

REVITALIZING HAMILTON'S HEART: KING STREET DOWNTOWN

REVITALIZING HAMILTON'S HEART:
BUSINESS OWNERS AND THE PROSPECTS FOR KING STREET DOWNTOWN

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for
the Degree Master of Arts

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Master's Thesis - C.Atkin; McMaster University - Geography and Earth Sciences

McMaster University MASTER OF ARTS (1992) Hamilton, Ontario(History)

TITLE: Revitalizing Hamilton's Heart: Business Owners and the Prospects for King Street

Downtown

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NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 154

ABSTRACT

Since the 1960's, post industrial downtowns across North America and Europe have suffered economic and population losses. Downtown revitalization theory is now a major subject in urban geography. Although each city is unique and requires customized revitalization techniques, certain approaches have worked better than others. Hamilton, Ontario, is a city of roughly 520,000 located just outside the Greater Toronto Area. Its downtown has struggled since the 1970's. In the last ten years, however, certain areas of downtown have shown signs of revitalization. Conversation about this change has largely focused on attracting creative industries. King Street, Hamilton's most downtown street, has yet to experience significant improvement, but is surrounded by changing areas and expected to follow suit. This study looks at two theories of revitalization: the Creative Capital theory, and the Main Street approach. It also discusses commercial gentrification. City officials and business owners along King Street were interviewed about what they expect for King Street downtown. Business owners, this study found, are underutilized agents of revitalization in the area. They want and expect the area to improve, but have yet to make significant changes to their own establishments. More could be done to include incumbent business owners in King Street's revitalization processes in Hamilton, and to acknowledge them as agents of change within the commercial gentrification literature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'd like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Richard Harris, for his guidance, patience, and kindness while I completed this project. To research the history of downtown Hamilton, I selected books and photographs from the Hamilton Library, the McMaster Library, and the Toronto Reference Library. Special to this project were the conversations I had with Hamiltonians who I met at events or in social settings about their city. Three people were especially helpful in directing me to content or contacts: Dr. Walt Peace in the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, Dr. Jim Dunn in the Department of Health, Aging, and Society, and David Falletta, a friend and planner at City Hall. Mr. Falletta especially helped me contextualize current affairs in Hamilton. Thank you to all my friends and family in Hamilton, back home and elsewhere who sent their ideas, well-wishes and critiques my way. Specifically, I would like to thank Timothy Scolnick, Jonathan Lockwood, Nicole Boyer, and Pamela Dalal for editing and proof-reading parts of this project.

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Figure 1.1 King Street at James Street (Author, 2012)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the 1970's downtown Hamilton, Ontario has experienced a decline in economic and social vitality. Recently, however, this trend has started to reverse, leading to speculation that the area might bounce back as a hub of economic, creative, and social activity. Stories like Hamilton's are familiar to urban observers: mid-sized industrial cities around the world have experienced similar economic busts since the global relocation of manufacturing industries in the second half of the twentieth century. Much of the study of these 'de-industrial' and 'post-industrial' cities has revolved around theories of urban revitalization, specifically of downtowns. This thesis examines the literature on two of these: specifically, the 'Main Street approach' and the 'Creative Class approach' to revitalization, as they relate to King Street in downtown Hamilton.

Special to Hamilton at this time is that parts of the city's downtown have begun to revitalize before its main street. King Street will likely experience an upswing, but has yet to. This has created a unique opportunity to study the street's potential for revitalization, specifically as the process relates to business owners. Both the agency of small business owners in commercial revitalization, and commercial revitalization itself, are understudied subjects (Sutton, 2010). So far, the academic debate surrounds arguments for and against corporate-led, top-down development - a focus, according to Sutton, that is perhaps misplaced (Sutton, 2010). The role of merchants has been taken for granted in this debate. They are so far viewed in the literature as passive recipients of good or bad elements of revitalization, and not as functional stakeholders in the process. This project therefore hopes to add to the discussion regarding commercial revitalization and the roles of business owners, city officials and their relationship in the revitalization of downtowns in post-industrial cities, and specifically of main streets.



Figure 1.2 On King Street at James North (Author, 2012)

King Street and James Street is downtown Hamilton's main intersection. James has recently been touted as the major location of most of the downtown's gentrification activity. King Street, however, is downtown's much busier street - its main street - with four lanes of busy one-way traffic throughout the day. A detailed examination of how each building on King Street has changed over time is found in Appendix 9. James North has been in the public eye for some time now. The city of Hamilton, though, plans to help revitalize the whole downtown 'core' over time. This thesis therefore focuses on the three most central blocks of King Street downtown, Hamilton's busiest west-running thoroughfare, for a variety of reasons: first, the area is geographically and culturally central to Hamilton's downtown, and symbolically represents the downtown overall. Second, because much of the façade of King Street downtown is currently under-maintained (see Figure 1.1), commuters who travel through downtown Hamilton receive mixed messages about downtown's actual revitalization. They may hear that certain parts of downtown are "changing," but not see it as they travel through the area because they do not need to deviate off King Street. Third, if King Street did ever experience a significant aesthetic upgrading, it could encourage further downtown development at a faster pace than other less busy streets.

This study's literature review frames the case study of Hamilton, Ontario's approach to downtown revitalization. The quality of life in Hamilton's downtown, like many other post-industrial downtowns, has suffered because of economic decline, because of the flight of middle class residents to the suburbs, and because of a misallocation of amenities and services that would support residential and commercial development in the downtown. What much of the

literature has demonstrated is that the quality and prosperity of the downtown core is critical to the overall perception and economic success of the city it belongs to. Main streets, especially, are exceptionally important to building civic pride and economic well being.

Hamilton is currently undertaking a major revitalization process in its downtown. The government of Ontario has identified its potential in a *Places to Grow* strategic plan. The municipal government has designated downtown Hamilton as a key commercial district, where they hope to attract creative and technological industries (Places to Grow, 2005). Urban growth has been accepted as necessary and inevitable for Hamilton; population estimates expect the city's downtown to grow to 250 jobs and residents per hectare by 2030 (Places to Grow, 2005). The City's 'secondary plan', *Putting People First*, has much of the same features as sustainable development and smart growth initiatives. They want to make the downtown walkable, bike-able, and inviting to all occupations; the city's downtown slogan is *Live, Work, Play, and Learn*.

The City's "street capital improvement plan," *Putting People First* (2001), seeks to open previously-closed alleys and lanes to pedestrian traffic, and redesign the downtown's main streets as more pleasant pedestrian-friendly boulevards. This might give commuters a reason to stop, but it could also displace current businesses along these streets. Herein lies the conflict of having to balance a downtown desperately in need of revitalization with a group of business owners, many of them first-generation immigrants, who have made their livelihoods in the area.

This study investigates and compares the perceptions of these business owners with those of city planners, ward councilors, and department representatives at City Hall (herein referred to as “city officials”) with regard to the current changes to Hamilton’s King Street downtown. The questions guiding this research are as follows: (1) What are the city’s plans for downtown King Street in the next ten years, especially with regards to the business environment on King Street? and (2) How do business owners along King Street perceive their immediate business environment, how do they want it to change, and do they see themselves in the same location in ten years’ time?

Through interviews, observation, reading, and conversing, the mixed methodology of this study helps to illustrate the current state of King Street downtown. The results inform two theories of commercial revitalization and gentrification with a case study about a notoriously struggling downtown as it relates to business owners as stakeholders and change-makers. The discussion of them also provides recommendations to the City regarding what could be done to revitalize the area with all stakeholders in mind.



Figure 2.1 New boutiques on James North (Author, 2012)

Chapter 2: How Cities Revitalize their Downtowns

In the 1950's and 1960's, cities like Sheffield (England), Belfast (Northern Ireland), Leipzig (Germany), Bilbao (Spain), and other post-industrial, mid-sized cities found that the global relocation of manufacturing activities had decimated their economies, their population numbers, and their retail districts. North American cities experienced this a decade later to an even fuller extent, especially in their downtowns. A rapid and extensive construction of highways, an obsessive and government-encouraged attraction to homeownership for the middle classes, urban racial tensions, and a relocation of firms to cheaper suburban land created an economic vacuum in urban centres throughout North America, especially in the north eastern United States (US) and southern Ontario in Canada.

Literature on economic development of urban regions has mostly focused on the decentralization of city structures and the decline of central business districts (CBD's), or 'downtowns'. In this discourse, residential and business 'suburban sprawl' has carried much of the blame for the dramatic shift of resources away from downtowns (Faulk, 2006; Harvey, 2000; Eastlick and Padilla, 2009; Bruegmann, 2005; Kuntsler, 1994; Squires, 2002; Fainsteign 1986; Fogelson, 2001; Leinberger, 2005). Policies to help revitalize downtowns, therefore, have focused on attracting people and businesses back to city centres from the suburbs. These policies have included marketing strategies such as 'place making' (Walks, 2009; Sager, 2011), rebuilding economic districts by preserving heritage buildings (Lopilato, 2003; Clark, 2011; Seidman, 2004; Mitchell, 2001; Oh et al., 2006), working on improving the city's hospitality, or 'welcoming' industry (Bianchini, 1995; Kan, 1987; Ryan and Fitzpatrick, 1996; Warde and Martens, 2000; Williams, 2000, Bell, 2007), and attracting people who enhance the creativity and talent of the city (Johnson, 2009; Krätke, 2010; Florida, 2005; Fritsch and Stützer, 2007; Perry, 2011; Rosenstein, 2011; Sager, 2011). There has also been a backlash against revitalization and gentrification strategies because they often cause displacement of poorer residents and business owners (Cameron, 2003; Decroloy and Criekeingen, 2003; Dobson and Ley, 2008; Ernst, n.d.; Freeman and Braconi, 2002; Hackworth and Reckers, 2005; Hamnett, 2003; Ley, 2003; Lees et al. 2007; Mazer and Rankin, 2011; Powell and Spencer, 2003; Walks and Maaranen, 2008). Revitalization is not always viewed as a positive thing.

Post-industrial cities around the world are now taking the initiative to revitalize their downtown urban cores, each featuring their own unique set of strengths. These cities are learning from each

other's success stories. Post-industrial cities in Europe have started to make a quantifiable comeback (Power et al., 2010). Cities in the U.S., like Philadelphia, Chicago, Pittsburg, Cleveland, and St. Louis, are all at different points along an upwards trajectory of economic and population growth (Kromer, 2010; Doig, 2012). In Canada, Hamilton is among a number of post-industrial cities that are working to improve their city centres.

This literature review investigates what previous researchers have said about how cities can make strategic interventions in core area retailing to revive ailing mid-sized, post-industrial downtowns. It seeks to answer: (i) What has been the fate of North American downtowns in the 20th Century? (ii) Why have post-industrial downtowns struggled to maintain regional economic influence? (iii) In post-industrial cities where downtowns have collapsed, what has been done to stabilize or reverse this decline? And (iv) What are the risks which accompany downtown revitalization and how have local residents and businesses responded?

2.2 The History of Downtown Renewal

In the 1940's, residential dispersal became a serious concern for city management across North America (Seidman, 2004). Many of the residents who had moved out to the suburbs had stopped coming downtown. There was no need - they did their shopping in the outlying districts, and spent their evenings in neighbourhood restaurants and movie theatres. Those who had not yet moved out - mostly the lower classes or racial and ethnic minorities - either could not afford to or did not want to leave their ethnic neighbourhoods in and around the downtown.

Residents of lower social and economic status thus tended to live in close proximity to the central business district (CBD), and did not have the same disposable income to spend in the specialty stores and boutiques. They also did not own the types of business that required extra services, like downtown lawyers, banks, and insurance companies (Fogelson, 2001). Federal policies also favoured suburban development; in the United States especially, zoning, tax, and bank mortgage policies contributed to the business flight from the downtown (Seidman, 2004). In Canada the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) created a mortgage system that favoured new suburban development (Harris, 2004). Downtowns across the continent therefore declined because of job migration and losses, few economic establishments, lower than average incomes and labour force participation rates, and high unemployment and poverty rates (Power et al., 2011). This is the legacy of many downtowns today.

In the early years of downtown renewal, city management saw only one solution: to make the downtown attractive to high-income families again. High income families could reinvigorate the downtown core with their associated buying power and improved property values (Fogelson, 2001). Inviting well-to-do families to live in the downtown, however, proved to be difficult. The only residential areas near the core were 'blighted' areas, consisting of derelict and dilapidated dwellings and run-down factories and warehouses. These places were "unsafe and unhealthy, lacking open spaces, fresh air, and the other features most Americans looked for in a good community" (Fogelson, 2001, 319). These blighted places, according to city leaders, had to be transformed into nice areas that were healthy, safe and attractive. The only way to do this, they assumed, was to raze and rebuild the central city to create suburban-like settings in city centres.

The 'blighted' areas were also densely populated and lacked adequate sanitation. In the first generation of urban renewal, these "intolerable housing conditions...coupled with the wish to make 'better use' of central urban land and drive the poor out of sight," inspired the idea of slum clearance (Carmon, 1999, 145-146). In the UK, slum clearance started with the Greenwood Act of 1930. In the US, it is debated whether slum clearance started with the housing law of 1937 or legislation in 1949 that held that the government was responsible for "the settlement of all families" in the US in "decent and affordable housing" (Carmon, 1999, 146; Berry et al., 1968).

These programs rarely halted or reversed the decline of downtown and were often more harmful than good (Gans, 1967; Fried, 1966; Hartman 1971, 1979). Most importantly, there were heavy psychological and social costs associated with forced relocation. Previously tight-knit communities found themselves scattered and disenfranchised. The neighbourhoods that were built in new locations for these people were multi-storey blocks "unfit for family life, and certainly not suitable for poor families" (Carmon, 1999, 146). In Canada, housing was razed to build roads and commercial buildings in large cities like Toronto and Vancouver. There were 48 such projects between 1948 and 1968 (Carter, 1991).

Urban renewal programs began in Canada in the 1950's, followed by a federally-funded neighbourhood-improvement program in the 1970's (Patterson, 1994). These programs no longer exist, but redevelopment planning is still a priority for many municipalities. Redevelopment plans are central to identifying community objectives, because, unlike top-down policies like zoning, they allow for community intervention. Redevelopment plans in Ontario are called

“community improvement plans” and are usually used to mend “older, blighted, high-density (“slum type”) areas in large cities,” but can be used for smaller cities as well (Gordon and Hodge, 2008, 232). Cornwall, Ontario is one such example. The city experienced neighbourhood degradation after a large factory next to the city closed down. To help them redevelop, consultants from McGill University strategized urban and architectural rehabilitation to preserve the “Le Village” neighbourhood (Gordon and Hodge, 2008).

Fortunately, the social costs of slum clearance project in the US, France, and the UK helped stop slum clearance in favour of a second ‘generation’ of urban revitalization: neighbourhood rehabilitation. A large middle class arose during the period following the Second World War. This large social movement brought a new awareness of poverty to public discourse, and public welfare programs became more accepted. Comprehensive rehabilitation programs began to improve urban environments instead of demolishing them. Treating social problems by adding and improving upon social services became important to urban planners (Carmon, 1999, 146).

These attempts at social amends, among them, the “Great Society” programs and the “War on Poverty” of the 1960s in the US, did not quell the riots that broke out in the mid-1960’s in cities across the US at that time. In response to these riots, the ‘Model Cities’ program was created to approach urban poverty from a comprehensive standpoint, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was created to manage it. The money from this federal program was spent less on housing and infrastructure and more on education, health, professional training and public safety (Carmon, 1999).

In Canada, although social programs were also provided, the Neighbourhood Improvement Program in 1973 focused more on the physical expression of poverty than the social. It dealt with the renovation of existing housing, together with selective demolition of unsafe housing, and allocated funds for social and community services, while ensuring the participation of the residents in the decision-making process (Carter, 1991). This was similar to the European approach, which integrated housing and social programs to combat poverty (Carmon, 1999; Power et al., 2010).

In the 1970's, development programs started to focus on revitalization practices in city centres. These were based on a "business like approach" that emphasized economic development (Carmon, 1999, 147). Even though the 1970's also experienced an economic downturn that drew public attention away from the inner cities at the time, the then cheap city centres started to become attractive to private entrepreneurs. This spurred on a type of urban redevelopment that Carmon (1999) divides into two categories: public-individual partnerships and public-private partnerships.

Public-individual partnerships occur in three instances: gentrification, upgrading by incumbent residents, and upgrading by in-migrants (Carmon, 1999). Classic gentrification is often the first sign of revitalization, but it can be spurred by initial public investments in the area. Generally, individuals or couples (often without children) will move to a place that has "character" or "charm" and renovate old buildings that have deteriorated. Often these are located in central neighbourhoods. Incumbent residents, too, sometimes invest 'sweat equity' to improve the

homes they live in. Sometimes, they can even get financial help from local authorities or non-profit organizations.

Immigrants can also be sources of neighbourhood revitalization. Although poor immigrants were considered negative for a neighbourhood in the 1960's and 1970's, a rise in the variety of immigrant groups, and of skilled and educated workers has helped improve the conditions of some neighbourhoods. This is especially true in Canada, where immigrants have become recognized as contributors to urban revitalization (Bourne, 1993).

Public-private partnerships, by contrast, have led large economic development projects in the form of downtown shopping malls, convention centres, hotels, and "occasionally, prestige housing" (Carmon, 1999, 148). Although many of these projects have been successful commercially, and have attracted "business, local customers and tourists" (Carmon, 1999, 148), they have actually widened the disparity of city centres. This was especially noticeable in the late 1980's and early 1990's, when the 'trickle-down' theory of wealth distribution was largely rejected, and the idea of "divided cities" (Marcuse, 1993) was more widely recognized.

More recently, Marcuse (2011) has argued that there have been three main approaches to modern day North American planning. The last two are more relevant to downtown revitalization, but the first, the *deferential technicist approach*, refers to the "urban work of engineers," and is controlled by those in power who "have the authority and resources to commission the work" (Marcuse, 2011). This perspective tries to overcome the physical inefficiencies associated

with the industrial economy. It supports existing institutional relationships, values efficiency, and is in turn supported by the most powerful political, economic, and social groups. This type of planning has governed the formation of urban environments.

The *social reform approach*, by contrast, is concerned with the social externalities (side effects) associated with industrialization, including ill health, crime, unclean housing, social disorder, and pollution (Marcuse, 2011). It is not concerned with economic processes, and instead focuses on power relations. Specifically, it is concerned with those who typically do not have power and reflects the shift in sociological studies toward issues of social justice, feminism, and affirmative action (Marcuse, 2011). In many ways, it contrasts directly with the deferential technicist approach, and argues against gentrification and the displacement it involves.

The *social justice approach*, similarly, is concerned with the human costs of rapid urbanization and industrialization, especially the spread of cities and the slums left behind. This perspective considers social issues from the point of view of “those suffering from them” and is supported by those who are poor and oppressed (Marcuse, 2011). Often, this type of professional planning grows from grass-roots groups and social movements. It differs from the social reform approach in that it not only discusses social issues, but fights them in the hope of promoting ethical and cultural principles, community-based planning, and radical and critical perspectives. Its overall goal is to try to create a utopian city.

Now, despite decades of redevelopment efforts and policies, many American downtowns “still have serious economic problems and are perceived, particularly by suburbanites, as inconvenient, obsolete, and even dangerous places” (Robertson, 1995, 429). There are, however, downtowns that have rebounded, and cities that have revitalized their commercial districts in successful ways (Seidman, 2004). The details of these revitalization techniques will follow.

City governments are now actively seeking to create ‘whole communities’ in downtowns, where the potential for a high quality of life is now seen as realistic. The pursuit of downtown revitalization is now a significant academic endeavour, raising such questions as: should cities target businesses or residents first? What kinds of businesses are most important for economically sustainable revitalization? How does the built form affect social conduct? What kind of consequences does revitalization bring with it? The following is a brief discussion of these questions.

Four approaches in particular have received widespread recognition. They include the Cultural Capital theory, the Creative Class theory, the Main Street approach and a discussion of marketing practices for revitalizing downtowns.

2.3 Attracting People: The Importance of Culture

One of the most popular approaches to urban evaluation and revitalization today is the creative class theory, which suggests that cities should seek to expand their economies by actively competing for talented, creative people. The theory assumes that creativity, “the ability to

generate new knowledge or to convert existing knowledge into economically successful applications,” is an increasingly important source of economic development (Krätke, 2010, 835). This assumption is based on the statistical association between the number of people in the ‘creative class’ and the development of high-tech sectors across cities in North America. The creative class, according to this theory, includes people who “create meaningful new forms” (Florida, 2002, 8).

The super-creative core, as Richard Florida calls them, includes “scientists and engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers, and architects, as well as thought leadership of modern society: nonfiction writers, editors, cultural figures, think-tank researchers, analysts, and other opinion-makers” (Florida, 2005, 34). It also includes “creative professionals who work in a wide range of knowledge-intensive industries such as high-tech sectors, financial services, the legal and healthcare professions, and business management” (Florida, 2005, 34). This ‘class’ of people itself acts as an attraction for even more creative activities (Fritsch and Stützer, 2007). Thus, the more individuals from this creative class move to a revitalizing area, the faster the area will improve economically.

Industrial cities traditionally compete regionally for firms because, traditionally, the locations of companies establishes the regional urban economic hierarchy. The creative economy approach claims to turn this formula around; instead of competing for companies, smart cities now compete for creative workers. “Creative workers are both highly mobile and eagerly sought after by technology employers, and thus have the option of locating virtually anywhere they

desire” (Florida, 2005, 68). Because there are so many creative companies in North America, and because the average young worker works in a job for only just over two years before moving on to another company, the pull factor is not where the companies are located, but the quality of life which a city provides (Florida, 2005).

In order to measure the potential for cities to grow, Florida identified what he calls the three T's of economic development: technology, talent, and tolerance. Tolerance, he defines as “openness, inclusiveness, and diversity to all ethnicities, races, and walks of life.” Talent is defined as “those with a bachelor's degree and above.” Technology, he explains, “is a function of both innovation and high technology concentrations in a region” (Florida, 2005, 37).

Florida insists that creative people tend to cluster with other creative people, but only in certain types of places. Downtowns in particular, are powerful “idea generators,” he says (Florida, 2005, 166). These places have specific social and physical attributes that define these places as creative. Diversity, he says, is very important, as are low barriers to entry for immigrants, and prominent gay and bohemian populations. The tolerance that the presence of these populations represents is key in attracting creative and talented people.

High quality natural environments within and surrounding city centres attract creative workers. “In the industrial economy, economic growth and the environment were typically seen to be at odds” (Florida, 2005). Now, however, good air and water quality, natural greenery, and well-crafted and maintained outdoor recreational spaces are key to attracting the kind of people who

create 'creative' urban environments. Urban sprawl, heavy traffic, and unclean areas, on the other hand, work as repelling forces. Environmental quality "has become important not simply as an end in itself, but as a prerequisite for attracting talent" (Florida, 2005, 58).

