today and the former commercial districts on its fringes.

Planning and the urban design traditionally has had a significant interest in creating high quality, walkable public spaces. Storefront frontages influence the human experience in more than one dimension. Functionally the street is a transactional space between the building and their activities. If the space is not inviting, no one will walk in. Open and interactive frontages can be a low-cost addition to revitalise these commercial districts in areas where space has not been taken up by traffic. Design scholars Alexander et al (1977) acknowledge this key role: If the edge fails, then the space never becomes lively the space becomes a place to walk through, not a place to stop (p 753).

If Toronto is to renew its commercial districts, there is a need for planners and designers to work with small business owners to protect and enhance their presence. The spreading vacancy of storefronts in former East York area that some merchants attributed to the lack of walkability of the neighbourhood shows that promoting interactive frontages requires more than just enforcing by-laws and standards. It requires knowing what these policies are fighting against in the first place: the

negation of social, economic and cultural attributes of the area that made it to thrive in the first place. Frontages allow the passersby to “see into premises, give them functional reasons to enter the premises and actually invite them into the premises” (Kickert, C.C. 2016).

Many streets in the former commercial districts of Danforth Village are filled with blank walls. A mixture of local design competitions and landmark buildings would repair the gaps left by decades of drastic zoning by-laws, restoring the relation between old small commercial building spaces and public space. Elements such as consolidated entrances, reflective glass and concrete facades and access ramps can make these districts appealing, injecting new commercial and social life into the neighbourhoods. While the automobile created the perfect storm, Kickert C.C. 2006, in his analysis of the cities of Detroit and the Hague argues that “ complex and often reinforcing combination of cultural, social, economic and technological forces has jointly shaped the city at eye level as it stands today.....the relentless modernization and consolidation of the economy, the rapid technological changes in transportation, a culture of amnesia and the growing divide between social classes have been the most significant culprits behind frontage deactivation”.

Zoning has served to amplify this process. Once a street begins to decline with regard to frontage interactivity or the number of businesses, this trend tends to accelerate. The evolution of the retail industry in the Danforth core will likely continue to pose a threat to these small businesses on the fringes, and the clock won't turn back toward the fine-grained sidewalk of yester-years.

To counteract this trend, planners need to tackle the deactivation of the street frontage and the improvement of safety in public space in tandem. Interactive frontages are a sign of trust in public space and its users that has been highlighted as important in the Danforth Village. It in turn feeds public space with more users, ensuring safety by numbers. Pedestrian oriented frontages entice both the driver and the pedestrian to stop and participate in the everyday life of the retail enterprise and this can kickstart an upward cycle toward less need for automotive infrastructure,

creating more space for further walkable public space and pedestrian-oriented improvements and frontages.

Businesses have generally been the first victims of decreased pedestrian activity caused by disruptions in frontage continuity, often taking other frontage uses in their fall. Conversely, blank walls or inactive functions such as parking lots that's are proliferating in the east-end of the study area or vacant buildings have been demonstrated to be contagious, as they bring down the viability of surrounding interactive frontages, allowing them to spread. Not all frontages can be saved. If every frontage is to become interactive none may survive. What is needed is a targeted plan towards a cluster of businesses such as the ones south of Woodbine and O'Connor. Strategies that engage a cluster of businesses have a better chance at success and at protecting the diversity and flexibility of frontages. Policies and design regulations should ensure this protection as it builds into the resilience of the small business ecosystem. If one frontage type disappears, another can take over.

A Historical Retrospective: The Changing Patterns

To build a foundation of evidence on how the area has changed over time, a historical study was conducted by reviewing the City Directory for the years 1945, 1965, and 1988. As this study is focused on the change in retail in areas currently not zoned to permit commercial retail, businesses located along the Danforth or other areas zoned Commercial Residential or Employment were not included in the review or following assessments.

