



Bloor Improvement Group Neighbourhood Review & Planning 2008



PART I: Economic Revitalization Plan

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Bloor Improvement Group

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Executive Summary

This report details an economic revitalization plan for the Bloordale and Bloorcourt commercial corridor in the City of Toronto, a neighbourhood which is experiencing early stages of gentrification. The plan identifies opportunities and strategies for revitalizing the commercial environment along Bloor Street while minimizing disruption to the socio-economic composition of the neighbourhood and attempting to avert displacement of existing businesses and residents.

This section of Bloor, stretching from Christie Street to Lansdowne Avenue, is characterized by a range of small businesses that serve a variety of social and ethnic groups. The surrounding neighbourhood has traditionally been immigrant reception area and is home to many active community organizations and social services.

To ensure our economic revitalization plan reflected the diverse perspectives in the neighbourhood, we used the following methodologies: surveys of residents, shopkeepers, and shoppers; key informant interviews; an inventory of commercial operations along the street; and analysis of census data.

The research resulted in the creation of a vision for the neighbourhood that emphasizes:

1. A diverse neighbourhood: accessible to residents and shoppers of different cultures and social status;
2. Better communication and integration between all community organizations and institutions;
3. Cooperation amongst all community stakeholders;
4. Safety: personal and social safety.

The plan offers several recommendations to the BIAs and community groups active in the neighbourhood. These recommendations include measures that will address tensions between local groups, create community institutions that encourage collaboration, and address the safety concerns of local residents.

1.0 Introduction

This report details an economic revitalization plan for the Bloordale and Bloorcourt commercial corridor in the City of Toronto. This plan identifies opportunities and strategies for revitalizing the commercial environment along Bloor Street while minimizing disruption to the socio-economic composition of the neighbourhood and averting displacement of existing businesses and residents. The research team was retained by the Bloor Improvement Group (BIG): a community organization committed to strengthening community relations and undertaking neighbourhood-based, integrated community economic development.

The development of this plan involved collecting and analyzing as much information as possible to develop an understanding of existing conditions in the study area. This was done through a series of statistical and demographic studies as well as consultation with businesses, shopkeepers, shoppers, community organizations, and other key informants.

2.0 The Place

The stretch of Bloor Street West between Christie and Lansdowne is characterized by a range of small businesses that serve a variety of social and ethnic groups. The surrounding neighbourhoods (Bloordale and Bloorcourt) have traditionally been an immigrant reception area, with previous concentrations of Portuguese and Italian communities. Now these populations are in the process of being replaced by Indian, Burmese, Vietnamese, and African households. The neighbourhood is also home to many active community organizations and social services. Recently, increases in the population of young professionals and the opening of several new art galleries suggest that gentrification is underway.

The western portion of the neighbourhood has particularly long-running social issues. The City of Toronto's 'Social Indicators and Priority Areas' study—focused on indicators of risk and social vulnerability—identified the Dupont-Lansdowne neighbourhood, in the western portion of the study area, as being especially vulnerable. High levels of crime and active drug and sex trades are present in this area.

3.0 Summary of the Problems

The request for a revitalization plan suggests that something needs changing in the neighbourhood. This is indeed a stigmatized area that is often portrayed as 'problematic' by the media. Many local businesses have had direct experience dealing with drug and sex trafficking, violence, or vandalism.

Our understanding of issues of concern in the neighbourhood are outline in the following section. This list was established on the basis of discussions at community meetings, interviews with our clients, and a survey of local business-owners.

Empty storefronts: The Bloorcourt/dale strip currently hosts a high number of empty storefronts: 13% of storefronts in Bloordale and 6% of storefronts in Bloorcourt are unoccupied and many have no indication of being for lease or sale. These vacancies may be due to property-owners anticipating an increase in local property values. If an increase in values is predicted, some commercial building-owners have an incentive to avoid leasing their buildings until the conditions of the neighbourhood change, property values rise, and they are able to lease to a high-paying tenant. These unoccupied stores are seen as playing a key role in perpetuating the ‘downtrodden’ image of the neighbourhood, thereby facilitating disinvestment, encouraging illegal activity, and deterring shoppers, pedestrians, and cyclists from using the strip.

Crime: The high neighbourhood crime statistics and visible presence of illegal activity—largely drug trade and prostitution—on parts of the strip may deter some local residents from using the street. Many businesses reported crime and drugs as primary matters of concern. A number of businesses reported plans to sell or move their operations and/or residence as a result of high levels of illegal activity.