Sprawl, Florida argues, is a serious problem for rapidly expanding high-technology regions, whose appeal originates from their "manageable size and high quality of life" (Florida, 2005). Growth, however, creates an expansion of urban habitation. More industrial and population growth creates lower environmental conditions, and higher levels of traffic congestion. It is because of these things, Florida explains, that smart growth and sustainable development campaigns have been introduced.

There are many critiques and discussions surrounding the 'creative capital' approach. Sager believes that the creative class theory that Florida speaks about fits "hand in glove" with neo-liberalism in the way it "takes globalised [sic] capitalism, inter-city competition, and the need for urban entrepreneurialism for granted" (Sager, 2011). The theory emphasizes the importance of attracting the kind of people who revitalize areas, and, like neo-liberal policies, promotes the types of services these people need, like "housing, shopping, entertainment and efficient transport" (Sager, 2011). Peck, an academic critical of the creative class theory, asserts that "city leaders... are embracing creativity strategies not as alternatives to extant market-, consumption- and property-led development strategies, but as low-cost, feel-good *complements* to them. Creativity plans do not disrupt these established approaches to urban entrepreneurialism and consumption-oriented place promotion, they *extend* them" (Peck, 2005, 761).

Although the creative cities model has been enthusiastically adopted in many places, including Austin (Texas), Ann Arbor (Michigan), and Toronto (Ontario), some authors have criticized the approach for its unaffected side effects of economic disparity, social élitism, and 'poor investment decisions' (Donald and Lewis, 2010; Peck, 2005, 2007; Scott, 2006; Sands and Reese, 2008). The concept of "creativity" is also difficult to quantify, or measure (Amabile, 1996; Boden, 2004; Markusen, 2003), and there are a number of fundamentally weak assumptions within Florida's thesis (Donald and Lewis, 2010). Tolerance, for instance, cannot necessarily be measured as diversity (Rushbrook, 2002; Thomas and Darnton, 2006), and most topically, what is good for larger cities is not necessarily appropriate for smaller ones because they could never have the same resources and services (Brooks, 2000; Young et al., 2006).

Some Canadian authors believe that the creative capital approach is especially damaging to smaller Canadian cities and perceptions of them. (Donald and Lewis, 2010; Markusen, 2003; Brooks, 2000; Lloyd, 2005). The creative capital 'toolkit,' when applied to smaller cities between 50,000 and 500,000, tends to marginalize underlying structural problems, "merely providing rhetoric to appease the local politicians (Donald and Lewis, 2010, 32; Chatterton, 2000). The consequences of implementing such an approach inappropriately include high socioeconomic disparity, which can be especially wounding to smaller cities that have "limited resources, job opportunities, and redistributive power" (Donald and Lewis, 2010, 33; Seasons, 2003). This happens because high-tech jobs and bohemian boutiques tend to very quickly transform a place into a high-end, high-cost environment, which in turn could lead to exclusion and displacement of middle and lower class residents (Scott, 2006; Gertler, 2004; Bradford, 2004). Canadian cities

that rank highest according to the creative capital ranking system also have the highest levels of socioeconomic disparity (Hyndman et al., 2006).

The creative capital thesis places cities with more creative industries at the top of the urban hierarchy. In Canada, these are the same cities which also happen to be the most populated, like Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, and are viewed as better to live in because of the particular indicators measured by the creative capital theory (Gertler et al., 2002; Spencer and Vinodrai, 2006). The creative capital thesis “implicitly favours the largest metropolitan areas in a region” (Donald and Lewis, 2010; Duxbury, 2004; Scott, 2006; Sands and Reese, 2008). To remedy this, Donald and Lewis (2010) argue that a new set of variables should be used to quantify the quality of life and drawing power of cities (Sands and Reese, 2008). These indicators follow closer to theories of ‘livability’ and ‘sustainability’ (Donald and Lewis, 2010). They include: the ecological footprint, housing condition, housing affordability, commuting distance, public transit, walkability and bike-ability, and education (Donald and Lewis, 2010).

Florida is not the only one to pontificate on the importance of culture. The subject has increased dramatically in the last thirty years (Bianchini, 1993; Frow, 1995; Hall, 1997; Howkins, 2001; Landry, 2000; Landry and Bianchini, 1995; Johnson, 2009; Roodhouse, 2006; Scott, 1997; Throwsby, 1999; Trowse, n.d.; Zukin, 1995; Gibson and Stevenson, 2004). Cultural capitals, places that “create value and value creativity,” are currently considered obligatory for economic sustainability, population growth, and tourism (Johnson, 2009). Cultural capitals are places

where “the arts have activated individuals, rebuilt communities, enlivened the polity, guided the physical regeneration of derelict spaces and re-oriented economies” (Johnson, 2009).

Cultural capitals are cities that define themselves as and seek out ways to become cultural centres. Not just cities that are already global centres, like New York, Paris, and London, but “second order” cities that have remade their “economies, urban spaces and societies through mobilizing some aspect of ‘culture’” (Johnson, 2009).

To transform a city into a cultural centre, social, economic and spatial changes must occur (Zukin, 1995; Landry and Bianchini, 1995). Done well, these changes to civic culture benefit much more than the economy, even though the arts are not inherently profitable. The arts do not necessarily contribute to community cohesion, and tend to promote solitary creative behaviour. They can, however, drastically impact a city's social, physical, and economic landscapes (Howkins, 2001; Scott, 1997). “What has been fundamental in reshaping societies and cultures across the industrialized world has been the shift away from manufacturing for the bulk of employment and profitability towards service, and a growth in the role of culture in defining commodities, identities and economic activity” (Johnson, 2009). This approach has mobilized the arts to “enliven these urban and social environments,” and make them hospitable and welcoming to newcomers (Johnson, 2009).

Raymond Williams, a literary critic and academic from Wales who helped lay the foundations of European cultural studies, identified three types of definitions for the word “culture” as “the

general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development; a particular way of life of a people, period, group or humanity; and also the works and practices of intellectuals, especially artists” (Williams, 1985, 90). Culture, in this context, includes: “objects or events which are produced by those defining themselves as artists which in turn encapsulate and give meaning to the particular way of life of a people” (Johnson, 2009). This definition helps, Johnson claims, in using culture to help measure the value of a place, and of approaching revitalization with a cultural approach.

Many cities that used to be industrial centres are now trying to rebuild their economies and societies by stimulating the arts (Power et al., 2011, Johnson, 2009). Despite criticism of art's place in urban regeneration strategies from authors like Sharon Zukin (1995) and Rosalyn Deutsche (1996) (mentioned later) who are concerned about displacement and gentrification, Johnson contends that regeneration strategies can be widely inclusive and socially sustainable.

In order to be socially sustainable, urban economic development should not compromise the social and physical environment, and should benefit a wide range of people (Bridger, 1999; Roseland, 2000; Bramley et al., 2009). Ideally, social services and economic risks should be shared equally and work to minimize socio-economic disparity.

If a city grows culturally, therefore, it must “ensure the maintenance and expression of its diverse and interconnected social identities, inter and intra generational equity and protect the quality of its build environment” (Johnson, 2009). If a cultural capital begins to develop, it must do so in a

manner that benefits even those who do not participate in political discussions. It must also preserve clean air and water, and adequate open space and biodiversity. Above all, promoting the arts to help a city grow should not compromise its ecological sustainability. Its growth strategy must “meet the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet theirs” (Johnson, 2009). This definition of sustainability is key to developing and refining the best and most ethical strategy for building cultural capitals.

2.4 Densifying Activity: The Importance of Main Street

The creative capital approaches to urban revitalization focuses on cities as whole entities. Although they emphasize that downtowns are important nodes of concentrated ideas and talents, their goal is to attract creative talent to the city overall. Downtown strategies, however, tend to be more focused. One of the most tangible and contemporary downtown revitalization strategies in North America is the Main Street approach (Clark, 2011). It has been popular with historic societies and small towns since the 1980's and is now the most widely used and touted revitalization strategy in the US (Robertson, 2004).

Although large-scale projects still dominate many downtown revitalization projects today, a ‘new’ downtown revitalization strategy incorporates much smaller, local businesses and other smaller details, including “historic preservation, consumer marketing, pedestrian access, and the cleanliness and safety of streets” (Mitchell, 2001, 115). This approach, although acknowledging that underlying social ills cannot be easily fixed with simple renovation, focuses primarily on

improving the aesthetics of 'Main Street' in order to attract newcomers and suburbanites to the area.

Revitalizing commercial districts, especially main streets, is paramount to the revitalization of downtowns (Seidman, 2004; Mitchell, 2001; Oh et al. 2006; Lopilato, 2003; Robertson, 2005). Few sources, however, analyze what factors determine the success or failure of main street revitalization (Lopilato, 2003; Francaviglia, 1996). To answer this question, Louis Lopilato conducted interviews with city mayors and other officials and observations of main streets in twenty municipalities of different sizes in the Northeastern US.



Figure 2.2 King Street: Hamilton's Main Street, (Author, 2012)

Successful main streets, this theory posits, must be aesthetically pleasing to invite shoppers downtown. Along the sidewalks, a necessary energy must develop. Pedestrians must be able to feel excited about being in that place. A buzz will develop in a well-designed place as crowds accumulate to give it a sense of *character*, or *soul*. An environment like this must be friendly and

community-oriented, safe and interesting. Historical preservation, attention to detail, and accessible walking paths help to create a successful downtown (Lopilato, 2003).

A number of bad urban design decisions, mostly made during the latter half of the 20th Century, have led to downtown's demise. According to the Main Street approach, these include sprawling suburbs, downtown malls, department stores, downtown homeless shelters, and exclusive architecture (Lopilato, 2003). Good designs, though, like having helpful downtown guides, and free but time-limited on-street parking, have helped in its restoration. Well-designed urban parks are important, as is a commitment to historical preservation. Shutting down Main Street to traffic is likely to advance its demise, but making it more pedestrian friendly, by perhaps minimizing the amount and speed of traffic that passes through, helps (Lopilato, 2003).

Lopilato examined the most important interconnected factors that influence the prosperity of Main Streets as shopping districts. The more interconnected these forces are, he explains, the more successful the district (Lopilato, 2003). Of these, safety is the most important to the revitalization of main streets, but is often difficult for the municipality to control for. There are certain things that are in the municipality's power: street lighting, policing of an area, making sure buildings are up to code, and making sure crosswalks and streets are safe and easy to use. Noise and fast streets are of particular note; densely populated cities become dangerous when they start to privilege cars. In many failed downtowns, Lopilato writes, "uncontrolled, high speed roads bisect local shopping districts" (Lopilato, 2003, 51). This should be avoided - "when safety is an issue, revitalization is impossible" (Lopilato, 2003, 51).

Perhaps even more damaging, the perception of fear, Lopilato says, discourages casual shoppers or tourists, and stifles its economic and business potential. The solution to fear is not, although often employed, to securitize buildings and close off public access. Doing that acknowledges that Main Street is a dangerous place, and continues a cycle of fear and danger. Loitering crowds can also be alarming to a visitor. Unemployed, homeless, and mentally ill people in large numbers are perhaps not dangerous in and of themselves, but they do create an unwelcoming environment (Lopilato, 2009). Customers and business owners are not likely to stay in such a place for long.

Cities have some power over attracting local industry, banks, support services, restaurants, anchor stores, boutiques and shops. They have greatest control over marketing, public transportation, roads, parking, educational institutions, civic investments, and government offices. Lopilato (2009) outlines some of the best practices for these factors. Local employment should be located within walking distance or a short drive to Main Street. "Local employees may, perhaps, be the largest source of consumers to a downtown shopping district" (Lopilato, 2003, 52). The higher paid the employees, the higher likelihood that they will spend money in the downtown. Banks should be located centrally. They generate pedestrian traffic and local merchants benefit from their overflow.

Cleanliness is vital. If the municipality cannot keep up with this, local Business Improvement Areas (see later) can tax their businesses to pay for the upkeep of the street. Cleanliness produces positive ambiance. This ambiance is enhanced by the demonstration of historical precedents, geographical influences or cultural antecedents. Showing off local history, unique plants and

animals to the area, and cultural influences in the region helps downtowns create their own identity. This in turn helps with city branding that attracts shoppers and investors.

Restaurants are a major driving force in revitalization (Leinberger, 2005; Lopilato, 2003). If restaurants along a main street have “ample parking, pleasant ambiance, security, and fine cuisine,” they will draw people downtown (Lopilato, 2003).

Anchor stores, or department stores on street corners, were once the mainstays of shopping districts, but when these stores moved to suburban malls, other merchants found they could not fill the gap. Today, these types of stores may not be the answer, but other smaller types of anchor stores could locate on street corners to help guide pedestrian traffic flow (Lopilato, 2003).

Boutiques are another type of store which are indicative of an upward economic trend. They tend to sell a single line of goods, and may also carry a diverse array of specialty products. These stores are inviting and curious to shoppers. It is thanks to these and other stores that do not compete with big box retailers like Wal-Mart that shoppers choose to shop downtown instead of at malls.

Big box retailers are, in many ways, the bane of downtown's existence. Their commitment to and ability to provide low-cost merchandise, combined with the convenience and comfort of the mall, makes them very hard to compete with. Downtown storekeepers, though, have one advantage: personal service. “Shopkeepers who identify with their customers as neighbors and

friends, as individuals and families, and serve their particular needs with a faithful following” (Lopilato, 2003). A personal connection is a powerful draw. Shops must be part of a ‘neighbourhood’ by entering into a ‘symbiotic relationship’ with clients, other shop keepers, and the local culture.

Clean and efficient public transport is especially important in a pedestrian-friendly downtown and to young urban professionals. “Driving downtown must be a pleasant experience” (Lopilato, 2003, 58), and parking downtown should be visible and accessible. Shoppers always want parking directly in front of their destination. To compensate for this, some municipalities charge for parking by the minute or hour. Their reasoning is that people will not want to pay more for longer periods. Interestingly, though, Lopilato says this is not as effective as free, time-limited spaces (Lopilato, 2003). The latter encourages a swift turnover of vehicles and a positive attitude to parking downtown.

Educational institutions and government offices near downtown can help boost downtown merchants’ clientele and encourage merchants to provide a diversity of goods. Downtown schools, though, especially for teenaged students, need to have neighbourhoods that support teenager-friendly activities to discourage loitering, like libraries, parks, and cafés. Downtowns should be pleasant places for everyone to be.

Like schools and university campuses, government offices provide a reliable client base for local stores and help maintain financial security in an area. Even though government buildings do not

pay property tax, they do provide steady employment, which is important during economic downturns and times of business downsizing.

Buildings in disrepair indicate disinvestment in an area (Kelling and Wilson, 1982). If cities are serious about revitalization, they must feature buildings in good condition, repair salvageable buildings, and demolish and replace the rest. This process requires public participation and consultation - urban architecture is close to citizens' hearts. "Whether it's creating a plaza, a park, burying utility wires, demolishing an old building or refurbishing facades, a new image can help transform a fading Main Street into a vibrant center of community and commercial life" (Lopilato, 2003).

The integration of these factors in revitalization strategies, Lopilato claims, is necessary to their success. "In time, given the right preconditions, the dynamics of change can reshape the character of an entire neighbourhood" (Lopilato, 2003).

To this end, business improvement areas (BIAs) in Canada (or business improvement districts (BID's) in the US) are invaluable tools (Briffault, 1999; Francaviglia, 1996). The main goal of BIAs is to improve the public's perception of their area. They work by "channel[ing] private-sector energy toward the solution of public problems" (MacDonald, 1996, 1) and provide a unique alternative to municipal planning and development. BIAs generally focus on one part of downtown and receive steady funding from a percentage of taxes from the local government,

which gives them an advantage over municipal governance - they can effectively implement a hands-on approach to places that need it (Mitchell, 2001).

BIAs are usually created by municipal governments, but business owners can lobby for their creation (Houstoun, 1997; Briffault, 1999). Sometimes, BIAs are born from voluntary business associations. They typically have a governing board, including property and business owners from the area, which “oversees the district to maintain accountability, establish a direction for its activities, and select a manager to run the BID” (Mitchell, 2001). Generally, local government remains uninvolved in strategizing, so as to allow the BIA manager and the board freedom and flexibility.

Unfortunately, evaluating the success of BIAs is often confounded by external factors. One way to measure their effectiveness is to conduct surveys before and after a BIA is created. Another method is to assess the goals of BIAs against their outcomes (Houstoun, 1997). This is the most popular form of evaluation (Mitchell, 2001). Because the main goal of BIAs is to enhance the perception of an area, Mitchell suggests that future evaluation will likely necessitate a focus on “ethnographic measures of cultural change” (Mitchell, 2001).

Academics who study BIAs agree that they are an active force in the successful remodeling of downtown areas (Briffault, 1999; Houstoun, 1997; McGovern, 1999), because of the advantages listed above. The Main Street approach, coupled with the implementation of BIAs, is a popular and effective means to increase downtowns' residential and business capacity.

2.5 Marketing Downtown

No matter what their focus, marketing strategies have become integral to all business district revitalization approaches (Weimer, 2011). Businesses and cities alike must have a thorough understanding of market demographics and demands to market themselves effectively (Weimer, 2011). Weimer recommends that the City coordinate with businesses and development groups to improve the residential market around the business district. Collaboration with the “real estate and leasing environment” in the area helps focus residents to downtown. A website, Weimer writes, is a valuable tool. It must be attractive and regularly updated to be effective.

Weimer also discusses the importance of historic preservation and ethnic and cultural markets and restaurants. The niche these create, he writes, helps to “ensure the success of the district as well as the city and surrounding areas” (Weimer, 2011). This niche concept is prevalent in revitalization literature - the creation of a unique place is perceived as vital to the overall success of an area (Weimer, 2011; Hague, 2005; Florida, 2005; Allen, 1984; Bell, 2007; Clark, 2011; Lopilato, 2003; Donald and Lewis, 2010; Eastlick and Padilla, 2009; Faulk, 2006; Leinberger, 2005; Levine, 1987; Mitchell, 2001; Oh et al., 2006. Robertson, 2005; Sager, 2011; Seidman, 2004; Sutton, 2010; Tokarska, 2010). Downtowns must refine their image by finding something about their districts that can “give it a more powerful and clearer identity for businesses and customers” (Weimer, 2011, 55). This type of city marketing is important to achieving competitive advantage over neighbouring cities within a region.

Sager examines post-industrial city marketing strategies from a neo-liberal planning perspective. In response to the decline in manufacturing that post-industrial cities have experienced, he says “local authorities have to become far more innovative and entrepreneurial” (Sager, 2011). And, he continues, the marketing of places is now “one of the defining features of the entrepreneurial mode of urban governance” (Sager, 2011). Sager’s main argument is that urban governments must, in the global competition between cities for economic and talented population growth, apply concepts of private sector marketing in the form of place promotion.

Changing people’s attitudes towards a city by rebranding it helps target potential new residents, new companies, and visitors looking to take advantage of the city’s hospitality services. But many authors have critiqued city marketing strategies for their inattention to “authenticity, diversity, democracy and welfare policy” (Sager, 2011; Gotham, 2007; Griffiths, 1998). In the rush to “brand” cities as unique, good places to live, efforts have created the opposite effect - “instead of being different, [cities] are beginning to look alike.” The reproducibility of a successful formula, the proliferation of ‘signature architecture’ and iconic buildings (and thus the loss of their ‘limited edition’ status), and the fact that mega-events have become more-or-less annual affairs have only intensified the competition, making it more difficult for cities to become something different or to strategically reposition themselves vis-à-vis other equally aggressive urban centres (Lui, 2008). The commodification of spaces, or the “treatment of places as products” can give places a ‘hollow’ nature - one that neglects the human aspect of living somewhere (Sager, 2011; Hospers, 2006).

2.6 Commercial Gentrification

One of Canada's prime examples of the commodification of space is the transformation of Yonge and Dundas Square in Toronto. In *Shaping Good Cities and Citizens*, Evelyn S. Ruppert (2011) studied how the square changed in the late 1990's, and how top-down forces can shape urban spaces and how we think about them. Ultimately, she argues, the physical and therefore symbolic transformation of a space affects the way people conduct themselves as citizens of the city. Practices of shaping urban space are therefore powerful representations of our moral code - they "constrain citizens' choices of actions by configuring the choices within which they can operate...through an assemblage of laws, regulations, plans, designs, material objects, and people" (Ruppert, 2011, 1).

Currently, Ruppert says, these techniques of governing simultaneously promote and are upheld by the stimulation of agency and, paradoxically, the manipulation of the freedom of those who have it. She seeks to understand, within this context, what makes a "good city" and "good conduct in the city" (Ruppert, 2011, 1). Her case study explores these questions:

Near the end of the 1990's, the City of Toronto seized a number of low-end retailers, "discount stores, bargain electronics outlets, pawn-shops, pinball parlors, jewelry exchanges, and fast-food restaurants," on the corners of Yonge and Dundas in downtown Toronto. They believed that the area was "dangerous, threatening, crime-prone, and suffering from social and economic blight" because of "the conduct of discount retailers, illegal vendors, pan-handlers, street youth, discount shoppers, and squeegeers" (Ruppert, 2011, 2). These people were blamed for spreading disorder

and negative perceptions of the area. Getting rid of them was meant to make way for a more “public” space. The City’s solution was to create Dundas Square – a large scale “urban entertainment centre” (UEC), which would contain “high end retail, theme restaurants, and a cinema megaplex” (Ruppert, 2011, 2).

Redevelopment of the intersection of Dundas and Yonge in downtown Toronto began in 1998. Ruppert contends that the discussion around the redevelopment of Dundas Square dictated a conversation surrounding moral values. Activities such as “engaging in intimidating or aggressive behavior, pan-handling, drug dealing, loitering, squeegeeing, not investing in the security of properties, not adequately investing in the image of the space, displaying tacky signs, posterizing, littering, and marking walls with graffiti” were considered bad, or immoral behaviour (Ruppert, 2011, 11). These activities, which city managers thought were attracted to the low-end retailers, made the space problematic.

The contrast between types of people who were considered by the City to be positive (named ‘public’ by Ruppert after she analyzed documents about Yonge and Dundas) and negative (or ‘non-public’) in this area in the late 1990’s was too stark. The renovation of the intersection was meant to maximize its use for ‘public’ groups of people, and minimize the amount of ‘non-public’ individuals in the area. The tools used for this renovation are described later in this chapter.

The kind of commercial, top-down gentrification of the kind that Yonge and Dundas Square experienced is not representative of the field of gentrification overall, which usually focuses on the “transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential and/or commercial use” (Lees et al., 2007). Gentrification as it was originally recognized began in a more surreptitious form in postwar London, England. The term *gentrification* was supposedly¹ coined in 1964 by Ruth Glass, who, after escaping to England from Nazi Germany, noticed how, block by block, working class neighbourhoods in London were being “invaded” by the upper and lower middle classes (Lees et al. 2007; Glass 1989). Since the 1970's, the term ‘gentrification’ has been appropriated to describe the same phenomena in other urban settings, namely rural gentrification, new-build gentrification, and commercial gentrification (Sassen, 1999; Lees, 2000; Butler and Lees; 2006; Lees et al. 2008).