Prior to the enactment of the 1952 zoning bylaw, there were no regulations preventing the spontaneous intermix of commercial land uses amongst residential land uses. The 1952 by-law was designed to introduce order by separating the location of land uses. This pattern of separating land use through zoning regulation has continued and is apparent in today's zoning bylaw. This has resulted in legal non-conforming commercial uses throughout the neighbourhood. Legal non-conforming commercial uses are the properties that were commercial uses prior to the enactment of zoning bylaw that restricted commercial uses from occurring on the site. These properties are permitted to support commercial businesses; however they are not stable locations for business. If the commercial business closes down and is not immediately replaced, the site cannot be converted back into a commercial business property. As a result, the character of much of the neighbourhoods has changed overtime, as stores that had contained retail are converted into residential streets.

For this historical study, the names and addresses of businesses identified in these City Directories were collected and mapped. Not included in the identified are various trades-based businesses including plumbers, roofers, tilers, carpenters, electricians and related fields. This business type generally operates by visiting their work site and is not visited by the business patron. As a result, the Directory listed business location is most often simply the home of the lead or sole contractor of the trade-based business. The businesses included in the study are the place of work for the business staff.

Outside of trades-based businesses, the study identified 242 businesses in the neighbourhood operating in 161 distinct addresses.

Year	Number of Retail Locations
1945	74
1965	103
1988	65
Total	242

Those identified were not the only businesses operating in the area. The City Directories are a useful tool; however, due to methods used by the publishers of the Directory, they are not a complete archive of all the businesses that operated in the area at the time. The Directories provide a useful sample on the location of businesses during the chosen periods. With this sample, patterns of their location and status of the property can be identified.

Historical Retail Locations and Current Zoning



Business Categories

To better understand patterns, the identified businesses have been separated into 4 main categories and 6 sub categories.

Main Categories

Category	Types of Businesses Included
Service	Barbers, Laundromats, Real Estate Offices
Food	Restaurants, Ice cream Parlours, Grocery Stores
Retail	Convenience Store, Drug Stores, Clothing Store
Health	Dentists, Physicians, Dermatologists

Sub Categories

The sub categories further sort Service businesses. These categories are:

Service Sub-Category	Types of Businesses Included
Administrative	Typewriters, Real Estate Offices, Agencies
Beauty	Barbers, Hairdressers, Beauty Parlour
Cleaning	Laundromats, Dry Cleaners
Auto Orientated	Moving Companies, Private Driving Schools
Repair	Shoe Repair, Upholsters
Other	Music Teacher, Pest Control, Landscaping

Location Patterns

Locating businesses along arterials are the most optimal method to achieve successful business and positive public realm. The location of businesses along major streets, specifically arterials, is desired by current Planning Policy. Section 3.5.3 of the Official Plan describes Toronto's vision for the future of retailing. Here, the Plan describes that permitting retail stores on arterials is desirable because this location supports the City's efforts of reducing trips via car. Retail businesses locating along arterials supports this effort by allowing patrons and workers to have better access to the business by bus or other active modes of transportation (foot, bike, wheelchair). This pattern of location is also beneficial to businesses. In addition to better access by patrons and workers, clustering along arterials and other major streets improves the chances of the store being seen by a potential patron who is visiting a store nearby.