Increasing competition from chain retail: Retailers along the Bloor strip face competition from large budget retailers (e.g. No Frills, Wal-Mart) in the nearby Dufferin Mall. Additionally, there is some evidence of retail chain activity moving onto the strip itself, the most recent of which to open was a Shoppers Drug Mart.



Disconnected pathways and long blocks: The south-west portion of the study area is characterized by 800m uninterrupted city blocks. This makes walking through the neighbourhood difficult and may discourage pedestrian and bicycle traffic through the area, thereby reducing street-life.

Organizational challenges: While the Bloor Improvement Group (BIG) hopes to mobilize stakeholders and the local BIAs in collectively revitalizing the strip, there are some challenges to doing so. First, the area is governed by two BIAs. This poses a challenge for the development of a coherent neighbourhood vision as well as a logistical challenge for organizing. Second, familiarity with the BIAs—especially in Bloordale—is low amongst businesses; as a result, attendance at meetings, and thereby scrutiny and accountability, is minimal. Furthermore, business interest in community organizing tends to be low: for instance, many businesses were initially reluctant to participate in last year’s BIG street festival.

Lack of information: Data is lacking on the demographics of the population who use the strip as it compares with the population of local residents. This is important information for the development of any coherent strategic plan. In addition, local community groups lack data on the infrastructure that currently exists in the neighbourhood and on the contacts and mandates of community groups that are active locally.

Lack of neighbourhood identity: While the area is home to an incredible level of ethno-cultural diversity reflected in its array of shops and restaurants, the neighbourhood lacks a coherent public identity. Rather, the neighbourhood is most often associated with the problematic history of the Bloor-Lansdowne intersection. This lack of identity was raised as a matter of concern by the project clients and local BIAs.

“People don’t respect the neighbourhood.”
- Residents association rep

Disinvestment by the city: Some businesses are concerned about a blatant lack of city investment along the Bloorcourt/dale strip. Parts of the street lack basic infrastructure, such as garbage cans and street lights—investments other downtown neighbourhoods take for granted. Additionally, some businesses are concerned that police are indifferent to the high level of local crime because ‘cracking down’ on it would simply displace it to another part of the city.

Gentrification: Predictions have been ongoing about the looming gentrification of the neighbourhood for many years, and the arrival of art galleries and coverage in the media suggest that it may finally be arriving. This, in combination with the broadening local socio-economic and ethno-cultural mix, has made for a heated political environment. As the neighbourhood becomes more stratified, local politics are marked by a sense of class conflict. While there is an abundance of community organizations in the area, their wide range of political and philosophical outlooks represent many diverse visions for the community, posing a challenge for co-operation.

While some business owners and residents welcome the local commercial changes, others fear they represent the beginning of a process of gentrification that could force out local businesses and residents.¹ For a detailed account of the gentrification process, please refer to the section of this report entitled “Confronting Gentrification.”

¹ Carraway, K. (2008). The Hipsters are Coming. *Eye Weekly*. 23 July.

4.0 Methods

In order to properly capture the range of viewpoints in this diverse neighbourhood we decided that it was necessary to use a wide variety of research methods. We wanted to ensure that we captured the opinions of shopkeepers and local residents as well as key actors who play important roles in the neighbourhood. These methods are outlined in Figure 1. The description and justification for each methods are outlined below.

4.1 Shopkeepers Survey

Method: Distributed Questionnaire

We used a short survey to sample commercial establishments in the study area. The survey included questions about the length of time the operation has been in the area, about the location of the shopkeeper’s residence, about the business’s participation in local street festivals, and about the ownership of the building. The survey also inquired about perceived problems in the area and about visions for the future of the neighbourhood and specific changes they would like to see in the area. Using this survey, every fifth commercial establishment was surveyed by the research team on October 16th, 2008; there were a total of 39 responses. The questionnaire itself can be found in Appendix I.

Figure 1: Research Methods



4.2 Shoppers Survey

Method: Simple Intercept Survey

We designed this survey to help us understand who is currently using the Bloorcourt/dale strip, how it is being used, and what changes shoppers would like to see occur along the strip. We wanted to better understand peoples' shopping experience along Bloor Street: which elements of the strip shoppers perceive to be assets to the neighbourhood and which elements they perceive as barriers to local improvement. The survey asked participants where they live, how often they shop on Bloor, what they buy, how many stores they visit, and why they shop on Bloor. Participants were also asked to describe the area and to list some ideas for improving the Bloor commercial strip.