Commercial gentrification is also called ‘boutiqueification’ or ‘retail gentrification’ (Zukin, 2009; Lees et al., 2008) and has been most extensively studied by Zukin (2009) and Sutton (2010). Zukin's work specifically examines Harlem, New York's experiences with “boutiqueing” and the emerging black middle class. This can be intentional, where the governing body seizes and sells off the land to developers, or when landlords choose to rent out their shop to a different, more lucrative business. It may also be unintentional, when land prices and taxes simply become too expensive for certain retailers as the land use around them changes.

¹ This according to Lees et al.'s *Gentrification*, however the New Yorker printed the word *gentrification* to mean the same thing in 1936 (Google Ngram).

Those who have studied the perspectives of small business owners in changing economic environments (Tokarska 2010, Sutton 2010, Rankin 2008, De la Torre 2005; Powell and Spencer, 2003; Decroly and Crieckingen, 2003) have primarily done so from a cultural perspective. They have focused on minority or immigrant populations, and the advantages and impediments that minority commercial establishments experience during or after gentrification.

Sutton is one of the few recent researchers to investigate commercial revitalization from the merchants' perspective. Her work outlines much of the debate about neighbourhood revitalization and retail development. Her focus is on 'weak-market' cities - cities where persistent underdevelopment has kept economic investment efforts from expanding. Her review of commercial revitalization and the small amount of commercial gentrification literature concludes "neither recent studies of 'bottom-up' neighborhood revitalization nor 'top-down' development adequately examine inner-city commercial revival from the perspective of neighborhood-based small business owners" (Sutton, 2010, 353).

Critiques of the effects of revitalization (namely, the displacement that accompanies gentrification) should include, Sutton argues, a critical examination of business owners as active stakeholders in the revitalization process, and not as passive recipients of the good or bad effects that may accompany new development. Literature that does mention business owners often depicts them as neighbourhood leaders, who wield local social power and whose businesses are local hotspots of activity (Sutton, 2010), which is not necessarily the case either. She argues that discussion beyond physical and economic revitalization must include strategies to boost political

and social activity in the area. The cohesive nature of the commercial environment can be advanced by improving “merchant civic engagement, representation in neighbourhood planning, and [attention to] merchants’ expressed needs and concerns” (Sutton, 2010, 354). Attention, she prescribes, must be paid to *how* change occurs more than what is produced by it.

Sutton does not specify whether revitalization or gentrification is inherently good or bad. Other academics, however, advocate outright for gentrification, and say that it can benefit even the poorer, original residents of an area, because it increases the number of residents and therefore the tax base of a city (Byrne, 2003; Freeman and Braconi, 2002). A mix of people of different socioeconomic status enlivens communities and creates culturally unique environments. If only governments were to properly secure affordable housing for the residents who are most at risk of displacement, the negative effects of a healthy, growing housing economy would be mitigated against (Byrne, 2003). And even if residents are displaced, one advocate argues, “poor people find better employment in the suburbs than the city” (Byrne 2003, 419). If residents are not displaced, others say, gentrification forces affluent and poor citizens to come to terms with each other’s priorities and therefore “ameliorates the social isolation of the poor, reduces crime, and increases the [their] educational attainments” (Lees et al, 2009, 2454).

There is certainly a place for gentrification. In Canadian cities, David Ley believes it originated from a “marginal counter culture” who wanted to live in a place most dissimilar to the 1950’s and 1960’s image of what was originally a suburban ideal (Ley, 1980). In *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, he argues that inner-city neighbourhoods in Canada were

sites of resistance which opposed the 'hierarchical lines of authority' with personalized, artistic, welcoming and socially inclusive spaces (Ley, 1996).

Commercial gentrification now, however, is frequently a top-down process (Atkinson, 2004). This was illustrated in the transformation of Yonge and Dundas Square. In arguments for its extreme makeover, those for it argued for "improving the economy of the street, enhancing retail competitiveness, creating a 'world class' image, increasing tourism opportunities, and improving public spaces of the central city" (Ruppert, 2011, np). The city of Toronto and other agents actively sought investors, developers, and professionals. These elite stakeholders, and the types of activities they could attract, were vital to making Yonge and Dundas square a 'good' place.

The City, with investors, used "laws and regulations, urban design, community management structures, surveillance and policing" to help guide citizens toward 'good conduct' (Ruppert, 2011, np). In this way, the 'bad' demographics would be diluted, and the area would attract a higher concentration of 'public' types of people. With these tools, Yonge and Dundas Square's renovation was successfully implemented. The businesses there are now considered 'legitimate.' Crime prevention through "environmental design, the privatization of space and security, the establishment of community governance structures, and a by-law to regulate conduct in the urban square" are now in place (Ruppert, 2011, np).

Designing a 'safe' environment meant that Yonge and Dundas Square had to introduce features of informal and casual surveillance, provide activities and uses that targeted specific types of

people, and create an attractive and clean environment. Their strategy was in some ways analogous, but more extreme, to the Main Street approach: sight lines were opened up, extensive lighting plans were introduced, 'vandal-resistant' fixtures helped mitigate skateboarding, rollerblading, loitering, and sleeping. Trespass laws helped to police the space more effectively. Finally, a BIA was created to encourage self-policing, business improvements, "security, cleanliness, and beautification" (Ruppert, 2011, np). The urban square was allocated a management team in charge of "marketing, event booking, maintenance, and security" (Ruppert, 2011, np). Permits are now required for special events, like exhibits, entertainment, demonstrations, and fairs.

At the same time, the Safe Streets Act outlawed squeegeeing and pan-handling in 1999, and Community Action Policing targeted certain areas of the city for increased police presence. A "training and employment" program to reform street youth was also implemented (Ruppert, 2011, np). With these strategies, the city of Toronto successfully managed, punished and used disciplinary strategies to quell 'immoral' conduct.

Ruppert contends that what happened at Yonge and Dundas square reflects an overall trend in municipal governance to "activate citizens, individually and collectively, to take greater responsibility for their own government" (Ruppert, 2011; Garland, 1999; Raco and Imrie, 2000; Rose, 1999). Her analysis illustrates how a moral discourse was used to commercially gentrify the area and displace individuals from their livelihoods, and demonstrates the process of top-down commercial gentrification in Canada's largest city.

It is because of extreme design overhauls like this that some academics argue against gentrification and its implications for class, race, ethnicity, and alienation (Walks and Maaranen, 2008; Betancur, 2002; Freeman and Braconi, 2002; Ernst, n.d.; Powell and Spencer, 2003; Hackworth and Reckers, 2005; Mazer and Rankin, 2011). Too often, some academics argue, the underlying narrative of white, upper-class 'colonizers' of neighbourhoods is ignored in discussions that prefer to feature the social diversity, creativity, and tolerance that gentrification supposedly breeds (Betancur, 2002).

While the debate continues, it is useful to remember that cities are not stagnant environments, but constantly in a state of flux. Urban cores are typically home to a highly transient population (Florida, 2012). Because of the case-by-case nature of urban planning, policy makers must spend time weighing the social costs of gentrification against revitalization policies (Smith, 1998; MacLoed, 2002; Atkinson, 2002; Freeman, 2006; Bridge, 2005; Dobson and Ley, 2008).

2.7 Conclusion

One of the contexts in which commercial gentrification is desirable is in cities that have experienced significant deindustrialization and inner-city decline. Cities in this condition can be found all over the world, where the importance of a thriving downtown is undisputed, and theories of 'revitalization' and 'core building' are prevalent (Seidman, 2004; Sutton, 2010).

Visitors to downtowns need to see businesses that encourage curiosity and keep people interested and on the street, such as art galleries, specialty shops and outdoor cafes and coffee houses. (Lopilato, 2003). Unfortunately, commercial gentrification, either in the form of top-down, government-led development (Ruppert, 2010), or smaller-scale “boutiqueing” (Zukin, 2009), is exactly the type of development that displaces already struggling businesses and their employees. Herein lies the conflict of having to balance a downtown desperately in need of revitalization with a group of business owners who likely do not want to leave and ethically cannot be displaced.

What do the authors in this literature review say about the core? The words that they used to describe its current state include a myriad of ‘re’ words: *renewal, revitalization, redevelopment, revival, regeneration, rejuvenation, reinvigoration, reestablishment, restoration, rebuilding, reconstruction, remodeling, replenishment*. Municipal goals for previously abandoned city cores include improving the quality of life, intensifying the mixed use buildings, inviting population growth, stimulating economic activity, evolving with changing expectations, advancing “progress” and generating activity, and encouraging community cohesion. The words *improvement, intensification, growth, stimulus, evolution, advancement*, are also referred to frequently in documents and articles about rebuilding city centres to serve their community.

Above all, there is an overwhelming sense that downtowns across North America and Europe are returning to their original position as the most important business districts within their cities. Strategic interventions in core area retailing are starting to revive ailing mid-sized, post-

industrial downtowns. They have done this by looking at both the 'big picture' and by focusing attention on specific parts of downtowns that need attention. Many cities in North America are seeking to attract creative individuals and industries in an attempt to revitalize their downtowns. Medium-sized cities like Hamilton are finding that it is best to focus on overall quality of life indicators like density, park space, walkability, and mixed-use environments to cut down on stressors like long commutes and unaffordable lifestyles.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study is of the north side King Street downtown, in Hamilton, Ontario between James and Catharine streets. It investigates and compares the perceptions of business owners and city officials, ward councilors, and department representatives at City Hall with regard to any potential changes along Hamilton's King Street downtown. The questions guiding this research were twofold: (1) What are the City's plans for downtown King Street in the next ten years, especially with regards to the business environment on King Street? and (2) How do business owners along King Street perceive their immediate business environment?

The first study question sought to find out how Hamilton officials want the city to develop, and what main theories they are using to boost development in the city. Are they trying to attract residents or businesses first? Are they trying to make the downtown more aesthetically pleasing,

as in the Main Street approach? How important is King Street to the overall revitalization of the downtown? Are they using the downtown as a centre for services for the people who already live there, or are they trying to cater to a new crowd of residents, ones with perhaps more disposable income? According to the Hamilton Spectator, and to conversations with city officials, Hamilton is interested in attracting creative industries, like in the Creative Class theory. Why is this? What other kinds of businesses do they want downtown, especially along King Street? And if downtown becomes more attractive to newcomers and businesses, what do they expect to happen to the businesses that line downtown King Street now? The interviews in this study help to answer these questions.

Being on the street level, business owners must have a sense of how the city is changing. The main question of this study started out as a query into King Street's potential for commercial gentrification along King Street. These interview questions seek to ascertain how business owners along King Street perceive their immediate business environment in relation to changing (or perhaps unchanging) conditions along the street. Have they noticed any changes in the last ten years? Do they see changes happening now, and in what direction? Would they welcome revitalization, or are they worried about the tenability of their stores in the face of a (potential) new retail environment?

If Hamilton's economic development department, its newspaper, its academics, its investors, and its new residents' predictions are right, and Hamilton's downtown does revitalize, there will surely be a shift in the types of retail that line King Street downtown. If this is the case, this study

has the potential of being one of the few to evaluate a main street's potential for gentrification, that is, the pre-gentrification state in a post-industrial city, from the perspective of both city officials and local business owners.

3.2 Methodology

Case studies, the “detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena,” (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1984, p. 34) are highly useful in urban planning (Yin, 2008; Kuhn, 1987). This study could have been a broad survey of post-industrial downtowns, but using a case study approach allowed for a deeper understanding of downtown revitalization from the business owners' perspective, a missing component in discussions about commercial gentrification (Sutton, 2010). Case studies are powerful because they sketch a narrative, the most efficient tool for human learning and retaining. They can either be representative of a larger phenomenon, or exceptional to the norm. In this case, King Street serves as a good example of a complex main street in a changing downtown.

The site for this case study is representative of many main streets in post-industrial cities that have experienced an economic downturn since the decline of manufacturing. Likewise, King Street's possible revitalization strategies come from other North American and European cities who have undergone similar experiences and who seem to be successfully recovering their downtown economies. It is exemplary of the post-industrial condition.

One of the most damning criticisms of qualitative case studies is that because the qualitative information is viewed as subjective, it allows for the researcher to accidentally (or otherwise) verify their preconceptions of the issue with biased data sourcing. But according to Campbell (1975), Ragin (1992), Geertz (1995), Wieviorka (1992), Flyvbjerg (1998, 2001), and others, “researchers who have conducted intensive, in-depth case studies typically report that their preconceived views, assumptions, concepts, and hypotheses were wrong and that the case material has compelled them to revise their hypotheses on essential points.” Flyvbjerg, 2006). This has been the case with this thesis, as the discussion of results shows.

The observational component of this study served to provide a description of the streetscape from the perspective of an outsider visiting Hamilton for an extended stay (I have only been in Hamilton two years). Observation is an important component of this study; business investment in Hamilton is largely dependent on investors' perceptions of downtown's economic potential. New buildings and other forms of visual gentrification attract new businesses because they indicate emerging markets (Lopilato II, 2003; Sutton, 2010). A continuous observation of the physical and social parts of downtown King Street therefore helped to evaluate the prospect of investors and small and medium businesses coming and staying in Hamilton.

Interviews are “encounters between a researcher and a respondent in which the latter is asked a series of questions relevant to the subject of research” (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1981). This case study involved interviews with business owners along the north side of downtown King Street and with city planners, ward councilors, and department representatives who work at Hamilton's

City Hall, referred to as 'city officials.' It also involved four 'key informant' interviews - interviews not included in the results - with a historian, a retired city manager, and other informed locals to provide context for the study. Participant observation, reading about Hamilton in newspapers and books, and personal journaling were also used in the study to triangulate the interview data and to reflect upon the methodology as it was carried out.

Individual, semi-structured interviews to collect information about personal perceptions and opinions were most appropriate for this project because of their characteristic privacy, and because individual interviews allow for personalized flexibility of questions (Baribell, 1994). Individual interviews are also simple to schedule, transcribe and code, which decreases research time. Focus groups would have been a possibility, but interviews have a higher chance of getting the most honest answers about a delicate subject, especially from city officials. Business owners in a focus group might depend too much on one or two knowledgeable speakers, and it would have been difficult to schedule a mutually agreed-upon time for them to meet. It is easier to assess their knowledge and opinions of change in their neighbourhood individually. Interviews are also positive because they value the individual participants' personal perceptions where they might not have felt valued before. As well as probing their experiences, interviews provide an empowering place for participants to voice their opinions.

Participant recruitment strategies necessarily differed between the two participant groups. City officials were contacted first by e-mail (attached as Appendix 6). They were selected either by their position at City Hall or by snowball sampling (Harvey, 2010; Gissendanner, 2002).

Snowball sampling (asking participants for other possible interview contacts) introduces the potential for bias, but it is useful in work environments like City Hall because the interests and experiences of individuals are not necessarily represented by their current job title; coworkers are more likely to identify befitting participants than a newcomer. Interviews with city officials were conducted during working hours, in a private meeting rooms in and around City Hall. They began after a brief overview of ethical considerations and an agreement to confidentiality and tape recording.

Five city officials were interviewed for this project. Their interviews took between 25 minutes and one hour. I asked each participant three categories of questions: (a) What changes do you predict for King Street downtown in the next ten years? (b) How do you expect businesses along King Street downtown to be affected by these changes? and (c) Do these changes align with how you want downtown to change over the next ten years? The full interview schedule can be found in Appendix 4.

City officials were asked questions about what they do and how long they have been established in Hamilton, as well as 'opinion' and 'structural' questions to find out how they perceive their environment (Hay, 2010). The participants were asked twenty questions each (Interview Schedule found in Appendix 4). Most of the interviews were recorded, but one participant declined to be recorded, and one was interviewed over the phone.

Business owners were more difficult to recruit. A general letter to all businesses (attached as Appendix 7), was most appropriate because of the difficulty of finding business owners' names. After personally dropping off the general letter, I followed-up with a visit one week later to set up interview dates with willing participants. I went back to recruit business owners a total of four times, with varied luck. Participants who agreed were mostly interviewed on the spot. They were informed about the details of the study, its relevance to the future of King Street, and about how the interview would be conducted. I briefly explained any ethical considerations, and that the interview would be confidential before beginning.

Business owners who were more opinionated might have been more responsive to a general call for participants with this kind of recruitment, but this possible response bias should not undermine the overall purpose of the study - the most opinionated participants are likely the ones who most readily agreed to the interview. In the end, twelve business owners agreed to be interviewed - almost half of the overall businesses that line the study area. Each interview with business owners took between 15 and 25 minutes. I asked similar, but more specific, questions to them as I did to the city officials, like "has your clientele changed in the last ten years?" and "do you expect your business to be here in ten years' time? Why or why not?" The full schedule can be found in Appendix 4.

Four key informant interviews were used for historical context and as a method of triangulation (Jayne, 2012). The knowledge of locals with an interest in the city was invaluable to this study, especially because I am not from Hamilton. The key informant interviews helped to answer

questions I had about the more recent planning history of King Street, what the relationships are like between building owners and businesses, and about general consensuses about the changes happening in downtown.

3.3 Data Theorization

As soon as possible after each interview, I transcribed it on the computer and labelled it by number, date, and time. I then used a number of methods to code the data. These included data contextualization, data comparison, and an attention to the implications of the results and what they could mean for post-industrial cities around the world (Silverman, 2000, 85).

The qualitative coding of the interviews for this project was primarily analytical, although descriptive codes were used to categorize the initial data (Hay, 2010). The investigation took several months. I noted themes and connections on the transcriptions and in a journal, which I then analyzed and compared to my personal observations of the streetscape and to key informant interviews for triangulation (see Conceptual Framework, Appendix 2).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The interview questions (see Appendix 4) were worded in such a way as to be as neutral as possible, because the interview could have been at risk of raising suspicion in the business community about development plans in the area. The subsequent consequences of this were unknown. Although the kind of probing this study entails could elicit a positive and proactive dialogue between business owners and City Hall, it was also at risk of unnecessarily alarming

business owners about potential changes to the area. Where they might not have thought about their business' changing role in the community before the interview, it could have spurred them to reflect upon the value that the city places on their business, and lead them to question their perceptions of future development. Precautions were taken to mitigate any immediate fears that the interview questions might induce. I did not give information about City Hall's plans for downtown, nor did I mention terms associated with gentrification.

The participants are not mentioned by name or by number in the study's results because some of the more controversial quotes would have been too easy to match with other quotes that could identify the participant. Because this thesis attempts to make sense of a collection of different perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, views and feelings in a coherent, organized manner, some of the experiences may be at risk of overshadowing others - this is the nature of qualitative research (Hakim, 1987, 43). In order to fairly portray the participants' views, I paid special attention to detail and subtlety within the interviews.

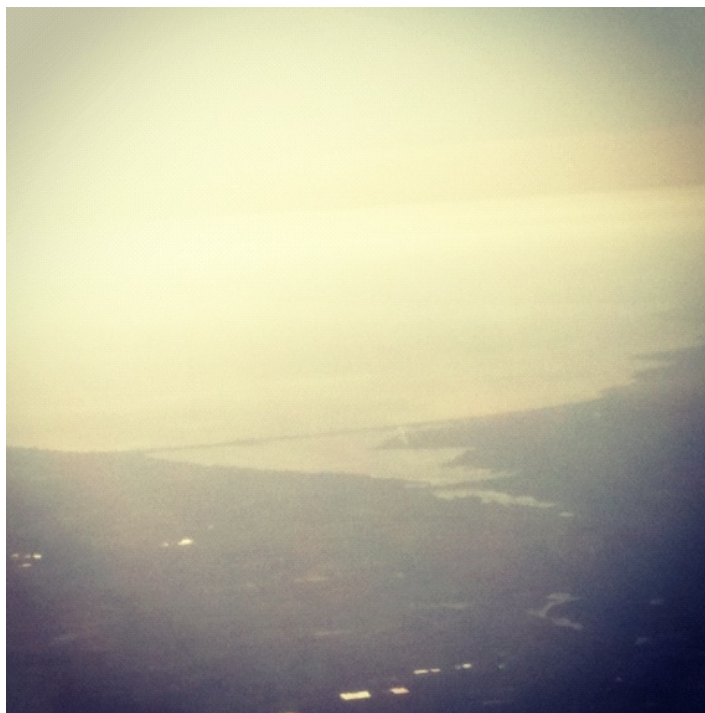


Figure 4.1 Hamilton Harbour, (Author 2012)

Chapter 4: Case Study

Downtown Hamilton has started to revitalize. In the last two years, new stores have opened, iconic buildings have been restored, and street festivals and their attendees have been multiplying every year. Along James Street North, especially, evidence of a renewed sense of optimism can be found in new shop windows and coffee shops.

Hamilton is located on the western shore of Lake Ontario, between Niagara Falls and Toronto (See Figure 4.1). Its combined eight former municipalities have an estimated population of 520,000 (Stats Canada 2011). Residentially, most of Hamilton's wealth can be found in the suburbs. The areas closest to the downtown core, by contrast, is mostly poor or lower middle

class. There are two dominant narratives that describe downtown Hamilton's current condition. One is that Hamilton is a struggling post-industrial city hanging by a thread to its last manufacturing days. The factories, having nearly completely closed down, had left masses to fall under the low income line. The downtown is decrepit and poor, according to this narrative, victimized by dehumanizing modernist architecture and misguided revitalization schemes. The 2008 Lonely Planet guide to Canada epitomizes this view:

“Blue collar Hamilton is the center of Canada's iron and steel industry, and as a result it's not a good-looking or particularly appealing town. There's a vague whiff of sulfur in the air, and a vague sense of menace in the city's smokestack silhouette. Tourists usually grit their teeth and continue to Niagara Falls without entertaining thoughts of stopping.” -Excerpt from the Lonely Planet Guide to Canada (Zimmerman, 2008).

It is largely recognized that Hamilton was, until recently, the “heart of the Canadian steel industry,” thanks to two large steel manufacturers, Dofasco and Stelco (DesRivières et al., 2003), and that Hamilton's downtown was severely weakened during the 1960's and 1970's, when manufacturing industries moved to other cheaper parts of the world. Their head offices, which had been in the downtown since the 1970's, slowly left the city and their empty office towers behind. Although not the only reason for downtown's economic decline, this story is largely seen as representative of the city's overall trajectory.

Hamilton has since emerged strong in a new, polycentric suburban form, with sprawling jobs and homes (Behan, Moah, and Kanaraglou, 2008), thanks largely to its central position in Canada's largest urban conglomeration known as the Golden Horseshoe. Its downtown, though, has been

evacuated by the middle class, leaving the poor behind. In a recent report called Code Red: Where You Live Affects Your Health (Buist, 2010) in the local Hamilton Spectator, the socio-economic and health disparities between Hamilton's downtown and its suburbs are striking.

The sprawling of Hamilton also contributed to traffic congestion (Behan, Moah, and Kanaraglou, 2008) and in the 1960's, Main Street and King Street were converted to single-direction, five lane streets to accommodate the new heavy vehicle traffic. This originally served to efficiently move workers in and out of the downtown during rush hour, but also inadvertently made it more efficient for suburbanites to travel through downtown and bypass businesses there.