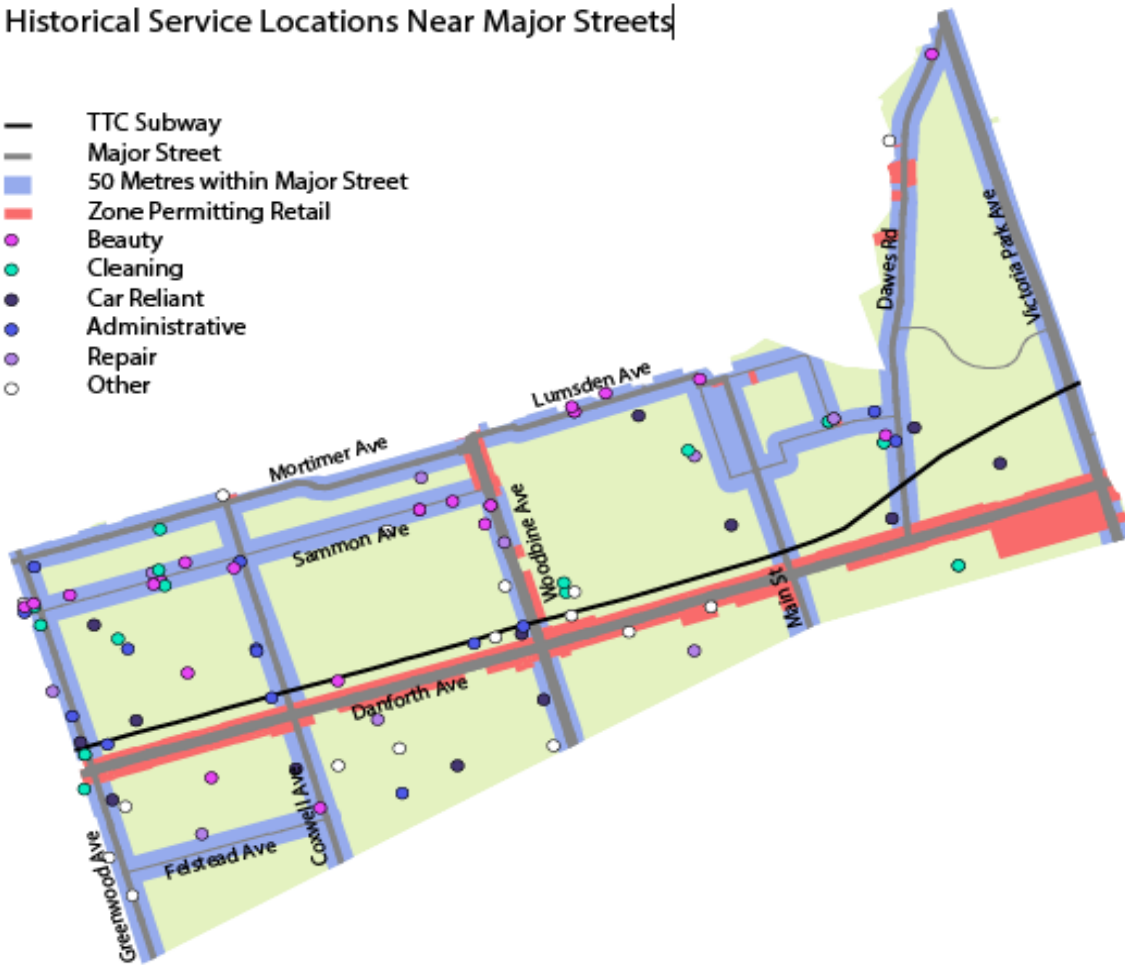
Historically, businesses have been attracted to locating along major streets. Out of 242 businesses, 184 (76%) are located within 50 metres of a major street (Major Arterial, Minor Arterial, or collector). Health orientated businesses were most attracted to locating along Major Streets whereas Service type businesses were the least attracted. This is likely related to differences in how the varying business types operate and interact with their patrons.

Business Type	Total	# Near a Major Street	% Near a Major Street
Service	99	65	66%
Food	69	57	83%
Retail	42	31	74%
Health	32	31	97%
Total	242	184	76%

The Service business category is broken into 6 subcategories to better understand the patterns within the broader category. While Service businesses as a whole are the least likely to be attracted to major streets, this is not true of its subcategories. The business types that locate near a Major street benefit more from the location than those types that do not. For example, the most attracted Service business, Beauty orientated businesses, would benefit from being exposed to patrons who are visiting other businesses on the Major Street, and the Beauty business would itself be more accessible to a wider population through its connection to public transit operating on the Major Street. The least attracted business, moving and driving related business would not need these benefits. This business type is more auto-dependent and would have the workers and patrons travel by car, as opposed to foot or the bus.