The pitfalls of large-scale industrial production in Hamilton are now painfully clear. Overly industrialized cities across North America and Europe have been witness to the same expeditious rise and fall that accompanies seemingly endless resource extraction and manufacturing. For a hundred years up to the 1950's, industrial innovation and expansion fueled urban growth. Cities who benefited from the early adoption of manufacturing technologies were lifted high with the promise of an ever-expanding appetite for their products, only to have their economies collapse when their livelihoods were replaced by cheaper means of production elsewhere (Power et al. 2010).

In the 1970's, Hamilton was the site of "Canada's largest urban-renewal project" (Mika and Helma, 1981). In this process, the city was divided into 118 neighbourhoods to "encourage citizen participation in urban redevelopment" (Mika and Helma, 1981). The city also constructed

Hamilton Place, an entertainment and conference centre, in the hope that it would revitalize the downtown core. Ideas during that time included “the construction of a theatre-auditorium, art gallery, hotel, trade and convention centre, underground shops, pedestrian malls and restaurants” (Mika and Helma, 1981). It was at this time that Hess Village, an area just outside the core, was successfully refurbished and rezoned for bars and clubs.

Downtown Hamilton still has not been successfully revitalized, although it has shown signs of making a come back. Today, much of Hamilton's manufacturing industry has been replaced by

the high-technology medical research (DesRivières et al., 2003). Small businesses and creative industries, too, and finding their way to Hamilton's cheap rental market. This is the basis for a newer, and more optimistic Hamilton narrative: that of rebirth and revitalization in the downtown core.

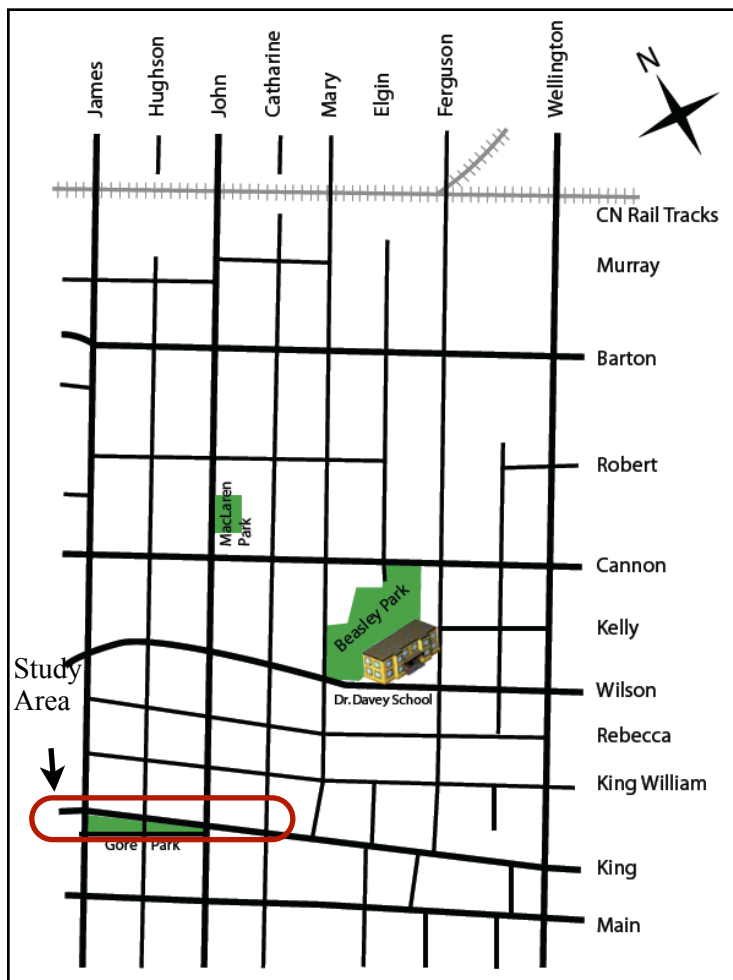


Figure 4.2 Map of Beasley Neighbourhood (BNA, 2012)

The study area for this project is found just south of Beasley neighbourhood in central downtown Hamilton (See Figure 4.2 for map).

Beasley is a unique downtown neighbourhood; although it is one of Hamilton's major business districts, it has a very poor population (57% of residents live below Canada's poverty line (BNA, 2012)). It also has a high number of people who identify as visible minorities and of residents who only recently immigrated to Canada (See Figure 4.3 for details).

Beasley is located between the CNR mainline tracks, Main Street East, Wellington Street, and James Street North. It was originally agricultural land, but became a transportation hub when the Great Western Railway was opened in the North end in 1853 (Freeman, 2001). Two commercial zones, James Street and King Street, emerged within Beasley and were maintained until the 1950's, when the suburban 'mall mentality' took shoppers out of the downtown and downtown stores withered (Manson, 2003). To combat this, Jackson Square mall was built in the 1970's. Unfortunately, this only hastened Beasley's decline.

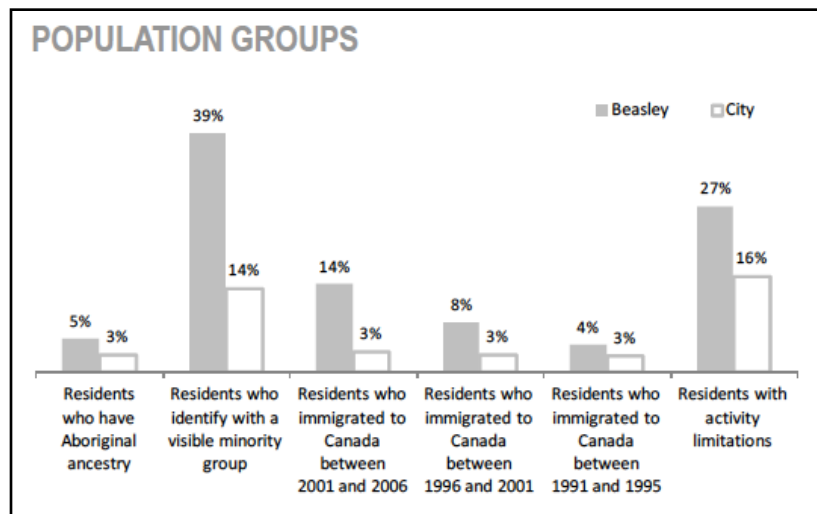
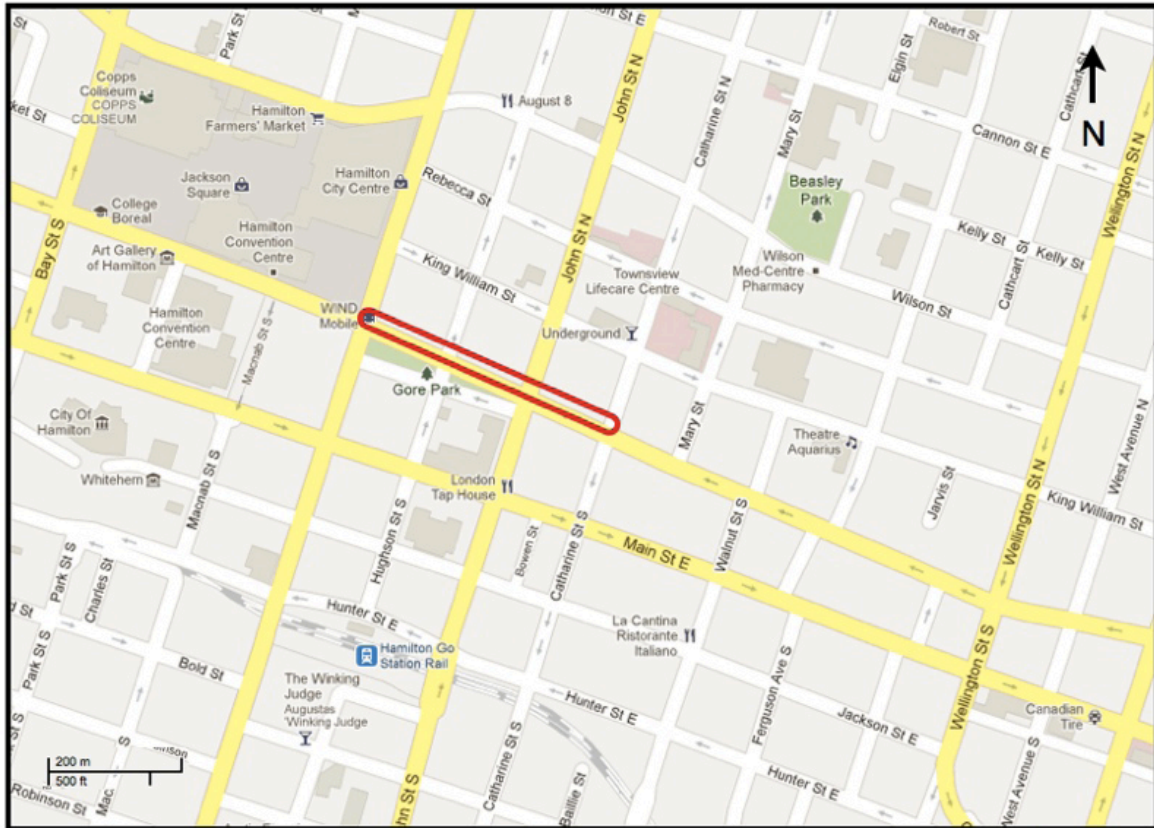


Figure 4.3 Population groups in Beasley relative to City of Hamilton (BNA, 2012)

Hamilton is still experiencing a population growth which, as Canada continues to invite immigrants, is expected to continue for decades. With this population growth, coupled with policies for redevelopment, infill, and conversion to mixed use buildings in the downtown (Behan, Moah, and Kanaraglou, 2008), Hamilton could revitalize in an ethical, sustainable, fashion. Unfortunately, zoning laws and financial incentives for developers still encourage development in the suburbs (Behan, Moah, and Kanaraglou, 2008).

In much of the literature on revitalization of post industrial cities, authors have stressed the importance of having an aesthetically pleasing, pedestrian friendly downtown. They have also stressed the importance of marketing and rebranding of main streets. King Street is the geographic and symbolic centre of Hamilton's downtown. For this main reason, I chose the most central three blocks of King Street as my study area (See Figure 4.4). I argue that these three blocks, also called the 'Gore' section because of their adjacency to Gore Park, are the lynchpin to Hamilton's downtown revitalization efforts.

King Street is one of Hamilton's main through-ways. Along the Gore Park stretch, there are a variety of retail stores, employment services, entertainment venues, and convenience stores. These include a bingo parlour, a bridal store, a hair and aesthetics school, an 'alternative' goods store, an adult cinema, a hip hop retailer, a record store, multiple discount shoe stores, two coffee shops, and others (For details on each building, see Appendix 9). Many of the business owners grew up in Hamilton, and many of them immigrated to Canada. The sidewalks on King Street are full during the day but generally empty at night. They are wide and have trees planted every few



— Area of Study

google.com/maps

Figure 4.4 Map of Study Area (Also in Appendix 1)

meters. There are garbage cans every block, and A-shaped signs advertising for convenience and retail stores every few doorways. The pedestrians along King Street vary in age and dress, but many of them are younger and dressed in shaggy or mismatched outfits. There is a high concentration of pedestrians on this specific stretch of King who tend to stand in large groups. See Figure 4.5 for a view of part of King Street during a slow moment.

When residents of Beasley neighbourhood were asked in 2012 by the Beasley Neighbourhood Association to list the positive and negative traits of the neighbourhood, they were optimistic in their descriptions. Words like “heart of the city, diverse and multi-cultural, walkable, livable,

regenerating, dynamic, creative, rich in assets, good mix of shops/homes/apartments/schools/hospitals/service, and strong sense of community” were all listed by residents with pride. The negative aspects, however, included “empty spaces, vacant buildings, neighbourhood design, traffic and safety issues, perception of crime, social issues, poverty, bad reputation, underrated, abused, neglected, polluted, gritty, underutilized, and self-critical” (BNA, 2012).



Figure 4.5 The study area looking west from Catharine Street, (Author 2012)

Although certain streets were featured in the BNA's most recent Neighbourhood Plan (2012), for whatever reason King Street was not (a member of the BIA with whom I spoke said that it might not be central enough, and too big, to be included). King Street does, however, have many of the traits that are found in Beasley overall. These traits, especially the issues of negative perception, makes King Street generally unwelcoming to suburbanites. A variety of levels of government however, have plans to revitalize King Street and the rest of Hamilton's downtown. The most pertinent plans for the study area, as well as contextual information about Canadian planning practices in general, are discussed in the next section.

4.2 Planning in Canada

In Canadian planning, the central business district (CBD) is an area that is most often singled out for specialized plans. This is because it is recognized as “the key to a community’s vitality, both economically and culturally” (Gordon and Hodge, 2005). It also represents the city’s well-being overall, in terms of aesthetics, land values, investments, and business climate. CBD plans tend to focus on three functions of the downtown core: the “functional arrangement of land use,” “transportation and parking,” and the overall urban design - the “three-dimensional character” of downtown (Gordon and Hodge, 2005). These three themes now guide Canadian downtown provincial and municipal city planning, whose goals now include densifying and diversifying Canada’s urban cores. Planning schemes in Ontario exemplify this broader national approach.

The *Places to Grow* plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the area that comprises the west side of Lake Ontario, was created to coordinate the predicted population and economic growth for the area. It was prepared under the Places to Grow Act of 2005, and frames an implementation of the Government of Ontario’s goals for the area, including “vibrant, diversified communities and economies, new and expanded community services, and arts, culture, and recreation facilities” (Places to Grow, 2006). It includes guidelines for “transportation, infrastructure planning, land-use planning, urban form, housing, natural heritage and resource protection - in the interest of promoting economic prosperity” (Places to Grow, 2006). It was created to work with other provincial and municipal plans, including the Greenbelt Plan, the Planning Act reform and the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement, and is meant to represent a “shared vision” amongst the municipal governments, their residents, and the Government of Ontario.

The Golden Horseshoe already has a booming economy. It supports over eight million people and a wide range of manufacturing industries, financial services, hospitality and tourism industries, education and research hubs, life sciences research, information services, and agricultural areas. It encourages its knowledge industries with research and design. The Golden Horseshoe accounts for more than half of Ontario's GDP (Places to Grow, 2006), has a highly educated workforce and includes naturally beautiful "heritage features" and agricultural areas, which are protected by strategies like the Greenbelt Plan. Culturally, the plan states, the Golden Horseshoe has enough of the "kinds of creative and recreational activities that attract knowledge workers" (Places to Grow, 2006).

As a massive urban region, though, the Golden Horseshoe suffers from severe traffic congestion. Because the residential development in it tends to sprawl, public transit has been difficult to effectively implement. There are still zoning challenges; new infrastructure is still being built in low-density areas, leaving higher-density areas underutilized and threatening the surrounding natural and agricultural lands and their ecosystems (Places to Grow, 2006).

To mitigate these repercussions of urban development and to continue to stimulate economic activity, the Places to Grow plan includes a set of guiding principles. Their goals include building compact, vibrant and "complete communities," protecting and enhancing natural resources, and densifying the area (Places to Grow, 2006).

Hamilton's downtown has been designated as an urban growth centre under this plan, by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, in consultation with Hamilton City Hall. Urban growth centres in this plan are focal areas for investment, including commercial, recreational, cultural, and entertainment institutions and services. They will accommodate "major" transit infrastructure and serve as "high density employment centres that will attract provincially, nationally or internationally significant employment uses" (Places to Grow, 2006). The centres are planned to grow in overall population and in density. By 2031 or earlier, Hamilton is targeted to achieve a density of "200 residents and jobs combined per hectare" (Places to Grow, 2006). If it succeeds, their target will increase - their goal is to achieve the highest density possible, to reduce automobile dependency and increase public transit use, economic competitiveness, mixed land-use, and other characteristics of "whole communities" (Places to Grow, 2006).

Whole, or complete, communities provide places to live, work, shop, and play for residents of all stages of life. They are meant to cure cities of the problems caused by overly separated urban activities. Since World War II, zoning laws have over-separated homes from shopping malls, schools and jobs. Complete communities mix building and transportation types in a dense web of activity to combat this (Places to Grow, 2006). Downtown Hamilton is working in that direction.

Hamilton's Regional Chairman's Task Force on Sustainable Development was created in 1989. This group headed hearings for citizen participation and recommendations until 1992, when VISION 2020, the original planning guide for Hamilton's sustainable development, was adopted

by the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Council. VISION 2020's step-by-step indicators were measured using Sustainability Indicators Report Cards.

The Sustainability Indicators Process, started in 1994, measured issues such as local economic strength, natural areas health, arts and heritage, air quality, and community well-being and capacity building, based on rate of improvement: three stars for "making progress," two stars for "hard to say," and one star for "needs improvement" (See Figure 4.6). The Sustainable Communities Decision Making Guide and the annual sustainability indicators reports published between 1995 and 2008 explained the status of the city on each issue. 1994 was also the year that Environment Canada awarded VISION 2020 with an environmental achievement award.

In 1995, the New Regional Official Plan was adopted by the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth (before the city amalgamated with the larger area suburbs in 2001). This plan incorporated VISION 2020's tactics and goals, which were separated into fourteen indicators: local economy, agriculture and the rural economy, natural areas and corridors, improving the quality of water resources, reducing and managing waste, consuming less energy, improving air quality, changing our mode of transportation, land use in the urban area, arts and heritage, personal health and well-being, safety and security, education, and community well-being and capacity building (City of Hamilton, 2012). Their goal: to make Hamilton "sustainable" - "a place where economic, environmental and social issues are jointly considered as we make decisions" (City of Hamilton, 2012). Although the report did not say anything about attracting

creative industries or talented workers, their attention to quality of environment, arts and heritage, and services mirrors that of the Creative Class thesis.

VISION 2020 INDICATORS REPORT CARD 2008			
	2003	2004	2008
LOCAL ECONOMY			
Rate of Participation in the Labour Force	★★	★★★	★★★★
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL ECONOMY			
Number of Hectares of Agricultural Land Lost due to Official Plan Amendments	★	★★★	★
NATURAL AREAS AND CORRIDORS			
Cumulative Area of Significant Natural Areas Protected	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF WATER RESOURCES			
Total Loading of Ammonia in Hamilton Harbour	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Total Loading of Phosphorous in to Hamilton Harbour	★★★	★★★★	★★
Total Water Consumption for All Uses	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Number of "All Beaches Open for Swimming" Days	★	★★	★★★★
REDUCING AND MANAGING WASTE			
All Solid Waste Generated	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
CONSUMING LESS ENERGY			
Average Residential Electricity Consumption	★★	★★★★	★
IMPROVING AIR QUALITY			
Ground Level Ozone criteria (O ₃) hours Exceeding 50 ppb	★	★	★
Annual Average Sulphur Dioxide (SO ₂) Concentration	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Annual Average Nitrogen Dioxide (NO ₂) Concentration	★	★	★★
Annual Average Inhalable Particulate matter (PM ₁₀) Concentration	★	★★	★★
Annual Average Respirable Particulate Matter (PM _{2.5}) Concentration	N/A	★	★★
Hospitalization Rate for Respiratory Illness per 100,000 People	★★	★★★★	★★
CHANGING OUR MODE OF TRANSPORTATION			
Transit Ridership Per Capita	★	★	★
Number of Cars Per Capita	★	★	★
LAND USE IN THE URBAN AREA			
Number of Residential Units with Permits in the Downtown Core Area	★★★	★★	★★
ARTS AND HERITAGE			
Number of Visits to Historic Sites, Arts Venues and Museums Per Capita	★★	★★★★	★★
PERSONAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING			
Number of Low Birth Weight Babies Born Per 1000 Live Births	★★	★★	★★
Hospitalization Rate for Falls by Persons 65+ Years	★	★	★
Rate of Mortality due to Heart Disease	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
SAFETY AND SECURITY			
Number of Robberies	★	★	★
Number of Pedestrians and Cyclists Injured by Motor Vehicles	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
EDUCATION			
Number of Adult Education High School Equivalency Diplomas Granted	★★	★	★★★★
Percentage of Grade 3 Students Performing at Levels 3 and 4	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
COMMUNITY WELL-BEING AND CAPACITY BUILDING			
Number of Community Contacts at Volunteer Hamilton	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Shelter Occupancy Rate "On Any Given Night" in November	★	★	★★

★★★★ - "Making Progress" - 12 Indicators, ★★★ - "Hard to Say" - 9 Indicators, ★ - "Needs Improvement" - 7 Indicators

Figure 4.6 Vision 2020 Indicators Report Card for Hamilton-Wentworth 1994-2008

4.3 King Street's Revitalization

Unfortunately, downtown Hamilton is still a long way from realizing the vision portrayed by provincial and municipal plans for the area. In a small report called *Unresolved Issues in Downtown Hamilton* (2003), the City found, after interviewing Hamilton residents, that downtown's most important problem was that it was generally perceived to be unsafe and unclean (Downtown Revitalization Task Force 2003). Hamilton's immediate downtown is still not currently hospitable to a wide variety of newcomers. The businesses that line downtown King Street between James and Catharine - the thrift stores, payday loan shops, pawn shops, the bingo parlour, and an adult entertainment cinema - invite a highly limited clientele to their front doors. And Hamilton's downtown revitalization is vital for a number of the city's goals. King Street is one of the first places that newcomers see when they enter the city via transit. The main hotels are located on King Street half a block in each direction from Gore Park. Tourists unfamiliar with the city logically visit downtown first. Potential investors must drive past this location before getting to James Street North, one of Hamilton's successfully developing streets. In order to succeed in re-branding downtown Hamilton as a good place to live and invest, the conditions of King Street must be attended to for these and many other reasons.

Attracting economically and environmentally sustainable businesses to Hamilton is a tricky business, but King Street seems to be well positioned for a revitalization. James North, which runs perpendicular to King, has already begun sprouting boutiques and new businesses, and Gore Park was retrofitted as a pedestrian plaza in the summer of 2012. Plans for the King Street, it

seems, are already laid. The question though, is will they succeed, and what are the consequences for business owners if they do?



Figure 4.7 In front of the Bingo Hall on King Street, (Author, 2012)

Chapter 5: Results

The following chapter discusses local plans for the area and the results from interviews with city officials (CO's) and business owners (BO's) along King Street downtown. It also summarizes the official municipal plans and organizations that most affect the street's revitalization potential. The original goals of this study were to find out what the city officials and business owners expected for the area, and ask them if that vision aligned with what each party wanted.

Three groups of people were interviewed for this study: city officials, business owners, and key informants. The latter served to inform the study, help identify official participants, and provide ongoing guidance during the project. None of their views are mentioned here. The interviews with city officials reached saturation very quickly. The participants referred to the same documents, and gave consistent information about what the City was trying to accomplish in the

area. After only four interviews with city officials, the information I was receiving had started to overlap.

Of the 33 businesses in the study area, 11 business owners agreed to an interview. These included owners and managers of a thrift store, a record shop, two fast food establishments, a hair supplies store, a hair school, a money lender, a pharmacy, a Bingo parlour, and a cannabis culture/alternative store. Their businesses have been located on King Street for anywhere between 5 and 59 years. Eight of the 11 stores, though, have been there for longer than 17 years, and three of them have been here longer than 30 years.

5.2 Municipal Plans for King Street Downtown

The following municipal plans were all mentioned in interviews with representatives from the Economic Development department, the Landscape Architecture department, the Planning department, and the Business Improvement Area organization. At the municipal level, these are the plans that affect King Street the most, from most geographically comprehensive to most detailed and geographically specific.

The Hamilton-Wentworth Official Plan was originally published in 2003 and is approved, but currently but under revision. The plan focuses on a number of goals, including creating a sustainable region with “compact urban cores, surrounded by a rural landscape,” and implementing Vision 2020, described in the previous chapter (Hamilton-Wentworth Official Plan, 2003). In this plan, there are a number of components that directly or indirectly relate to

King Street's potential revitalization. In the Economic Action section, for instance, it explicitly states that the city wants to "improv[e] the quality of life" in the area "to enhance the image of Hamilton-Wentworth" - a strategy consistent with the Creative Capital thesis (Hamilton-Wentworth Official Plan, 2003). It also requires that "municipal regulations contain requirements for "safe planning" design criteria, such as appropriate lighting, visibility and other safety features," and "provide responsible police protection, consistent with the needs of the citizens in the Region" (Hamilton-Wentworth Official Plan, 2003).

The Downtown Secondary Plan, city officials say, "drives everything else." It was originally published in 2001, but a revised 2006 version is online. Although currently under review to better represent the new "provincial information for direction on land use and density," which must match the urban official plan's density guidelines, this plan is the go-to for downtown development policies (Putting People First, 2006).

The Secondary Plan is also called "Putting People First: The New Land Use Plan for Downtown Hamilton." Its principles include: (1) Using public realm improvement as the catalyst for revitalization, (2) strengthening the connection to neighbourhoods, the waterfront, the escarpment and other surrounding features or attractions, and (3) making downtown living attractive. Its goals include, among others, establishing a "defined and more compact Central Business District within the downtown" (Putting People First, 2006).

Most of the same themes run through this Secondary Plan as in the interviews with city officials. These include improving the “linkages between downtown and surrounding residential areas through the development of vacant properties;” creating “a diversified housing supply in the downtown geared to the needs of various age groups with increased opportunities for home ownership;” providing and maintaining “neighbourhood services such as local shopping area [sic], community centres, parks, and open spaces and educational facilities in and adjacent to Downtown residential areas” (Putting People First, 2006). It also actively promotes “retail areas geared to the needs of residents in the downtown and adjacent neighbourhoods,” but does not specify whether it will cater to the residents who live downtown now, or the types of residents that the municipality is hoping for in future years.



Figure 5.1 Gore Park, post-renovation (Author, 2012)

There is also a Gore Park Master Plan for the south side of King Street and, as a BIA representative told me, I could not write about the north side of King Street without including this project in the conversation. The interviews were finished before this project became a reality in July of 2012, but it has since been completed with positive results. The city's goals for this area are to make the street south of Gore Park a pedestrian area, with emergency vehicle access only. They want it to be a place where pedestrians can pleasantly stroll and enjoy cafés and street life.

One participant mentioned that this project might be implemented in conjunction with the renovation of the Royal Connaught Hotel, but they only hinted at it. "The intent for Gore Park is to have it be a prime commercial, prime retail street," said another city official. This would allow for offices, commercial, and residential use, and a medium density. In one interview, a city official participant also mentioned that the Gore Park Master Plan was a "pilot project," and that if it was successful, the City would consider doing the same thing at other sites around downtown.

Another plan is currently being carried out by Public Works, who first conducted studies on walking through downtown. This Pedestrian Master Plan, once it is done, will also "provide guidelines and tools for any development in that area to take place," said one city official. The goal is to have a "walkable, livable city," said another. This plan is in conjunction with the Transportation Master Plan, and seeks to provide these things to pedestrians on specific streets all over the downtown.

The Transportation Master Plan was produced at the same time as the Secondary Plan, in 2001, but was reassessed in 2008. It includes turning one-way streets back to two-way streets, introducing bicycle lanes, and “creating a spot for cars, for transit, for cyclists,” and for pedestrians (CO). At the time of the interviews, about three major streets had already been transformed. Implementing two way streets and bicycle lanes was hard, one participant said, because “people have been ingrained in a certain way,” but now, they said, the streets they have changed are proving to be successful.

The most important subject to participants on both sides regarding the Transportation Master Plan is the prospect of having Light Rail Transit run along King Street. This massive project is planned for the city but is currently stalled for lack of funding. While some city officials are more hesitant about whether or not it will happen, two spoke as if it was just a matter of time: “Ultimately, you know that King Street has been designated as the route for LRT, right?” one asked me, “so, eventually, once LRT starts to be implemented all the way from East Gate Square right through to McMaster, they are going to be siphoning off traffic until it reaches Walnut. And Walnut is over here, so by the time they reach Walnut, there will be no traffic between Walnut and Mary street. So that’s all going to be pedestrianized, and traffic will continue up and go back on Mary or Catharine - because they can’t cut off access to the Crown Plaza, the hotel, right?” (CO).

Some city officials have big hopes for this plan. “Eventually, [King Street] will be two-way LRT traffic with one lane of [vehicle] traffic going this way and more than one lane of [vehicle] traffic

going down Main Street. So, eventually the traffic will be reduced on King Street, but you're going to have LRT vehicles that can hold three or four times the amount that a car could go through there, so there's going to be more visibility for the businesses... and the stops are going to be critical" (CO).

The LRT plans came up a lot in interviews with business owners as well, and are a source of much debate around the Hamilton area. City politicians are, however, still studying the cost-benefit analyses at the time of the interviews.

Apart from its involvement in the design and implementation of formal plans, the City has also participated in establishing organisations that promote dialogue and involvement with local businesses. These include the Downtown Renewal Group (DRG) and the Business Improvement Area (BIA). The DRG was originally headed by Ron Marini, a respected and now retired planner in Hamilton, who championed and developed policies and programs to "help business people to improve their businesses and also help work with the city" (CO). "Some of those programs included facade improvement, loans or grants," one CO participant explained, "and [Marini] also tried to work with different investors to try to marry up people with vacant properties."

These programs lapsed over time, but have recently been revived, and the downtown renewal office is now "providing an incentive for property owners all around Gore Park to the tune of fifty thousand dollars [as a grant] that will help to improve the facades" (CO). Because it will only be available for the next three years, the City hopes that it will speed up the process of

facade renewal along that stretch. The city and the BIA are trying to encourage property owners to take advantage of this “if they need windows, new signage, new lighting, of new facade improvements” (CO). “Hopefully,” one participant said, “if some people take advantage of this, it will change the look of downtown. Because what we have now is a mish-mash of signage and lighting that dates back to the twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, and so on, and so what we’re hoping to do is provide a cleaner, more efficient, but more interesting look for the unique businesses that are along that stretch of King Street” (CO).

A longer-lasting and more significant initiative is the Downtown Business Improvement Area. As noted in the Main Street approach, BIAs are important to revitalizing downtown main streets, and King Street has a very active one, with an annual budget of about \$180,000. As well as publishing a newsletter four times a year, the downtown BIA throws and promotes events to get people downtown, and works closely with many organizations like the Theatre Aquarius, Hamilton Place, HECFI, Tourism Hamilton, other BIAs, the police department, and some of the city departments like parking, traffic and public works. They also partner with other organizations like the Art Gallery of Hamilton and the YMCA to share resources and build relationships within downtown.

One of the BIAs main goals, identified in collaboration with local business owners and which aligns with city plans, is to create a “pedestrian-friendly outdoor shopping environment along King Street” (CO). They hope to “promote downtown to the suburban community to come down” (CO). Along with events, this downtown BIA runs a clean-up program in the summer by

hiring students to clean graffiti, pick up cigarette butts, and distribute tourist literature and information about downtown businesses to people at the promenade and the farmer's market. The BIA is also on the front lines for business owner and city official communications. Its newsletter is distributed four times a year. Unfortunately, though, two business owners said that most of the time it was too long to read.

5.3 City Officials' Perceptions

The city manager, landscape architect, BIA representative, and planners reflected the municipal plans' assertion that the study area - the Gore section of King Street between James Street and Catharine Street - is a key, "priority area" to the revitalization of downtown Hamilton. Because Gore Park is such a "cultural heritage landscape," one said, the downtown should "radiate out and have connections through this area to the waterfront and to the escarpment" (CO). Another called downtown the "heart and soul of the community" (CO). Because Gore Park was "one of the first public spaces in Canada," because of its central location to the original town site of Hamilton, and because it has always been the "place where people have come to rally [or] to celebrate, it merits close attention," they said. It is partly for these reasons that a light rail transit system is planned for King Street, and why the Gore area has been an important litmus testing site for pilot projects like the urban braille system (see Figure 5.2), a new street lighting system, and a pedestrian promenade. "The city has always designated our downtown as our employment growth sector... similar to an industrial park" said one city official. The following section of this chapter explores how city officials and business owners perceive the success of and possibilities for this important area.

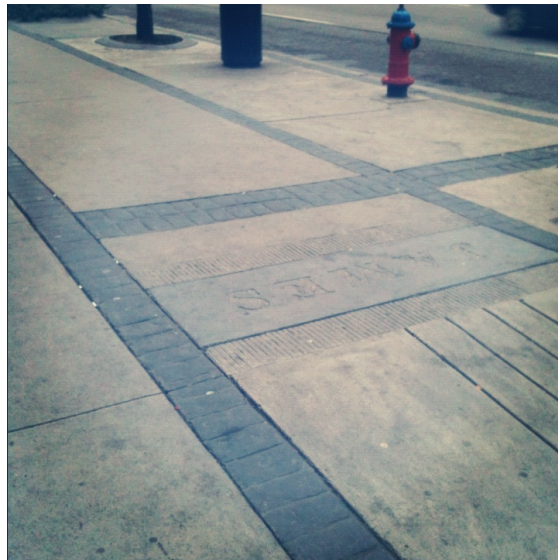


Figure 5.2 King Street's Urban Braille (Author, 2012)

City officials described an incremental but definite improvement along King Street over the last ten years. Since 2002, they said, there has been significant improvement in the downtown. “Ten years ago, we hit the bottom of our employment downtown... [This created] serious problems for the retail stores, and [we] started seeing the bigger ones closing. So we lost, you know, the two department stores downtown. It then became desperation for the landlords, and so they ended up taking less than ideal...tenants” (CO). Similar views were expressed by the other city officials interviewed.

City officials were more likely than business owners to narrate a social, as opposed to physical, change in the downtown. In the last ten years, one said, there has been an “influx of the disenfranchised and the unemployed. Not that it's ... not that they don't have a right to be there, they absolutely do, but the perception is that the downtown had become unsafe because of their presence. The panhandlers, a lot of people don't want to deal with that or view it as unsafe,

which I don't agree with but they do. And so people stopped coming downtown, and that exacerbates the whole problem over and over again. So fewer people downtown, more stores suffer, less maintenance gets done, less upkeep, less quality of tenants in there. And it's a vicious circle. Where do you stop that cycle? Which is where we're at now" (CO).

The city officials found poverty to be a massive issue, and mentioned it openly in discussion about businesses along King Street, and prospects for their revitalization. Not only are there fewer people, one city official explained, but "somebody you wouldn't have noticed [before] you notice now because there [are] fewer people and there [are] more of those people there, so the dilution factor's gone away. You see more people who are 'street engaged' right? They might not be homeless, but they're barely surviving, they're probably not fully employed. There are more people with mental health issues, and... by helping them we help everybody downtown" (CO).

When the issue of safety along King Street arose in interviews, city officials were quick to cite the numerous ways that an increased police presence in the downtown had improved the area overall. "We have a very close relationship with the police department," said one city official. ACTION is a local police initiative. It stand for "Addressing Crime Trends in Our Neighbourhoods." It now "has about forty officers, both on foot and on bike and in cruisers that are dedicated to the downtown. And that's not including... five others that are on horse...and they have transformed downtown Hamilton in the last three years of operation" (CO). The city officials considered this program enormously successful.



Figure 5.3 The Pagoda Building on King Street, (Author 2012)

City officials had little to say about drug use in the downtown. One participant expressed regret that the methadone clinic was placed near King Street, and even questioned the methadone treatment's effectiveness as a cure. The issue seems to be perceived as a police and services issue more than an urban planning one. City officials seem to focus on poverty more than drug use in their approach to revitalizing the downtown core.

The physical changes that city officials noticed within the study area were the removal of the bus terminal and the redevelopment of a few buildings. Some tried to go further back than ten years, citing changes in the street lighting or the sidewalk 'urban braille' system. "There has been a lot of transformation," one said, "it's not like this city has been idle; it's been very proactive in changing" (CO). The city has rebuilt streets, or 'street-scaped' in the downtown in the last ten years, for the benefit of pedestrians. They have introduced benches, trees, signage, and public art. They have also put in 'gateways,' including the downtown Hamilton sign and the Hess Village sign.

One participant did note a physical change in the buildings themselves. Since 2002, they said, the Gore building (a five-storey, mixed use, mostly residential building) has been built next to the Pizza Pizza, for student housing. The Pagoda building (a three-storey commercial brick building, see Figure 5.3), too, is currently under renovation. Also, some adult entertainment clubs have closed down.

According to city officials, one of the biggest barriers to Hamilton's revitalization is the lack of quality residential space in the city's core. Buildings in the study area are, for the most part, dilapidated, if only on their upper floors. Unfortunately, two city officials explained, the building owners are sometimes "absentee landlords" who have "long since paid off their mortgage" and are quite happily getting what they do in rent. Fixing up buildings, upper floors, and façades, city officials are hoping, will come in time thanks to what they call "peer pressure;" once enough building owners start to renovate, more of them will feel inclined to work on their own buildings. This is the idea behind the Department of Economic Development's grant programs to redo building facades and to "repopulate the upper floors" (CO). The facade program, introduced in January 2012, had had three applications from along the Gore section of King Street by the time I spoke with a city official from that department three months later.

There have been challenges, city officials said. For instance, one of the hardest parts of downtown's revitalization was getting financing. "There's been difficulty with some of the major lending institutions [not] wanting to finance in Hamilton. I don't know why, it's just hearsay, but there had been many good projects who [sic] have come but who have fallen by the wayside

partly because they couldn't secure financing," said one city official. This is an interesting observation, because banks do play a significant role in commercial development. Typically, they will not lend to commercial land owners unless they have class A tenants (major brands). This phenomenon of "soft redlining" has also been documented in the local Hamilton Spectator newspaper (McGreal, 2012).

In light of the downtown's challenges, I asked city officials what they expect for King Street downtown in the next ten years. Only good things, they said: job growth, the "rebirth" of buildings, retail businesses "moving up the buying cycle," more efficient use of building space, more creative industries, more schools, more competition..." (CO). It is an alternative to Toronto now, they say, and it is more affordable. This affordability, and Hamilton's rising art scene, they think, give the city a competitive edge.

One city official gave me their ideal for the street: "my vision in the next ten years is the Bingo Halls gone, all the signs are removed, and there's lots of ground floor commercial, thriving businesses, and office and residential upper. Possibly student residences there... A lot of change has to happen" (CO). They added, laughing, "but expect and hope are two very different things" (CO).

Another city official said that their goal was to have a "pedestrian-friendly, outdoor shopping environment" along King Street. "Anything that you would find in a normal downtown... I don't know... it's silly but they say like, a Lululemon... will locate [to revitalized areas], and Starbucks,

but why not, you know? They don't do big box stores, but like little stores, I think that attracts a certain type of niche" (CO).

These are just their ideal visions, but the officials are slowly working towards it. They can only work within their realm, they say, but the projects they can do may have a positive, lasting impact: "I do think Gore Park is a really fascinating area, and I think it will change in the next ten years, just from the type of developments we are seeing in the downtown, and I think it will be positive, and I think what the driving factor hopefully will be [is] the park. And with rapid transit as well, I think that type of stuff will start getting people thinking" (CO).

As a city, "we are trying to improve the public realm so that it makes it more inviting and enticing for the private sector to come in. You can't force somebody to do something so you work on a set of influences... To improve the investment climate, it requires a lot of factors... There really has to be about a ten or a twelve point plan of attack, and you have to do it all.



Figure 5.4 The Thrift Store on King Street, (Author 2012)

Street-scaping is just one factor” (CO). Other factors, they say, include events planning, incentive programs, general maintenance and upkeep, building restoration, and good street lighting (CO). As one city official put it, “it’s all tiny things... you can’t put your finger on one particular bullet that’s going to be the savior of downtown Hamilton” (CO). This philosophy aligns well with the Main Street approach, which advocates practical and methodical attention to building upkeep and aesthetics.

I asked the city officials if they were concerned about a potential displacement of businesses that are on King Street now. In response, they said they not only expected a shift, but hoped for it. “Think of it as evolution,” said one city official. “Somebody who’s in there now and struggling, being replaced by somebody who has a better product offering what people want. For some people, it’s a blessing; “thank God, somebody came along and got me out of here” (CO). It is worth mentioning that other city officials would not support this view - displacement could not, they thought, be so white-washed.

Throughout the interview process, there were certain businesses that were repeatedly mentioned by both the city officials and the business owners. The Bingo hall, along with a few other businesses, was listed by a city official as an undesirable business to have in the heart of downtown. “Is that really the right place in the city’s primary street?,” they asked. “This should be our pride... these three blocks that we’re looking at, and we have a Bingo hall occupying the major store front street. Is that appropriate? Well, you can understand the landlord” (CO).

Another city official bemoaned how much parking customers at the Bingo Hall took up in the downtown. “I find too that a big stretch of that section is the Bingo hall, and the Bingo Hall attracts a lot of people to come downtown. They use up a lot of consumer goods; that’s why a lot of the variety stores are here, a lot of the cheque cashing type businesses. You also have a lot of those people [either] taking the bus, which is why it’s so centrally located: it’s on all of the major bus routes, or taking up parking meters” (CO). They went on: “We have a Salvation Army thrift store now. Is that appropriate? We have a peep show. The peep show was there longer than ten years though, but, what’s changing there is there’s more and more resistance to it and we will eventually get it out” (CO).

Money Mart, a pay-day loan company with very high interest rates, has expanded its operations in downtown Hamilton. “We have seen more Money Marts [in the last ten years]. There are more downtown than ever before. Even in the last couple years, we had one open this year. Why do we



Figure 5.5 Money Mart on King Street, (Author 2012)

have so many of them within a three block area? There must be six downtown” (CO). Another city official did not like the Money Mart sign on King Street, and said they were actively trying to get it removed (CO) (See Figure 5.5).

Despite their distaste for money mart, one city official saw the business's necessity: “People need loans, so what does that say? And these are regular working folks right? I don't know if people realize, to get one of those loans, you have to have a job. So these are not bums and unemployed. These are people who are trying to make ends meet and just can't get to their paycheck and unfortunately, I view it as, victimized by having to pay these higher fees to get their money. Why aren't the banks stepping up with this kind of product is my question, at more of a debt rate? It's their customers. All these people bank elsewhere, every single one of them has to have a bank. And yet when they get cut short a hundred bucks to make their pay day, they have to go to someone who is going to take ten or twenty of that hundred to get them there” (CO).

City Officials who I interviewed had very little to do with the business owners downtown, even though their work somewhat affected the business owners' livelihoods. They did, however, acknowledge the teams and departments who worked with business owners in the downtown the most. Also, often representatives from the business community would sit in on committees and meetings. “We're always communicating with them,” said one city official, “and that's how we find out the problems” (CO).

Much of that communication, however, flows the other way, in the form of informing business owners about what is going to happen in their area. “Everything we do has an effect on an individual and that individual has an opinion, so working with or managing the information or the expectations of individuals is a constant for us” (CO).

If there is a shift in retailers in the downtown, what kind of businesses might replace those who are there, I asked. “More restaurants, I see more sidewalk cafés, coffee shops. I know a couple of major chains that are circling around, and these are, you know, the big names in coffee, that are trying to make a decision whether they’ll open up downtown” (CO). This is unsurprising - coffee shops are often the first type of business to locate in newly revitalizing areas - as can be seen along James North and South. Major chains, although perhaps not the present for the beginning processes, are considered indicators of an economic upswing.



Figure 5.6 The new MacNab terminal (Author, 2012)

5.4 Business Owners' Perceptions

City officials tended to be more optimistic about changes in the area than business owners. According to this group, the study area seems to have changed the most significantly over the last decade only in the last year, when the bus stops were moved from that stretch to the new MacNab terminal, one and a half blocks west. This could be because business owners might have a shorter time horizon, or because they may have considered more physical than social changes. One participant said that the amount of customers they had had declined because of the bus terminal move (See Figure 5.6). Although no convenience store owners were interviewed, two other participants expressed concern for how the new bus terminal would affect the six convenience stores along this three block strip.

Three businesses also said that although the street has changed little in the last ten years, that it has changed drastically since the 1970's. This was obvious, they thought, because the Connaught Hotel would not have closed if downtown was still as busy as before. Another reminisced: "this area used to be packed. There was a cheese shop and a wine shop and Wendy's and a McDonald's" (BO). One participant said that as a ten year old in the seventies, he used to come downtown alone with a dime, but would never let a child do that now. Another said "it's gotten worse since ten years ago, but if you compare it to the last 30 years, it's much, much worse" (BO).

One participant used Jackson Square as their marker, saying that before they built the mall, "Hamilton used to be really nice" (BO) (See Figure 5.7). They thought the mall had hurt the

Right House, the Birks, and other “really nice bakeries and restaurants” that used to be downtown. “Once their leases were up,” he said, “[those businesses] moved out - they either went up to a big mall or they just didn’t retain the downtown area” (BO). He thought that although the downtown had slightly improved in the last ten years that it might never “come back.”



Figure 5.7 Jackson Square, (Author, 2012)

Three business owners who had noticed changes in the last ten years thought that the street had improved. They credited the city and the police force for cleaning up “some of the people on the streets that weren’t desirable” by installing street cameras and by being present on the sidewalk. “I think the city has been doing some good work downtown,” one business owner said, “I’d give ‘em an A+ for the effort they’ve put in to downtown and what they’re trying to do to the area” (BO). Two business owners, however, were significantly concerned with the methadone clinic that was near their store, and said that the street had declined because of it. “That’s hurting a lot of our business because you can see a lot of like you know, too much louder, they’re violent

people around with too much dogs. You know, they are shouting a lot, they gather people together, it scares” (BO).

One business owner, when asked about how the street had changed in the last ten years, said that it was worse than before. He was, however, jaded overall about the state of the downtown and the workings of the city. “Whenever you have public transit,” he explained, “you’re going to have a poor population. Ancaster and on the mountain doesn’t have that public transit, and they have more affluent people out there... The tax base from the steel industry has been demolished. As a result, there has been a downward spiral in the downtown core. And there have been some really bad decisions by city council - there was going to be a Walmart downtown, but instead they allowed the Bingo hall there, which isn’t a good thing for the downtown. There has to be something to draw people to the downtown” (BO).