Historical Service Locations Near Major Streets

- TTC Subway
- Major Street
- 50 Metres within Major Street
- Zone Permitting Retail
- Beauty
- Cleaning
- Car Reliant
- Administrative
- Repair
- Other



Historical Retail Locations Near Major Streets

- TTC Subway
- Major Street
- 50 Metres within Major Street
- Zone Permitting Retail
- Service
- Food
- Retail
- Health



Health offices attract patrons at various distances depending on the health issue the office addresses. Locating along a major street makes the office more accessible due to the public transit along the major streets. Also, this business type often clusters in medical buildings that host multiple different complimentary or related health offices. This location pattern allows for better service and is beneficial to the patrons who may have barriers or disabilities that reduce their mobility.

Business Type	Total	# Near a Major Street	% Near a Major Street
Beauty	27	24	89%
Cleaning	18	12	67%
Administrative	15	11	73%
Car Dependent	13	5	38%
Repair	10	5	50%
Other	16	8	50%

Total	99	65	66%%
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Traditional Shopping Streets

Business Type	Total	# in “Traditional Shopping Streets”	% in “Traditional Shopping Streets”
Service	99	50	51%
Food	69	41	59%
Retail	42	19	45%
Health	32	29	91%
Total	242	139	57%

Clusters of Historical Retail

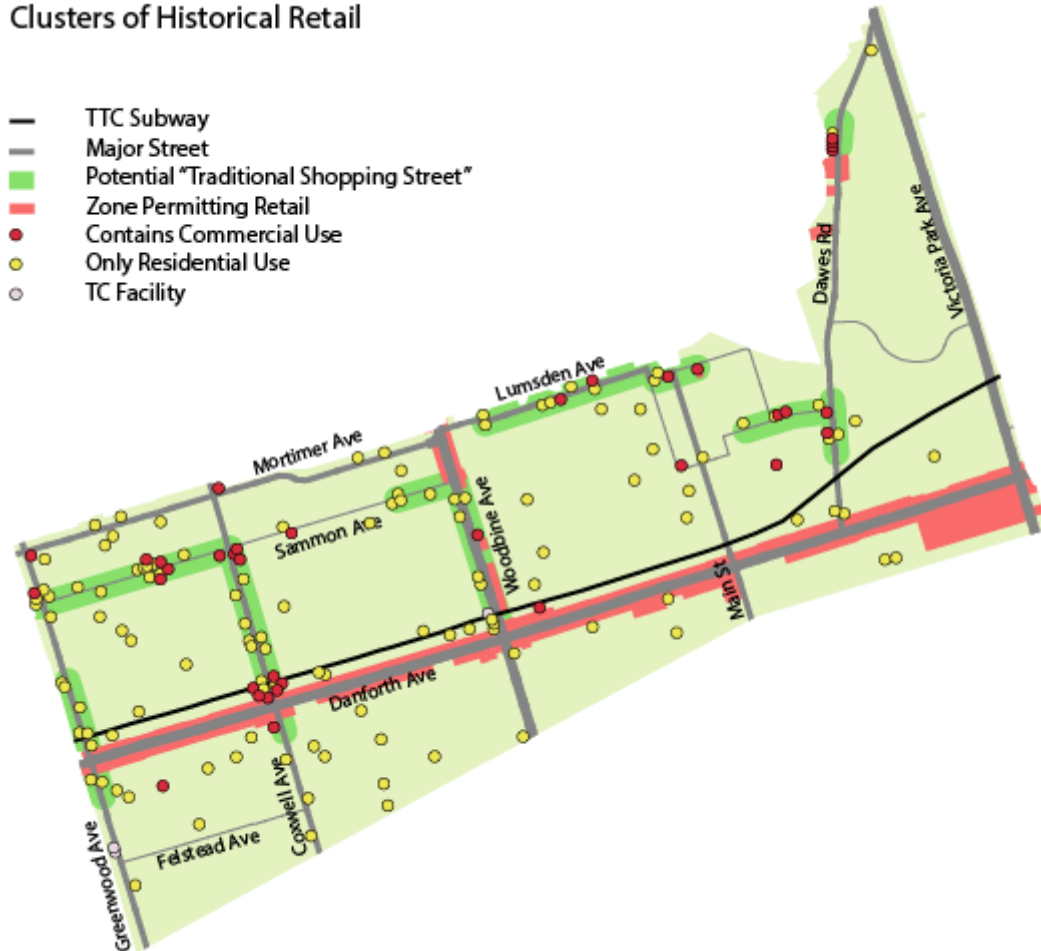


Based on this study, Sammon Avenue, Coxwell Avenue, Woodbine Avenue, and parts of Greenwood Ave, Lumsden Ave, and Dawes Rd could be described as “Traditional Shopping Streets”. This is because these streets and street portions were the most attractive location for businesses to operate. Section 3.5.3 of the Official Plan provides further support for retail along “Traditional Shopping Streets”. The Section’s non-policy text describes “Traditional Shopping Streets” as “centres of community activity that add life to adjacent neighbourhoods and support a walkable City...”. The areas identified here as potential “Traditional Shopping Streets” cover approximately 5 linear kilometers of the major streets in the area. During 1988 and the years prior, these streets likely operated as centres of community activity.

Closed Businesses

The 242 business operated through 161 distinct addresses. As of September 2017, 77% of the properties no longer host commercial uses.

Clusters of Historical Retail



Business Type	Total	# in “Traditional Shopping Streets”	% in “Traditional Shopping Streets”
Contains Commercial Use	37	29	78%

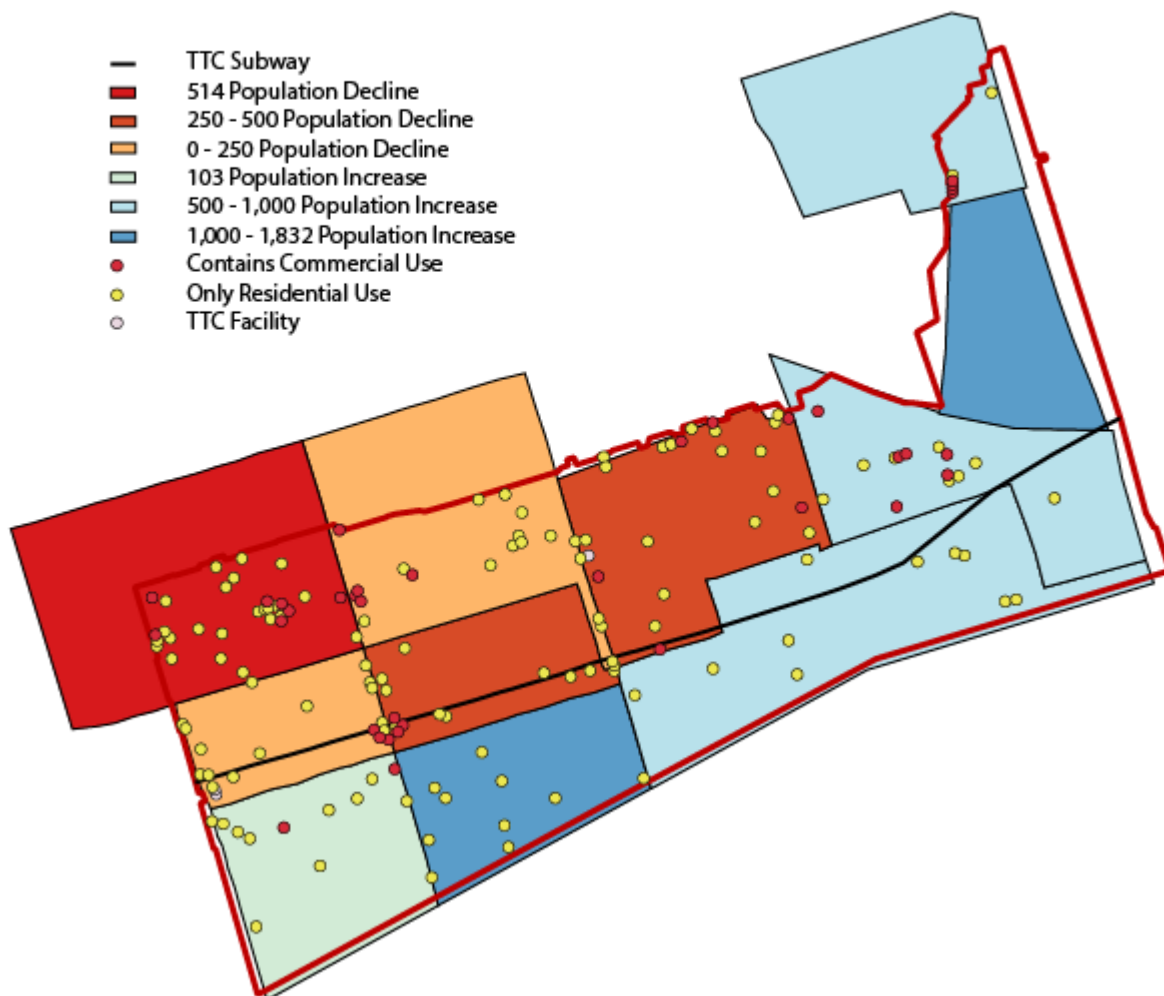
In areas identified here as potential “Traditional Shopping Streets”, commercial properties appear more resilient. This may be due to various market effects including the ability of business clusters to attract more patrons. The most resilient shopping streets, as identified in this study appear to be Sammon Street near Coxwell, and Lumsden Avenue near Main Street. This may be in part due to their distance from other commercial areas in the neighbourhood. For example, the “Traditional Shopping Street” portion of Sammon Avenue is 622 metres from Danforth Avenue, and the Sammon Avenue and Coxwell Avenue Intersection is 935 metres from Woodbine Avenue. These are 10 and 11 minute walks each. Furthermore, as illustrated in map xx, outside of the Danforth and parts of Woodbine Avenue, there are no locally accessible commercially zoned areas. This reinforces the demand for some commercial activity in the Sammon Ave “Traditional Shopping Street” area. The same principles apply to the Lumsden “Traditional shopping Street” area.