Two business owners said that their clientele had not changed in the last ten years. One fast food shop said that their business had declined since the strip club near them closed down. Two others said that their clientele had diminished or changed because their store or industry had evolved, not because of the change in the street.

One of the first interview questions I asked business owners was “is King Street the best place for your business?” Out of the eleven business owners, all but one said yes. They attributed their success to the centrality of the area and to good transit, and felt that their businesses catered to the types of people that lived close by. Only one business was moving, and they were locating

only two blocks east of their current location. Another business owner thought the mountain might be a better location, but that for the mean time, their current location was satisfactory.

Overall, although most business owners thought that the city was making ample efforts to revitalize the downtown, many saw major room for improvement. A number of common themes arose from the interviews regarding what could be done in the area. These included issues of parking, policing and safety, drug use, violence, and visible poverty.

Parking was mentioned as a concern for at least half of the business owners. The biggest issue was a lack of loading spots for their businesses, or that loading spots were abused by other types of drivers. Of all things that two interviewees wanted changed about downtown, loading zones were the most important. “We’ve already talked to the BIA copious amounts of times about putting a loading zone spot right here beside our store because our delivery guys are getting tickets all the time, and the BIA even said that they were going to do it for us, and nothing happened... there’s a loading zone a block that way and two blocks that way and that’s not helpful. Cause there’s thirty businesses in between, right?” (BO).

Lack of parking is a drawback of the location, one participant agreed, because customers cannot get to them as easily. Free parking would help, another said, along with two-way streets, because they “make people stop and shop” (BO).

One participant could not get access to their loading zone because it was located near the methadone clinic, where drivers would let patients out and then sit in loading zones in their cars waiting for the treatment to be over; “they sit there, they drink the beer, they party in the car or on the street... and they block our parking plus they block the loading/unloading zone too so if our stuff is coming we have a really hard time of it” (BO). But another said that parking in general on King Street really was not that big of an issue. “If you have a business that people want to frequent,” he said, “people will find a way to get to it” (BO).

The secondary plan does not allow for any more parking lots to be developed. When prompted, one city official said “King street was one area where some of the parking areas were removed to create pedestrian amenities, and that always becomes a debate: Who’s street is it? Are you catering to the car, where you provide parking in front of a shop owner, or do you remove three spaces of car parking and create a boulevard with some flowers so that you create a more attractive experience for the pedestrian. So we always have to navigate those challenges” (CO).

Policing was one subject that generated mostly positive responses, with some concerns. Some business owners demonstrated empathy for the police force, explaining that although they would like more surveillance, they understood why it was not possible. Overall, they had respect for the police force, even though they wished more could be done about petty crime. “Police, they are around, but they can’t monitor the area twenty four hours. In downtown, we need some sort of monitoring twenty four hours. Police inside the park. I mentioned this for so many years, anybody ask me, we need a little booth inside the park, then you don’t see... the downtown would be nice and clean” (BO). Another participant thought (perhaps unfairly) that the police

would not monitor the area at night because “the police are afraid to come there during that time” (BO). “It’s kinda hard because that’s a lot of police work that has to happen, but they do walk the beat and they do drive,” another noted, before complaining: “and they see people sitting around, they should remove them really, because it doesn’t look nice” (BO).

Other business owners criticized the police force for not being present when they were needed, or for their ineffective methods of dealing with loiterers. “There are waves of police,” one business owner commented. He was concerned especially with people who come in to beg for change inside his building, in which case, he says, he has to involve the police. Another owner bemoaned the “human rights laws made in 1983/84” that made it impossible to tell certain people, especially “the derelicts,” to leave public areas. He was not the only person who thought the police should be doing more - or have more authority - to move certain types of people off the sidewalks. “The street kids that hang out here, I think it’s inappropriate for business,” said another, “they sit in front of the business. I understand there’s circumstances, but there is places for them to go to have a meal or to sleep, the Good Shepherd and stuff like that.” (BO).

Shoplifting was an issue for some business owners, but they said that there was not much anyone could do about it. Shoplifting had always been an issue, one said. When he catches people, the perpetrators usually just give the goods back. Vandalism, he says, is much harder to deal with. “One time someone they break my window, a pedestrian saw them, and they went to some party, drinking. But the police say he can’t do much because he did not see. Because people have rights, and then they have to be proven guilty, it’s a long process. And they can’t spend time to deal with these small things” (BO).

To mitigate against theft, some stores have cameras, but one business owner said they were often useless because there was little they could do with the information. Another business has cameras that they consider helpful, but they do not hire anybody who might be uncomfortable being in the store by themselves, and they keep a baseball bat behind the counter. They mitigate against theft by keeping most of their goods behind a long counter. Although they felt safe inside the store, they thought that the cameras on the street were insufficient: "Matters of safety I think it's more outside on the streets, like I got jumped at three o'clock in the afternoon in the middle of daytime, so... I think it's a big concern for safety down here... People aren't going to want to come down here when they're hearing about things like that on the news and they don't feel safe to come down here and shop. That's probably going to affect everybody's business if safety isn't controlled" (BO).

Overall, business owners agreed that police presence had improved over the last ten years. Security concerns included, however, street harassment, drug dealing, and the previously mentioned 'street people' and shoplifting. Business owners felt that 'street people,' especially, negatively impacted the reputation of the downtown: "There should be no standing around on the public property, you know, public sidewalk. Do your business, and carry on. Why are you hanging down here smoking drugs or doing whatever they are doing? Panhandling, everything, you know what I mean? It shouldn't be allowed" (BO).

The issue, of course, is that loiterers deter customers. Customers "always complain," one owner said. "Always complaining about the people around. The good people doesn't like to come, the kids, like you know teenagers. It's so hard, you can see a lot going on and so..." (BO). Another

was worried that it looked bad for people to be on the street: "People are a little intimidated by a bunch of young guys just hanging outside, smoking. They get a bit noisy. They don't usually hang out in front of my door, cause they know me, but it's just, maybe, it's not good to have people loitering just for the sake of loitering. It tends to attract sometimes the wrong types of elements and problems. I mean it's not a park, it's a sidewalk" (BO). This is a well-known problem in the downtown. Loitering men and women of all ages can often be found standing in loud groups along certain parts of King Street downtown.

Another business owner thought it was getting better downtown. "At one point," he said, "we had a problem with a lot of people that weren't desirable on the streets, and you know, plunking themselves on our window sill and just sitting there with their hands out. I did call the police and asked them to get them removed and the police, the police lady said "well what do you expect, you chose to have a business in downtown Hamilton," and I said "well I'm afraid that's the wrong attitude," that because I chose to have a business here doesn't mean that we have to put up with being abused.

One business owner claimed that the Bingo parlour on King attracted loiterers. Another denied this, saying that the people in front of the hall are not the same people as inside, and that the loiterers in fact dissuade people like the older ladies who do go there from entering. From observation, it is hard to tell, but the draw seems not to be the Bingo hall itself, but the cheap coffee shop next door, where the Bingo Hall promotes its one-dollar coffees.

The three business owners who did mention the Bingo hall as being problematic were concerned with the amount of drug dealing that occurred outside of it on the sidewalk. One participant even knew a common system that the dealers used to avoid getting caught: “The boyfriend will be outside slinging and the girlfriend will be inside drinking a cup of coffee, holding. When the police frisk the guy selling they don’t find anything... [although] sometimes they come in and frisk people inside the building” (BO). Another participant casually mentioned the Bingo parlour while complaining about drugs and addiction in the downtown: “The methadone clinic is not helping anything, anybody. And the fact that the Salvation Army, which is like a halfway house kinda thing. I bet you a lot of people that are there are patients at the methadone clinic and when they’re not they’re hanging out in front of the Bingo Hall...They sell drugs there. All those people... It’s because they started monitoring the Gore Park, so there’s cameras, so they moved. So sometimes the police will actually stand right there, but they can only stand there so long, so they’ll disperse. But I get, maybe once a week, they know who I am, and I’ll get asked like once a week if I want to buy weed” (BO).

Drug use was the biggest issue for some businesses who had bathrooms or who were close to the methadone clinic. “The leave the needles in the toilet and don’t flush,” one owner complained, using the term “drug heads.” “They think our washrooms are public... [but] every city has its warts” (BO). This business owner thought that there was a “whole new wave of street people,” in the last few years and that it had gotten worse.

One business owner stated clearly that drug addiction was a threat to revitalization: "I know they have to put [the methadone clinic] somewhere, but there's so many of 'them' in the downtown core and then you're basically putting it there for them, it's so convenient for them. You're putting all these people in one concentrated area that's trying to boom and be better, and you're putting it in a spot that's so accessible for them, they're all around here" (BO).

People hanging out with drugs was another serious concern. "The people trouble makers. You know how many drug dealers are in the downtown? They all hang around. The people they sell the illegal cigarette... I know them. Their backpacks selling it. I see the people they sell the pills, little pills, I see the older man seventy years old, fifteen, sixteen year old kids they're their friend. Why is this friend? Obviously this guy gets some sort of medication, giving them to sell it for him, you know? Half and half. You know what I mean?" (BO). Business owners seemed to take pride in having their ear to the street, so to speak.

During the interviews, both groups of participants spoke more of the greater Hamiltonian public's perception of violence than of violent acts themselves. A number of violent events were mentioned, however; aside from the one person who got 'jumped' in the afternoon, one said "I've seen fights, and I've seen somebody all messed up, and get hit by a car when they're on a bike there" (BO).

Sexual harassment is also a major concern in this study area. "Most of the girls," one business owner said, "aren't offended by someone saying 'oh do you have a quarter, or do you have a

dollar?’ but they are offended by some of the other things that are said... If you were from a small town or from a farm... you wouldn’t deal with it very well. But it has cleaned up really a lot and I think the police are doing their job.” (BO). After these and other comments, I asked one city official about sexual harassment. They responded by talking about the police force and how much better it is now than three years ago.

Another said that during the day time, the mix of clientele at his business was probably 50/50 men and women, but that downtown Hamilton has a reputation of being dangerous, and not female friendly. Some women don’t come at all, he thought, “because they don’t feel safe.” (BO). He is probably at least partly correct in this observation - I visited King Street repeatedly for this project during the daytime, alone, and often experienced minor incidents of men commenting on my appearance, spitting, or inadvertently throwing cigarette butts in front of me. Walking in a group of two or more, especially with a man, does not elicit the same response.

Poverty was a reoccurring theme in interviews with both business owners and city officials. One business interview was even disrupted by a young woman entering the store, mumbling to one of the customers, and leaving quickly. “See,” the owner said, “now there’s people looking for money. It looks like busy, but nothing.” They explained that their customers would often ask to put items aside until they were paid. “They say holding, put it aside, I’ll come back tomorrow, because this town is mostly welfare, especially now... people get money from the government, they spend it” (BO).

“A lot has changed to make this a poor area,” said one business owner. “Like when people from the hospital were turned out onto the street - many of the people there should be under some sort of supervised care. Now they're on our streets” (BO).

Another explained how visible poverty affected their business: “Guy sits there every single day and I think it's... it ruins people businesses. We get older people that walk in here and they're scared to come in because the guy is sitting there... It's inappropriate” (BO). The same person later questioned the welfare system, saying they needed more shelters and community centres for young people and young mothers. They also suggested (rather callously) putting the street people to work doing menial labour: “They need more centres, [or] ...I think personally... that these people that are on Ontario Works and ODSP, if, unless they are totally, totally, totally 100% disabled, which - if you can walk and talk - then why don't they clean the streets? Why don't they do something? ...Those people that are on OW [Ontario Works] that don't do nothing, that stand outside in a clump once they get their pay cheque and [who] live on the street and deal their deals and if they gave them something constructive to do, maybe it [would be] a better place” (BO).

This was not the only time that an owner commented that business came in waves, month per month. One fast food restaurant was so swamped for a week every month that the manager asked me to come back two weeks later so that he would have more time to talk to me. Every month was the same, he said. The welfare cheques elicit a spending spree.

Another described not the concentration of poverty in the area, but the lack of wealth: "I don't see no... I'm not saying... people are people, but I'm not seeing lawyer, doctor, walking in the downtown with their kids, sitting on the half a million dollar fountain there in the park, you know what I mean? Or I don't see like bankers or big people walking in there. Not ordinary people, walking around... lots of like "spare the change," stuff like that. Lots of young, like they don't have something to do, especially summer time hang around this area. That scares the people, they don't want to come downtown" (BO).

Despite the poverty, and the difficulties that accompany owning a business along King Street, half of the participants said that they were positive they would still be located along King Street downtown in ten years' time. These business owners were generally younger and were overall positive about how the downtown was cleaning up and about the prospects for their businesses in the neighbourhood. One even said they looked forward to the future of King Street, which might include "street parades" or "blocked off areas."

Other business owners, however, were less sure. It depended on what would happen when they retired, whether their children would be interested in running the store or whether someone would buy the business. For one owner, it depended on whether the street became safer or stayed the same. "If it's getting tougher and tougher, we [will] have no choice, we [will] have to move out. That's what I'm saying, only two, three years, otherwise I... because it's not worth it for us. I don't want my daughter to come and work for me here. Because she is a teenager and I can't take

a chance. What happens if I put some employee here and something happens? It's my responsibility so I don't want that... It gets scary sometimes" (BO).

Despite the decidedly severe issues that still plague downtown King Street, most business owners said that they expected downtown to improve in the next ten years. "Absolutely. Why not? It can only get better right? They are working on it... on cleaning it up. There's a small police presence and they are offering incentives, you know? To hopefully invite potential investors and buyers to downtown" (BO). Others were just hopeful, or said that downtown would change only if certain projects came through, like the light rail transit or the Gore Park revitalization plan. At least two are planning renovations and counting on a surge of activity in the downtown.

When asked if any changes to King Street would affect their business, most business owners said that it would, in a positive way - "The [changes I expect] would promote even more pedestrian traffic and even more sort of business-friendly traffic, family type stuff. Stuff that the downtown needs in order to get away from a little bit of an image that the Hamilton downtown has." More people, to them, meant more customers. There were some exceptions, however. "Most of our clients are homeless," said one owner, "If we have people with disposable incomes - when you attract a higher [bracket of shoppers], they will spend money [differently]." One store in particular expressed concern over competition. If a larger store that sold the same type of goods came by, they said, "that would kill us." "But overall, for the look of downtown, the feel of [it]," he said, "it would definitely benefit the city" (BO).

Of the 11 business owners that I spoke to, only two were also building owners. Only a handful of them had upstairs floors that were inhabitable, or used commercially. I asked them if they might renovate and rent out space to prospective residents or as studio space. The response I received was negative. Either there was no safe, separate entrance to upstairs, or they did not want to invest in the area generally.

“[There are no plans] that I know of,” said one business owner, “[The building owner] is one of my family members, and [upstairs] is not something that we plan on fixing - actually, we plan on fixing it, but I mean in terms of actual usage, it’s not going to be possible with the retail store here. Cause there’s no separate entrance. You’d have to go to the back alley, you’d have to go to Crack Alley - I said, that, Crack Alley, yeah, you know, and nobody’s going to do that. Someone like you, would never ever consider using the back alley if you see the type of people that hang out there, you know what I mean?” (The particular alley, upon inspection, is dark, dirty, and not particularly inviting. it is featured in figures 5.8 and 5.9). “But I mean if we could somehow figure out how to make that work, and get people to use the back alley that’d be a different story” (BO).

Another building owner did not want to renovate because he did not think the downtown was worthwhile to invest in: “Oh, [upstairs] is empty. I could renovate, but that would involve a bit investment. Do I want to invest my money in downtown Hamilton? I don’t know. I think it’s too risky. And I’m not going to become a slum lord, renting out to people on welfare” (BO).

One business owner who did not own the building but who knew the building owner guessed that the owner was uninterested in renovating the upstairs at this time. “I don’t think so,” he said, “he’s happy just to let the building escalate in value now that property’s going up. There’s a lot of building zone codes that are really restrictive” (BO).



Figure 5.8 Down “Crack Alley” (Author, 2012)



Figure 5.9 Graffiti, broken windows, and electrical work in “Crack Alley” (Author, 2012)

The prospect of residential units in the downtown was hard for one owner to imagine being successful in Hamilton: “You know what? Residential doesn’t work in downtown. Because no decent people - no lawyer, no surgeon wants to come live in downtown. Because downtown’s name is no good. If you say downtown it means gangs, drugs, trouble makers. So everybody wants to go up mountain, Ancaster. You don’t see no lawyers living in King. And Barton. No! It’s all low class people. As I say, I am not discriminating [against] people, but people with the issues, people with the problems. People with drug related, prostitution, all this area. So I don’t think a nice girl like you you’re going to go live in Emerald or Barton. You scared. There’s

nothing wrong with that area, but people they live in that area, they are not the decent people. You know?" (BO).

Others, though, thought that increasing the amount of residential units in the downtown was key to the city's success. One business owner wanted more condos built for young urban professionals. Another said that residential condominiums would help attract young people who could alleviate Hamilton's condition of poverty: "The downtown core now is not much different from a third world nation," one participant declared, it has "that kind of people. illiterate, immigrant. Young people... would allow for the human talent that's left in the city to spend their money downtown" (BO). He later said "Hess is relatively successful. The same thing that's happening at Hess would benefit the downtown core. Young professionals raise the value of everything. They have income to spend" (BO).

Some participants thought that certain businesses would be better able than others to stimulate downtown shopping activity. From the business owners, there was a call for more family-oriented businesses in the downtown, including restaurants and retail shops. "A few decent restaurants would be very nice. I don't find that [people who work downtown] have a lot of places they can go, although there's been some places that are opening, if we go out our back door there's a couple of little spots opening on John Street and King William that are ok, they're pretty good," said one business owner. Another wanted more fast food restaurant chains, so that he could know "what to expect" when he went out for lunch. The number of restaurants are

increasing in the downtown, but the only ones close to this particular establishment serve fast food.

One participant wanted more “boutique type stores, clothing stores, kind of knick-knack, antique-y type stuff that would draw people who do a variety of shopping” (BO). But another called for “some good companies, big companies... Bay or Sears or something like that” (BO). Although three participants mentioned that retail would be most useful, one business owner was adamantly against any store that might sell “hip hop retail” because it attracts “them” (he later clarified that he was talking about “street people”). “They like dressing like they’re dealing,” he explained, “they think they’re players” (BO). Two business owners, however, said they would be happy with “any kind” of business near theirs. They were not concerned about competition.

One business owner was more specific about what exactly they wanted: “I think less loitering, more family oriented businesses, as opposed to like we have a Bingo hall, sort of an adult kind of store on the other side. So with that kind of business it’s not good for just families and people who want or just come down and spend time and spend their money, you know, just regular type shopping, boutiques, or even little thrift stores, that kind of thing. So I think that would help” (BO).

Five of the eleven participants referred to loitering before anything else. One complained that there were “hordes” of kids outside, standing around. “They buy coffee and think that they can then use the bathroom all day.” These business owners wanted the sidewalk “cleaned up,” or at

least smoking laws tweaked to disallow hanging around outside store fronts. One complained that because of people smoking (mostly) cigarettes, “you can’t walk around here... just to get fresh air you can’t...” while another said that the “new law of no smoking in the park will push people to the street” (BO).

Some businesses were more interested in lowering the costs of operations more than how the street might change to benefit their businesses. “We need an affordable tax rate,” one owner said. He was upset over what he called an unfair property assessment. “Use common sense,” another said, “one of the reasons that some of these stores are empty is that the rent’s so high and the people that own these buildings couldn’t care less... my rent’s four thousand dollars. It really shouldn’t be that high... no one’s going to want to rent your shitty old store front that hasn’t been renovated since 1952, you know? They’re gonna have to put more work in themselves and they don’t want to put out more money than they’re already paying for someone else’s rent. It doesn’t make sense” (BO).

It’s a “catch-22,” another business owner explained: “Property taxes make moving here as a business almost impossible. I don’t know how they assess properties any more, because it doesn’t make sense. Taxes are much higher than they should be now, as are assessments. Property taxes in downtown Hamilton are three times that of Burlington! Owners can’t afford this” (BO). The business owners who spoke about property taxes and assessments spoke cynically about city management. One even declared that the city “keeps wasting the money they have, so they need to keep raising taxes” (BO).

5.5 City Official, Business Owner Relationships

Only two of the 11 business owners said that they knew nothing about what plans City Hall had for the area. One said that he “didn’t talk to the city,” but that his business should be important to them because it helps local charities. Another scathingly critiqued government in general, saying that “mediocre people” go into government, “and then mediocre solutions happen. They end up being either irrelevant or in the way of progress” (BO). Another resented the work the BIA did because he thought it was ineffective.

Other business owners, however, were more positive. Five of them mentioned the facade program, and felt positively about it. Two or three even had plans to use the grant. “I heard recently that the city is willing to give some money to local businesses for them to fix up the front area of their building,” one business owner said, “That would be nice. That would help us” (BO). They said that they knew about the facade program because representatives from the city had called them.

Three participants spontaneously mentioned the possible light rail transit plan, and two people mentioned the Gore Park revitalization project. The responses to these projects were positive save for one participant’s opinion on light rail: “It might have an impact,” he said, “although I’m not sure it would be positive. Being able to come downtown faster will not get people downtown” (BO).

Four business owners did not think that City Hall attached importance to their views as business owners. "They'll pay lip service," one said, "but no. Look at the unemployment rate in this city. There's no way that I can look at that and can fathom that any business man is being listened to." (Beasley's unemployment rate sits at 57%, although Hamilton's overall unemployment rate is lower than provincial average (BNA, 2012)). "They don't listen!" another owner said adamantly. "If city people, they come ask me what is the problem in here, ask thousand business owners around here, what is the problem, then they can fix it. They don't come! You don't see none of the councilors, older men, walking around here asking nothing... No! They see their point of view, they don't see what I see... I am here 24/7" (BO).

Another said that representatives from the city never came to his store. "No, cause I don't deal with anybody in the city. It's not like anybody's ever come here and asked me 'how are you today?' you know? 'What can we do to try to help you guys?' you know? I mean the BIA is there don't get me wrong. They do keep in touch with [businesses], but they're more about removing graffiti and keeping the streets clean, trying to keep it tidy versus 'how can we help you make more money to hire more people and get the economy a little bit better?' you know what I mean? Nobody's ever done that" (BO).

Thoughts were mixed regarding the BIA overall. Two business owners thought that the BIA was ineffective, and that they're requests for loading zones were not listened to. "At this point," one said, "I don't even know nothing, like if they're listening or follow whatever we say or whatever, because it's all politicians. They don't listen to normal people. They take every advice and then

it's going in the garbage [laughs]" (BO). Some were more positive: "In regard to the BIA and us joining with them and stuff and actually it's been welcoming, and that's actually good... they've actually decided to help out. I mean look at the Lister Block they just redid, gorgeous building [located one block north of study area, on James North] (See Figure 5.8). It makes a big difference. It makes it inviting for people to want to come to a nice clean atmosphere, instead of something that looks like slum" (BO).



Figure 5.10 The Lister Block building on James North, newly renovated (Author, 2012)

One business owner told a story about when a city representative did come to see him: "They have come in here and asked me about what I thought about the train or whatever they want, but I told them it was a stupid idea, because they said they wanted to block off a certain part of the road cause it gets tight at Ferguson, and that's retarded cause so many people drive by my store and they're going to have to go around, and that's a lot of driving. People are driving by my store a lot, they're gonna have to go around" (BO). Two business owners were more positive. They

believed that the city listens to them, but that there could be “more done to improve the downtown.” A few were even interested in helping to improve it themselves.

5.6 Summary

Hamilton's municipal plans strategize an improvement in the quality of life in the downtown. City Officials want and expect a higher density of jobs, residences, and services in the future, and are working within their power to shape the downtown to accommodate these things. Plans to make Gore Park and the downtown overall more pedestrian-friendly have already begun, and are so far successful. The grant programs to fill the upper floors and redo the facades along King Street have also begun, and are viewed positively by the business owners along that stretch. Some have even applied for the grants already.

Business owners and city officials alike generally agreed that the state of King Street has improved in the last ten years, thanks in part to the Hamilton Police Force and the overall revitalization of King William Street (See Figure 5.9) and James Street North. Ten years ago is considered the low point of Hamilton's downtown, and it has improved since then.

There are significant challenges that still face King Street, however. The life of the sidewalk is of particular concern to both business owners and city officials. A few business owners were concerned about safety within their stores, too, especially regarding shoplifting. Violence, poverty, and drug use were main themes in the interviews. Violence and random attacks were less of an issue than their perceived threat - business owners and city officials alike were

concerned that potential clients would not come to King Street if they thought violence was a possibility. On a similar note, every single participant who I asked thought that the methadone clinic should not be close to King Street. Parking was a repeated issue among business owners, but only mentioned once by city officials. This issue was something that business owners thought the city officials ignored, which they business owners resented.

Despite these challenges, city officials and business owners both generally had positive expectations for King Street. The city officials were much more optimistic, dropping words like "rebirth" and "evolution." Business owners, too, though, thought that with the work the city was putting in to the downtown, it stood a fighting chance at revival. Despite this, most of the buildings along King Street remain vacant above the main floor.

City officials and business owners both wanted more restaurants, cafés, boutiques and a couple "good, big" companies like the Bay or Sears to locate in the downtown. The Bingo hall, the convenience stores, the Money Mart, and the Hip Hop retailers all came under fire from either other business owners or city officials as places that attracted the types of people that were considered undesirable in a business environment. Fairly or unfairly, these accusations are significant to the revitalization of the area.

Business owners said that they rarely saw representatives of City Hall down on King Street, and the city officials I interviewed said they rarely went there. Two business owners actually saw this

as a sign that downtown is not revitalizing - that because there were no "men in suits," that there was little chance that the area would attract well-to-do residents.

City Officials expect an "evolution" or displacement of certain businesses as the area revitalizes. This, one explained, is a necessary and even positive part of revitalization. Business owners, though, did not mention any perceived threat to their livelihoods. In their eyes, if the street revitalized, they would benefit from more customers. Some businesses said they expected to be there for at least another ten years. Others weren't so sure, but they based their predictions more on personal or immediate circumstances like retirement, and less on what was happening on the street.



Figure 5.11 King William, newly renovated (Author 2012)

Chapter 6: Discussion

City officials' main goals for King Street, according to this project's results, are to promote a pedestrian-friendly, outdoor shopping environment, to create a "normal downtown," and to foster a "positive public realm." The City of Hamilton has been proactive in changing the downtown's public landscape (past projects include the urban braille system and street lighting), and they would like to see a clean up of facades, to have signs removed, and to welcome more ground-floor commercial businesses and residential upper floors along the street.

The City, however, can only do so much; developers, residents, and business and building owners have a large impact on the streetscape too. City officials, therefore, must attempt to change the downtown by working on a set of influences in an attempt to inspire restoration and revitalization activities. Publicly-funded activities and programs like streetscaping, events

planning, incentive programs, general maintenance and upkeep of the street, building restoration, and good lighting and policing are all part of this strategy. The Business Improvement Area (BIA)'s efforts are also highly valued by the city. Hamilton's downtown BIA not only works to improve the area's aesthetics, but also to connect city departments and large and small organizations to promote a positive downtown atmosphere. They see the future of King Street downtown as a classic 'main street' - a central outdoor shopping environment - and work to promote it as such.

The possible displacement of some of the existing businesses was considered an overall positive thing by city officials. They hope for a "shift" or "evolution" in the commercial sector of downtown, and especially want more restaurants, cafés, and boutiques. In the words of city and provincial plans, the concrete plans for the city include building sustainability, density, safety, revitalization, connectivity, diversity, a variety of services, walkability, livability, "whole streets," and a high level of pedestrianization. King Street, they say, should be a "prime commercial and retail street." They want it safe and attractive for shoppers.

King Street is, after all, Hamilton's main street, and its revitalization has been treated as such even if neither the Main Street approach nor any specific theory of revitalization was mentioned by city officials in interviews. The goals of the Main Street approach are "historic preservation, consumer marketing, pedestrian access, and the cleanliness and safety of streets" (Mitchell, 2001), with a focus on the aesthetics of the main commercial strip. City officials could pay more attention to this approach, even though their methods do overlap. For instance, the BIA, the

facade improvement program, and the attention to walkability would all be a part of the Main Street approach. The City could, however, be doing more to curb the accumulation of services such as employment help and addiction rehabilitation along King Street. They could also compromise on on-street parking and loading zones, and slow down the traffic going through the Gore area to make it safer and quieter for shoppers. Neither of these possible ideas was mentioned in interviews.

On-street parking, in particular, could be of use to King Street according to both the Main Street approach and to local business owners. Although one city official thought that it would favour car traffic over pedestrians, on-street parking would provide a barrier of safety between the sidewalk and the busy lanes of traffic, and would likely slow down cars along that stretch. Free, limited time parking could also solve business owners' complaints that they had no loading zones, and that it was too difficult to pick up or drop off food and goods quickly.

Where the city officials and city plans align with the Main Street approach, the City seems to have experienced small successes. The level of business owner satisfaction was high in regards to policing of the street, for instance. The BIA is well-funded, and local businesses are championed by the Chamber of Commerce and local news media. Re-branding the street is important to the Main Street approach, and Hamilton has done this on a neighbourhood level, giving autonomy to each neighbourhood association in the downtown area. The City is also working hard to mitigate any perceptions of danger in the downtown by promoting activities that invite suburbanites and students to the area.

Business owners also hope for economic and visual improvements to the downtown. Some even hope certain businesses will be forced out, although none of those who were interviewed expressed neighbouring concern for their own businesses' displacement. All of them expect to benefit from more customers along King Street. The business owners who were unsure whether they would still be there in ten years' time cited family or life circumstance, or lack of customers and a deterioration of the street as the only possible reasons for closing shop. If it occurred to them that rising rents or property values might force them out, they did not mention it.

Almost all of the participants in this project demonstrated a remarkable faith in the prospects for King Street downtown, even if a minority were more ambivalent. The city officials interviewed all had hope for the area, but stressed that urban revitalization takes time. Business owners, too, said that if King Street changes much it will be for the better, but that it might not be soon. Some of them did not think the street could change for the better in the next ten years, because of downtown's recent economic decline. How could King Street change, they asked, without first changing the entire population of the downtown?

This concern was among a number of circumstances mentioned by business owners as blocking King Street downtown's chance at revitalization. The social make-up of the area, as mentioned, is predominantly poor. This was illustrated by the patterns of business that the area experienced; the week after government aid was dealt out was the busiest time of each month. So busy, in fact, that when contacted near the end of the month, some participants asked to reschedule appointments for this research. They said that the area was 'dead' the rest of the month.

One of the most telling findings of this study is that business owners feel resentment toward the people they see along King Street, indeed some of their own customers, even though their businesses cater to people of lower socio-economic status. This could be why they do not seem to expect to be out of business if the types of people who shop on King Street change.

The reputation and visual appeal of the area was also on business owners' minds when they were asked about the prospects for King Street downtown. The building structures are severely underutilized and poorly maintained. This was a big issue for participants because it indicated that building owners either had little faith in the area, or that they were using the property as a financial investment alone and were waiting until the property market improved to sell or improve the buildings. However, some of the business owners' own stores were dusty, messy, and unappealing, inside as well as outside. Their window displays, often protected with thick bars, and messy themselves, were unwelcoming. This demonstrated an interesting discord between how the owners perceived the area, and what they were doing to improve it.

Unfortunately, the city officials' goals may not succeed without the displacement of these current businesses. As more people move to downtown, the customer demographics will likely change to better reflect the entire city. As residents' socio-economic statuses change, businesses will either lose business and risk displacement, or evolve to better cater to new residents. Business owners, however, seem unworried, even oblivious, to this potential threat. This could be because they have not heard city officials' visions for the area. It could also be because they cannot imagine King Street experiencing a major overhaul of businesses in the next ten years. It is too early to

tell. Because this project examines only the potential for King Street downtown to gentrify, it may also offer the potential for an alternative to classic displacement. Sutton's *Rethinking Commercial Gentrification* (2010) discusses the unexplored agency of business owners in these types of situations (although she focuses on the process after it occurs). She thinks that business owners are an untapped stakeholder in the revitalization process - an interesting notion for King Street, where some business owners themselves could be doing much more to improve the area.

Few business owners also owned the buildings. City officials have begun to explore how *building* owners can be inspired to renovate, with the introduction of the façade improvement grant program. They could, however, perhaps engage further with some of the business owners who express an interest in improving the window displays and inside ambiance of their own establishments. The Main Street approach mentions this explicitly as an integral part of revitalizing a commercial district: to start the process with the businesses who are already there, and who expect to stay.

That the business owners want the downtown to improve is a boon for city officials. It also indicates that they might be willing to collaborate. So far, already-established business owners as agents of revitalization is an understudied subject in urban geography, but the results of this study indicate that King Street would be an interesting environment to try this in. Some businesses, of course, would know how to improve their spaces better than others. Consultation visits and workshops with business owners might be one way to help business owners improve their own stores.

At first glance, this creates a conundrum: business owners can help revitalization, but they can also be displaced by revitalization-fueled development and rising property values. Would this not be a case of business owners aiding in the City's objectives and then being unfairly displaced for their efforts? This could happen. But in the face of potential revitalization, investing in their own space and their own commercial image might be the best thing business owners could do to avoid being displaced. Helping interested business owners to evolve with the area may be best way, then, to both fully revitalize King Street while mitigating against the detrimental effects of commercial revitalization. This would not only add to the literature on commercial revitalization, it would situate Hamilton's municipal government at the forefront of revitalization policy.

6.2 Study Limitations

It would have improved this study to have had a wider variety of interview subjects. Although many informal interviews served to inform the direction of the literature review and study questions, there were a number of questions that arose that could have been better answered by formal interviews with potential developers, absentee building owners, grocery chain managers, and young professionals moving to the city. Potential developers would have been able to identify exactly what qualities they were looking for in a downtown. Absentee building owners could have contributed to the discussion of facade improvements and upstairs renovations, and why they would or would not be interested in further investing in their buildings. Grocery chain managers would have been interesting to speak to because grocery stores provide important services to all types of residents. City officials and key informants both thought that residents would not come to live in the downtown if there was no good grocery store. Interviews with

young professionals would have been informative because young people are a large portion of the demographic city officials are interested in attracting. Hamilton has young entrepreneurs already coming to the city, but what would the ones who are still thinking about coming need Hamilton to prove to get them to live in the downtown? Although I had access to and conversations with some of these people, I chose not to have formal interviews with them because I thought it would take away from the focus of the study. It is unfortunate that potential developers and current business owners would have been too difficult to contact, and that potential young residents would have been almost impossible to identify. They would have helped to provide a more complete perspective on the study area.

It is also of note that although the city officials interviewed in this study have important opinions and contributions in how Hamilton's downtown changes, they can only provide recommendations regarding how projects should proceed. Funding for city projects is decided by city council. Although this does not affect the results, the fact that city officials in this study are not politicians and do not vote on behalf of locals in municipal rulings makes their comments about gentrification less politically significant than they would have been.

6.3 Conclusions and Future Research

The prospects for King Street downtown are positive, and the area is expected to improve. The main question is "when?." This thesis provides an expository account of what could be Hamilton's most downtown street in its pre-gentrification throes. Its most significant findings

inform the body of literature on commercial gentrification, and could perhaps help the City of Hamilton adjust their own goals and programs for the area.

This case study will only be complete if it is replicated after King Street has more fully experienced revitalization. It will be interesting to see how the area develops, and how the actions and perceptions of city officials and (especially) business owners change with it. Future research in the area could more thoroughly investigate commercial gentrification from the perspective of business owners over time. It could also consider how creative industries are changing Hamilton's downtown. Finally, future research could look in to how King Street's revitalization, if and when it happens, affects both adjacent neighbourhoods and Hamiltonians' perceptions of the area.



Figure 6.1 Development Plans for King Street Downtown (Author, 2012)

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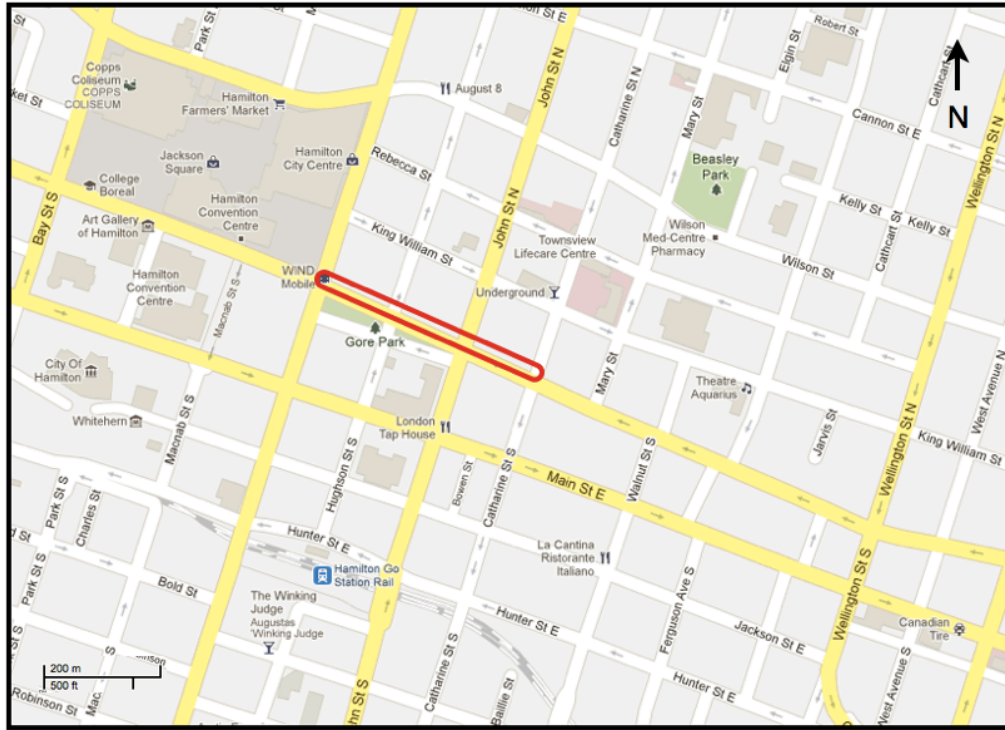
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Area of Study

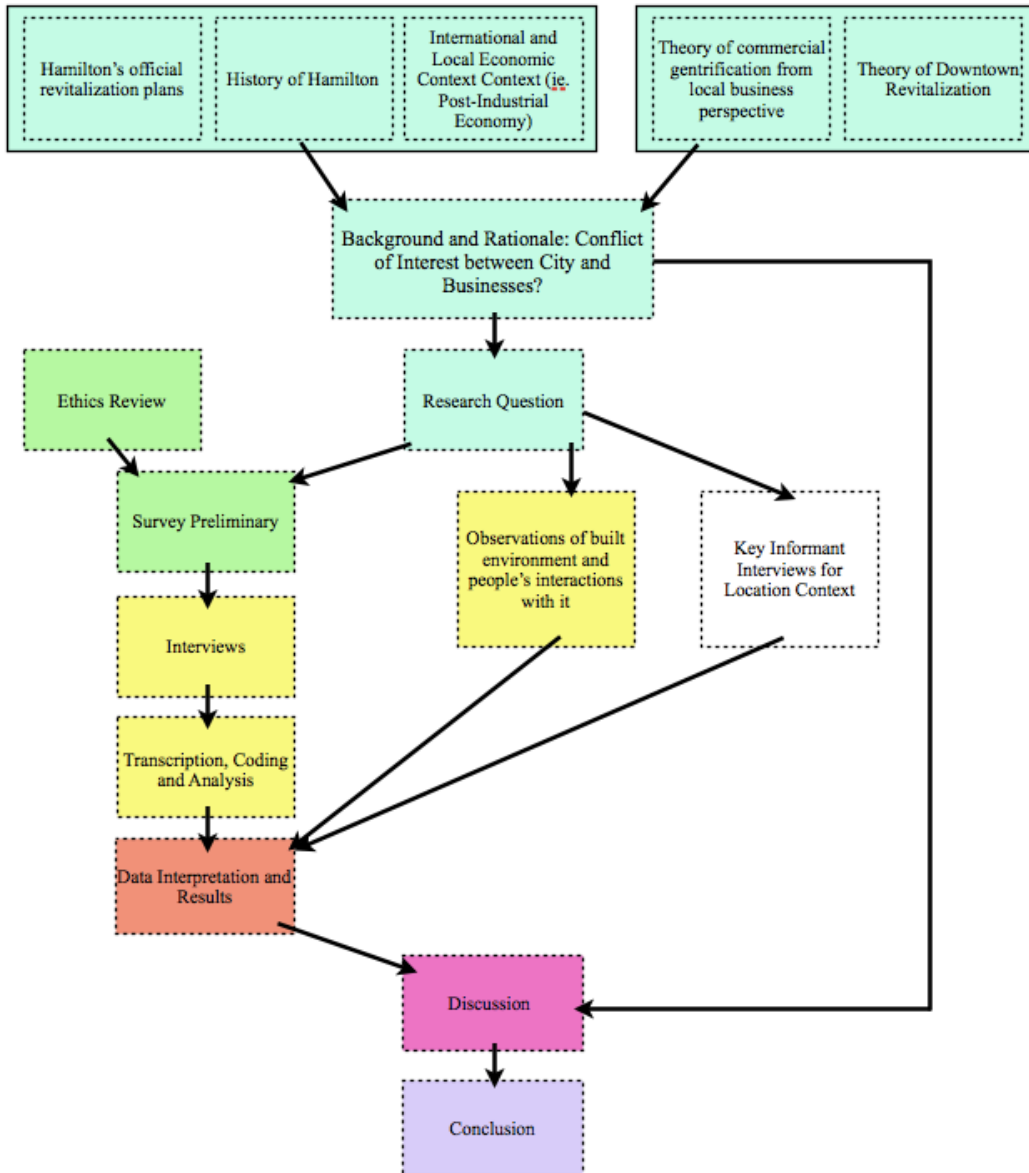


— Area of Study

google.com/maps

This area of King Street is between James and Catharine Streets. The study is only concerned with the north side of King Street.

Appendix 2: Conceptual Framework



Appendix 3: Interview Schedules

Note: every introduction to the interview will involve a short explanation of the project, including a map of the specific area of focus.

Interview 1: City Planners

Good morning. Thank you for agreeing to this interview. My name is Claire Atkin, as you know, and this project is a part of my master's research at McMaster University in the department of Geography and Earth Sciences.

*I'm trying to find out how business owners along the downtown strip of King Street perceive the area, and what they expect for it. The specific area under investigation is King Street between James and Catharine Streets. So just these three blocks here *show map*.*

I'm also interested in how well business owners' expectations fit with what the city is doing. I will be starting those interviews in the next few days/week/month. The final report will benefit both business owners and planners in a number of ways.

This project could serve City Hall by informing planners and elected representatives of perceptions in the downtown. It will also help to identify where possible communication strategies could be directed in the future.

*This is the area that the project is focusing on *show map*. As you can see, it is quite small. When I ask you questions about King Street, I will be referring to this small section. When I ask you questions about downtown, I mean the blocks that surround King and Main Street here *show map*.*

This interview should take about half an hour to forty-five minutes. Do you have any questions before we start?

Do you mind if I record this interview for research purposes? I can assure you this interview will be confidential. The recording is just for my notes.

I'd like to start by talking about you for just a few minutes.

1. What is your position here at City Hall?
2. What does your position involve on a weekly or monthly basis?
3. How long have you worked in this position?
4. Do you hold or have you held any other positions in Hamilton that might be relevant to this project, for instance are you on a committee or do you own a business?

Now I'd like to get your insights on Hamilton.

5. How has downtown Hamilton changed the most in the last ten years? What have been the biggest changes?
6. How has downtown King Street changed physically in the last ten years?
7. *Do you know what the City has planned for the area of King between James and Catharine? Could you describe the main plans briefly? What are the general guiding principles for this area?
8. How do you expect downtown, and specifically King Street, to change in the next five to ten years? Will the changes follow the City's plans?
9. Do you think there will be differences in the physical character or appearance of the north side of King street? How?
10. What kind of changes to the businesses downtown would help the area develop economically?
11. How might these plans affect current local businesses?
12. Will the same businesses along King Street still be there in ten years?
13. If not, what kind of businesses might replace them?
14. Is there anything to add about King Street of Hamilton's downtown?

Thank you for your time.

Interview 2: Business Owners

Good afternoon. Thank you for agreeing to this interview. My name is Claire Atkin, as you are aware, and this project is a part of my master's thesis at McMaster University in the department of Geography and Earth Sciences. You are an important voice in the community of downtown Hamilton and your thoughts are important to this project.

My research at McMaster is about city planning. This project specifically is about how business owners in downtown Hamilton along King Street between James and Catharine think about the area and how it has changed.

The final report will benefit both business owners and planners in a number of ways. Primarily, it could help build communication between business owners like yourself and the people who plan the downtown.

Do you have any questions?

Do you mind if I record this interview for research purposes? I can assure you this interview will be confidential. The recording is just for my notes.

Let's start by talking about you and your business.

1. What is the nature of your business?
2. How long has your business been open for? Has it been located on King Street since it first opened?
3. Is King Street a good place for your business? Why or why not?
4. What kind of people come into your shop? Men or women? Younger or older?
5. How long do they spend in your store?
6. How much does the average person spend in your establishment?
7. What kind of things do they buy?
8. How many people do you think come in per hour on an average day?
9. What kind of pedestrians do you get outside your business?
10. Have you noticed any ways that King Street downtown has changed in the last ten years?
11. Has your clientele changed at all? How?
12. In what ways could King Street change to benefit your business?
13. Do you expect the downtown area to change in the next ten years? How?
14. How do you think these changes will affect your business?
15. Do you see your business here for another ten years?
16. Do you know if the city has plans for this area?
 - **if yes** Do you know what they are?
17. Do you think the city attaches importance to your views as a business owner, and other business owners along King Street? Why or why not?
18. Is there anything further you would like to say about King Street or Hamilton's downtown in general? **Probe**

Thank you for your time.