Population Change

Areas where population Decreased	
Number of retail locations	107
Number closed	82
%	77%

Areas where population Increased	
Number of retail locations	54
Number closed	42
%	78%

Population



Over the 30 years between 1986 and 2016 there has been uneven population change in the neighbourhood. The north West portion of the neighbourhood has decreased in population by 1,511 people. Despite covering a similar amount of area, compared to the area where population has increased, the North West section of the neighbourhood hosted twice as many businesses. This may be due to the fact that the northern part of the neighbourhood is further from Danforth Avenue, and businesses located in this section of the neighbourhood to serve the demands of these patrons. The South and East section of the neighbourhood increased in population, enough to offset the population decline of the rest of the neighbourhood. Like the other half of the neighbourhood, this section also saw a large loss in retail locations. The difference however is they have easier access to Danforth Avenue, and therefore may be less impacted by the loss of retail.

Final Findings and Recommendations

The disappearance of the corner store relates to lowered demand for their products and services. This can be attributed to a few reasons:

- lowered population densities in residential area,
- increased use of cars as transportation creating *induced automobile traffic*, and less food traffic. This is aggravated by the requirement for any new build to have parking, even in areas close to public transit such as the Danforth East.
- tighter zoning regulations which restrict this historic use when buildings change ownership or use is lost temporarily.

To protect neighbourhood retail embedded within neighbourhoods, two possible strategies exist:

1. Shield Legal Non-Conforming Use within local zoning, or
2. Deem specific buildings to not be seen as abandoned when its use changes temporarily.
3. Encourage higher local residential density through stratification of individual homes. Secondary suites are a start, but there are a number of homes which have been further sub-divided and so are non-compliant with local zoning regulations, despite the public good of having more affordable units at the neighbourhood-level.

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