Interview 3: Key Informants

This interview is dependent on who the informants are. The questions asked in this interview will cover the following topics:

1. How long have you lived in Hamilton?
2. What are your specific areas of interest?
3. How has Hamilton's downtown changed in the last ten years?
4. How has King Street changed physically?
5. What do you expect to change in the area?
6. Do you expect the businesses that line King Street to be affected positively or negatively by changes made to the downtown in the next ten years?
7. How good is the city about communicating effectively with local businesses?
8. What could be done to revitalize King Street that would attract shoppers from the suburbs?

Appendix 4: Observation Schedule

Friday, November 25th: afternoon, four hours.

- physical form
 - street description
 - overall environment (trees, Gore Park, sounds, etc.)
 - buildings (age, architecture)
 - type of businesses
- social behaviour,
 - traffic
 - pedestrian activity
 - interaction with businesses
 - What time do businesses open and close during the week?
 - How many people entering and exiting businesses ?
 - which businesses are busiest?
 - what kinds of people are entering the business?
 - how long do they stay?

Sunday, January 15th: early evening, one to two hours.

Note: social behaviour, including traffic and pedestrian activity, and business interaction

Thursday, March 15th: evening rush hour, one hour.

Note: social behaviour, including traffic and pedestrian activity, and business interaction

Saturday, May 12th: late morning, two hours.

Note: how physical form has changed, if at all, since November. Note social behaviour.

Appendix 5: E-mail to potential participants (City Planners)

Dear _____,

The success of downtown is a concern to all Hamiltonians. As a graduate student at McMaster, I am undertaking a study of one part of the district in order to help the City frame a viable policy. I'd like your help.

You must be busy, so I will keep this brief. My name is Claire Atkin, and as a graduate student in Urban Geography, I am studying three blocks of King Street downtown. I am comparing the perceptions of business owners, city staff, and elected officials regarding the present character and potential changes to this small area over the next ten years. I will also be interviewing individuals who know Hamilton's history and politics, to help put my findings in context.

This project should help the City's revitalization efforts. It will provide on-the-ground intelligence about how business owners perceive downtown now and what they expect for the area in the next ten years.

Because of your role at the City, and your knowledge of current issues and policy, I would very much like to include you as a participant of this study.

Please consider agreeing to a half-hour interview at a time and place that is convenient for you. My contact information is below. I will follow up with you next week otherwise.

Sincerely,

Claire Atkin

Contact:

Claire Atkin

phone: 289-880-6508

e-mail: atkins@mcmaster.ca

Supervisor:

Richard Harris

phone: 905-525-9140 ext. 27216

e-mail: harrisr@mcmaster.ca

Appendix 6: Letter to potential participants (Business Owners)

To the owner of _____,

Your business is an integral part of downtown King Street, and your continued success is important to you, to your neighbours, and to Hamilton. My name is Claire Atkin, and I am a master's student at McMaster University, researching King Street.

Your help would be sincerely appreciated.

The final report of this project will be given to you, other business owner participants, and to planners at City Hall. Your opinion, although entirely confidential, will be included within it if you choose to participate.

Although McMaster and I, the researcher, have no affiliation with City Hall, this study has the potential to inform, in a small way, future development projects in the area. Your participation would ensure one more important voice be heard.

If you would please consider agreeing to a half-hour interview in your store at a time that is convenient for you, I would be honoured to include you as a participant.

If you are interested in the study, please contact me (Claire). I will come back in this week to follow up with you personally.

Thank you,

Claire Atkin

Contact:

Claire Atkin

phone: 289-880-6508

e-mail: atkins@mcmaster.ca

Supervisor:

Dr. Richard Harris

phone: 905-525-9140 ext. 27216

e-mail: harrisr@mcmaster.ca

Appendix 7: Letter of Consent

DATE: November 20, 2011

LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT

A study about perceptions of downtown changes in Hamilton

Investigators:

Principal Investigator:

Claire Atkin
Department of Geography
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(905) 525-9140 ext. 20441
E-mail: atkin@mcmaster.ca

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr. Richard Harris
Department of Geography
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(905) 525-9140 ext. 27216
E-mail: harrisr@mcmaster.ca

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to take part in the study on how the perceptions of business owners and city planners compare with regard to the current and potential future changes to Hamilton's King Street downtown in the next ten years.

What will happen during the study?

For this study, I am interviewing business owners along King Street and city planners who work at Hamilton City Hall.

Each interview should take about half an hour. It can take place in your establishment during a quiet hour as just after your store closes.

During the interview, I will ask you questions like "has your clientele changed in the last ten years?" and "how do you expect downtown King Street to change in the next ten years?" as well as simple questions about the history of your business. With your permission, I will record the interview – this makes it easier to remember all the important things you say. I'd also take hand-written notes.

Are there any risks to doing study?

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. You may feel uncomfortable with giving your opinion about the local business environment, and if you do, you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. You can withdraw at any time. I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

Are there any benefits to doing this study?

The research will not benefit you directly. I hope that what is learned as a result of this study will help us to better understand Hamilton's revitalization process and help to improve communication between City Hall and businesses in the downtown core.

Confidentiality

You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. No one but me will know whether you participated unless you choose to tell them.

The information/data you provide will be kept in a locked desk/cabinet where only I will have access to it. Information kept on a computer will be protected by a password. Once the study has been completed, the data will be destroyed.

What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to be part of the study, you can decide to withdraw, before April 1, 2012, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by approximately August, 2012. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at: atkins@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance.

If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CONSENT

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Claire Atkin, of McMaster University. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have been given a copy of this form. I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

1. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded. Yes. No.

2. Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

Please send them to this email address _____
or to this mailing address: _____

No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

Appendix 8: Confidentiality Agreement

(To be signed by security “buddy” after business hours)

Confidentiality Agreement

It is understood and agreed to that the below identified discloser of confidential information may provide certain information that is and must be kept confidential. To ensure the protection of such information, and to preserve any confidentiality necessary under patent and/or trade secret laws, it is agreed that

1. The Confidential Information to be disclosed can be described as and includes:

Information regarding personal perceptions and opinions of private individuals participating in the research study “Downtown Revitalization in Hamilton, Ontario: A Comparison of the Perceptions of Business Owners and City Planners.”

2. The Recipient agrees not to disclose the confidential information obtained from the discloser to anyone unless required to do so by law.

3. This Agreement states the entire agreement between the parties concerning the disclosure of Confidential Information. Any addition or modification to this Agreement must be made in writing and signed by the parties.

4. If any of the provisions of this Agreement are found to be unenforceable, the remainder shall be enforced as fully as possible and the unenforceable provision(s) shall be deemed modified to the limited extent required to permit enforcement of the Agreement as a whole.

WHEREFORE, the parties acknowledge that they have read and understand this Agreement and voluntarily accept the duties and obligations set forth herein.

Recipient of Confidential Information:

Name (Print or Type):

Signature:

Date:

Discloser of Confidential Information:

Name (Print or Type):

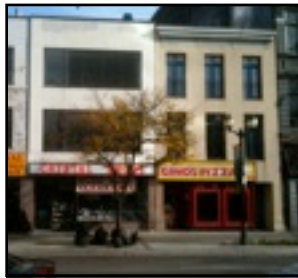
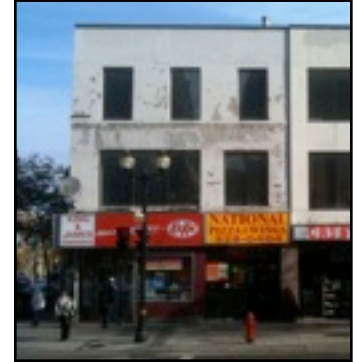
Signature:

Date:

Appendix 9: Details of King Street Downtown Today

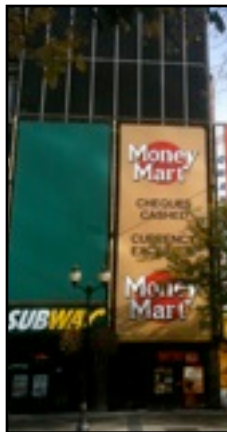
The case study area for this project follows the north side of King Street East between James Street North and Catharine Street. The historical information included here is found in *Footsteps in Time* by Manson, 2003.

1-3 King Street East (1): This three-storey pre-Confederation Georgian style brick building was built in 1843. Sir Allan MacNab used to have his law offices here. Since then, it has housed a “medical practice, a dry goods store, a tailor shop,” and many retail stores including Treble’s Clothing and Laura Secord candy shop (Manson, 2003). Over the years, the original Georgian exterior has been replaced with more modern façades. Its original foundations, floors, and walls, however, remain in tact (Manson, 2003). For a few years, a clothing store occupied the corner compartment. Today (2012), the shop is occupied by a convenience store and a pizza shop. The upper floors are currently unoccupied. The outside is bare save a satellite dish and peeling paint. The windows are unclean. Random power cords and brackets, perhaps originally for an awning, hang from the walls above the first floor. In front of the corner door is a thin pole with flyers taped to it, and an A-shaped sign advertising pizza and wings.



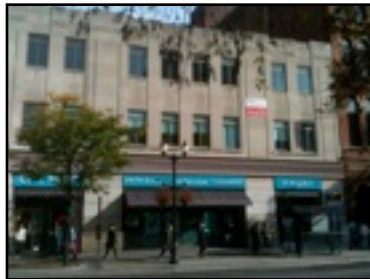
5-9 King Street East (2): In the early 1900’s, this building housed a high-end men’s wear shop and Garland and Rutherford Limited, druggists. Now it houses Crystal Shoes and Gino’s Pizza. In Crystal Shoes, a radio plays loudly outside the front doors, only just rivaling the gurgles of a massive air conditioner. Their signs are white and neon orange. One that says 50% off is taped to the window. Behind the upper floor windows are old blinds and stacked cardboard boxes. Gino’s Pizza still has its Christmas decorations up in the windows in June, but the outside walls are freshly stuccoed and newly painted. “Customer Washrooms Only!!!! HSR Drivers Exempt” is scrawled across a small cardboard sign taped to the door. Upstairs, there are three apartments which seem to be occupied.

11-15 King Street East (3): This was the site of Mills Department Store both before and after a fire that destroyed the building in 1903, until the business shut down in 1920. Four years later, Herbert Mills opened a famous china shop here that succeeded until 1983. There is still an old logo painted on the upper west floor of the building, and its facade included decorative windows and a metal parapet. Now, Urban Alley hip hop and skate shop is located here, although a Mills China awning is still visible, rolled up above the door. The outside paint is peeling, but the original architecture is still there. The upper floors in this location are empty - a sign hangs inside the second story windows. The only other entrance to upstairs, however, is through the alley at the back of the building. It won’t be renovated for residential units soon, because that alley is still considered too dangerous for regular use. Another sign flaps lightly above the door in the wind.



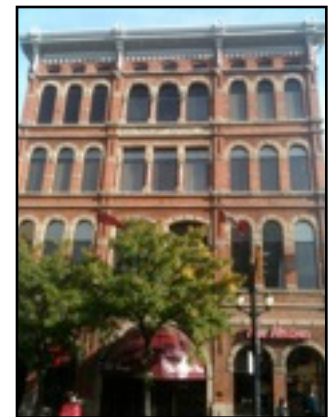
13-15 King Street East (4): The Northway Company leased this building from the Mills family from 1925 until 1960. The building grew to include five sales floors, escalators, and elevators, but the Northway company had to close when the suburban shopping malls drew shoppers away (Manson, 2003). Now, both Subway and Money Mart have covered the original façade with large signs. Behind the signs are 8’ by 3’ metal grids covering the building. Each side of the building has two large lights that lean out to light up the signs at night. Their windows are clean, although littered with advertisements. Money Mart even has neon signs in the window and ads for “pay day” and Public Mobile.

17 King Street East (5): This building was a drug store called Tamblyn for many years. It is now a convenience store called the “Royal Super Mart.” Outside the store, a broken A-shape sign advertises cheap desserts next to a pay phone. Other advertisements for calling cards and lotto competitions cover the inside of their windows. When the Super Mart is closed, a heavy metal set of bars and a drop down gate cover the building windows and door. The large sign that covers the building is covered in the spring and summer months by tree foliage.



19-31 King Street East (6): This building housed the second site of the downtown Woolworth store in 1931 (Woolworth had originally opened in 1921 just down the block). In 1947 a fire completely destroyed the inside of the Woolworth building and damaged buildings next door, including the Right House building. Woolworth’s rebuilt the next year, and this building is now the site of Liberty Tax Services, Safen Grill and Café, City Mart Inc, and P.A.T.H. Employment Services, and has a for lease sign in the window. Above Safen Grill are offices, but above P.A.T.H. there is a for-lease sign in the window. Along the whole building are unused, rolled up awnings.

35-41 King street East (7): Thomas C. Watkins built the Right House in 1890. This was Hamilton’s first department store, which sold a number of dry goods, carpets, household furnishings, clothing, and fancy-goods. It was also the most “up-to-date department store of its time in Canada” and featured new innovations like “phones in all departments, credit-buying, a satisfaction-or-your-money-refunded policy, free home-delivery, large-scale advertising, female clerks, live fashion-shows, writing rooms, restrooms, and even an emergency ward” (Manson, 2003). The building was one of the first in Hamilton to be built using reinforced concrete, which helped to protect it against the fire next door in 1947. The bottom floors of the building were originally retail, while the fifth and sixth floors were offices. Watkins built a seventh storey in 1910, making the Right House Hamilton’s first “skyscraper.” The Right House has been preserved over the years. It is now occupied by a Tim Horton’s and a Hair Salon in the front, and offices in the back and on the upper floors. Remedy Night club, downstairs, has been closed for five years, and has not been replaced.



*Cross Hughson Street North



43-51 King Street East (8): This building was originally a Clyde Office block, but in 1930, the S.S. Kresge Company opened it as Canada’s largest single storey five-and-dime store at the time. In 1948, they expanded north and build a new brick and steel Art-Deco building with a “roof deck, terrazzo floors, walls covered with washable wallpaper, a mezzanine which housed a ladies’ lounge and powder room, and a luncheonette with chrome and red vinyl counter stools” (Manson, 2003). It is now a giant B.I.N.G.O. hall on main floor, with a discount coffee and donut shop attached. Neon lights flash ads for Bingo and a digital clock in the front window. There are missing tiles from above the upper windows, although most of the architecture is still in tact. Its upper floors are empty, and they won’t likely renovate it any time soon. Cameras watch outside and inside the Bingo Hall,

below empty flag pole holders. Uncovered florescent bulbs form a line above the windows.

Grandad’s coffee, in the same building, advertises \$1 coffee any size, written in marker on the inside window under a neon “open” sign.





59 King Street East (9): The R. McKay Dry Goods Company opened here around the year 1900, and was replaced by the Arliss Building in 1950. It now houses a thrift store, and a closed entrance to the old “Arliss building.” To the left of the Thrift Store sits “My Convenience Store,” a minimalist, simple place with a news stand and clean, printed ads in the front window. The Thrift store, by contrast, has exposed plywood on its exterior, and a peeling sign. Inside the window, it says “10% Seniors Discount.” “BATA” is written in tile before the front door. The upper floors in this building seem to be empty. There is an “available space” sign hanging outside. Old cabling is rusting and uncoiling out of the walls, which are ridden with plugs. The “Arliss Building” front entrance is in similar disarray, as the picture to the right shows.



61-65 King Street East (10): In the early 1900’s, this building was occupied by J.A. Carpenter and Company Hardware. After, the F. Hamilton Company Limited Hardware and Sporting Goods store were here. Today, it houses an unused newspaper stand and an adult cinema. This building’s upper floors are blacked out. A “Western Union” and electronics shop occupy the building to the right.

67-69 King Street East (11): Mr. Ebenezer Stinson opened a dry goods store here in 1837. This building was then used for a “hardware store, a clothier, a shoemaker, a cafe, a florist, the Singer Sewing Machine Company and a Honey Dew Restaurant” (Manson,



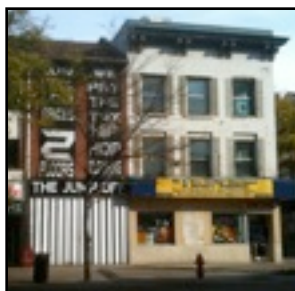
2003). The Chicken Roost Restaurant opened here in 1948 by the Mintz brothers. Now, Cheapies Records occupies this space. This is one of the rare buildings on this stretch of King that is owned by the occupying business owner, which is perhaps why this is one of the last music and video stores in Hamilton. The window displays are clean and artful, and the outside walls are nicely tiles and well lit. The aesthetics of the store give it a sixties feel. Although a sign in the second story window says “we buy used records,” one in the door says “we are NOT buying for cash!” The upper floors of this building are empty and there are no signs of development.



71 King Street East (12): This building was briefly the location of the first Rapid Blue Print Company, which later moved to King William Street. Now, Widemart “Shoes, Lingerie/ costumes, Wigs, and Stockings” are here. On the mannikins in the window are lingerie items including pink mesh stockings and wigs. Among them, heels and stilettos grace the display.

73-79 King Street East (13): These buildings housed a drug store, a photographer, a dentist, Giddings Furgs, and residential apartments after 1900. These days, Christopher’s BBQ and Grill and Keon’s Super Convenience are located here. Christopher’s has a tiled façade, with some tiles missing. Random paint splashes can be seen on the front walls along with old sign brackets and exposed florescent lights.

An A-shape sign sits in front of the door advertising shwarma and burgers. Keon’s Super Convenience also has peeling paint. Its flooring outside the store is old terrazzo. It has wood panelling. Advertisements for lotto and an ATM are taped to the window. A pigeon's nest is found just above the entrance.



81 King Street East (14): This is the location the first brick store in Hamilton, built in 1829. It housed the Heintzman and Company piano store from 1912 until the 1960’s. Today, the Hi and Buy Dollar Discount and Beauty Supplies store occupies the space. This is a hair accessories store. The windows are barred and busy, full of posters and products. The sign is made of plastic corrugate with tape. It is yellow and blue. The upper floors of this building are empty. There are old flag pole holders and electrical cable sticking out of the walls. The original mouldings are still found at the top of the building.

*Cross John Street

85 1/2 King Street East (15): The second floor of this building is occupied by the Pagoda restaurant, which opened in 1942. It is the oldest continuous restaurant in Hamilton. The main floor now houses a Pizza Pizza fast food restaurant. The third (upper) floor is currently being renovated. The owner of this building apparently wants to renovate it for 'creative' use. Outside the building, a vintage florescent sign and an old awning welcome diners to the Pagoda restaurant. Next door is an empty first floor retail space advertised "just leased" in the "Gore" building.



95-97 King Street East (16): This was the location of the Mills Hardware Company from 1912 until 1960. For a while, it housed a strip club, but today it is empty. The Mediterranean grill that used to depend on the late night customers in this spot (seen in the middle here) moved in 2012 to a location further east down King Street. The building is currently being renovated. It has a unique large-spaced wooden lattice outside its doors. Next door to the right is Klassy T-Shirt Rock Museum, which is not a museum. Their façade is aluminum siding and brick. They have a yellow door and plastic signage. The upstairs floors are assumably empty.

103 King Street East (17): Originally, this site housed the old Woodbine Hotel and then the Brennan Lumber company. In 1917, the beautiful Loew's Theatre was built here at a phenomenal expense (at the time) of \$225,000. This theatre's orchestra pit, auditorium, and balconies were carpeted. Its velour canopy was lined with gold fringe. The Ontario Coat of Arms rested over the velvet house curtain. A large sky-lit stained-glass dome covered the audience. This theatre featured blockbuster silent movies and vaudeville shows, live theatre and symphony concerts. It was also rented out for election rallies and religious conventions. The audience seats held 2,268.



In 1922, Loew's Theatre was renamed The Capitol when it was bought by Hamilton United Theatres Limited, who installed a massive pipe organ to accompany the silent movies. It was then resold in 1940 to Canadian Famous Players and again in 1946 to the Canadian Odeon Theatre Chain. In the 1950's, the rise of television hurt movie houses all over Canada, and in 1958 Odeon Theatres decided to modernize the Capitol Theatre façade in an effort to save profits. In the process, they demolished the Capitol's steel canopy-marquee. This did not help, and after years of struggle, the Capitol's operations ceased in 1971.

Two years later, the auditorium was demolished. A parking lot now stands where the main hall was, but the lobby and facade of the old Loew's is still there. For now, it is empty, although it was a strip club for a while. The municipality has since bought this property and intends to renovate it for use as a restaurant (see renovation picture to left). This location used to also have a patio that spilled out on to the side walk. It still has its decorative mouldings and lattice but it is starting to fall apart. Outside, there is a heavy metal and plastic gate that covers the doorway when it is not in use.

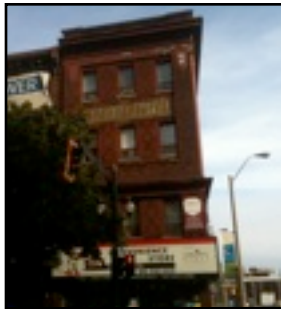


105-115 King Street East (18): Before the Hamilton Spectator opened their offices here in 1921, this building was occupied by multiple bicycle stores. The newspaper's operations shared the building with Woolworth's, D'Allaird's, G. Gaul Jeweler, Laura Secord, and Rainbow Shops until it moved to Frid Street in 1976. Today, Rainbow Bridal and Bruno's Hair School are still in this location. They have been there for roughly 50 years. Two other boutiques also occupy this building, one of which is owned by Rainbow Bridal, while the other is closed. Above Rainbow Bridal is an old but intact awning, and plants growing out of the awning cover next to a bird nest. Bruno's Hair School used to be a Wendy's. The

upper floors remain empty. 117-121 King Street East (19): D. Moore and Co. built this four storey Victorian building for their retail store here in 1821. The company sold tin-ware, heaters, ranges, and other household appliances there until 1910, when the building became occupied by a Piano Company, then some shoe stores, then the Joel Bridal Salon. Today, half of this building is empty, but currently being rebuilt for restaurant use. The other half is being used for Wintas Computers. Wintas' windows are barred and unwashed. It is white inside. Upstairs, there is a paper sign in the window. As of June, 2012, they seem to have just moved in. The walls are made of stucco and tile.



To the right of this building is Power Pharmacy. This façade is covered in signs. Its windows are dirty, and display only piles of garish household decorative goods placed haphazardly in a lobby. "Power" is written in the tile in front of the entrance way.



125 King Street East (20): Before 1919, the Canada Cycle and Motor Company occupied this site. The building was demolished and rebuilt, however, in 1919 by the Green Furnishings Company. It has contrasting brick and terra cotta. It then became a bridal store called Leeds. Today, Crazy Bill's Convenience Store occupies this building's main floor. Its windows are clean and its displays well organized. There are twelve apartments on the upper floors, all occupied.