We surveyed shoppers at one location in each of the two BIAs: at the corner of Bloor and Brock, and at the corner of Bloor and Dovercourt. At each location we surveyed every third passer-by until the target of 15 participants was met. We conducted the survey on Sunday, November 2nd; a total of 30 shoppers were surveyed. The survey can be found in Appendix II.



4.3 Residents Survey

Method: Random Sampling

This portion of the project expands on a survey of the Bloorcourt BIA area conducted by Councillor Pantalone’s office in 2007. Using the same questionnaire—to ensure comparability of data gathered in Bloorcourt and Bloordale—we expanded this survey into the Bloorcourt section of the neighbourhood. This survey was intended to help us understand the residential make-up of the neighbourhood and, therefore, how a stronger relationship could be fostered between the Bloor commercial strip and local residents. The survey contained questions about shopping patterns, perceptions of the Bloor strip, and desired changes to the commercial makeup. The Bloorcourt survey was updated and extended into Bloordale during the period from November 8th to November 22nd. Every third house was surveyed on each street in the BIA: half of the streets north of Bloor and half south of Bloor in an alternating pattern. The survey which was administered can be found in Appendix III.



4.4 Key Informant Interviews

We conducted interviews with a wide variety of local actors who could provide critical insights into the dynamics of the neighbourhood. We made a particular effort to connect with groups that are not currently involved in the public conversations about neighbourhood change or are at risk of displacement if the neighbourhood gentrifies. All key informants were asked the same questions about the state of the neighbourhood as it currently stands, local changes that are taking place, and their visions for the future of the neighbourhood.

Interviews were recorded by both tape and written notes. While the questions were at times modified depending on the informant being interviewed, the general guiding interview questions are in Appendix IV.

4.5 Store Inventory

A store inventory of the Bloorcourt BIA was conducted by Councillor Pantalone in 2007. The business name and phone number were recorded for each commercial address within the Bloorcourt BIA. We updated this inventory on October 9th by surveying the entire commercial corridor from Montrose Avenue to Lansdowne Avenue. Every store was then grouped by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code. The results of the updated store inventory can be found in Appendix V.

4.6 Demographic Analysis

A thorough understanding of the area's demographics is needed to create a successful economic revitalization plan that accounts for the socio-economic status and conditions of surrounding neighbourhoods. Statistics Canada Census data was compiled and analyzed to create a detailed profile of the neighbourhoods that are adjacent to the Bloordale and Bloorcourt commercial corridor.

To facilitate the analysis of local demographic characteristics and socio-economic conditions, we established a local catchment area that included residents who are likely to shop on Bloor Street. The boundaries of the study area were determined based on discussion with local officials, stakeholders and careful consideration of resident and pedestrian movement patterns in relation to commuting flow, location of subway stations and street orientation.



Map 1:
Map of the Bloordale and Bloorcourt Study Area



As illustrated in Map 1, the study area covers approximately 5.3 square kilometres, stretching from the Canadian Pacific railway in the north to College Street in the south, and from the Canadian National railway in the west to Christie Street and Grace Street in the east. The socio-demographic analysis of the study area was primarily based on 2006 Census results released by Statistics Canada although 2001 and 1996 Census data were used for trends analysis.

5.0 Analysis

5.1 Shopkeepers Survey

Crime and safety were the top concerns identified by shopkeepers. Several business owners had either a direct experience with crime or anecdotal evidence of crime in the area. Many suggested that this was a factor keeping people from shopping in the neighbourhood. Others expressed regret with opening businesses in the neighbourhood, citing lack of spending power amongst those who shop on the street.

However, there is a high concentration of businesses located in the area which appear to be quite stable, having been located on the commercial strip for over five years. As can be seen in Table 1, 50% of the shopkeepers interviewed had been located in the area for over five years. Many shopkeepers did express the sentiment that this was a 'good' neighbourhood, but that the crime on the street needed to be controlled so that the people who live in the area feel safe to shop. Despite these comments, only 25% of shopkeepers surveyed reside in the neighbourhood.

Table 1: Summary of Shopkeeper Survey Results

Resident of Neighbourhood		
	Number	Percentage
Yes	4	25%
No	12	75%

Time in Operation		
	Number	Percentage
Under 1 year	3	19%
1 - 3 Years	1	6%
3 - 5 Years	4	25%
Over 5 Years	8	50%

Ownership of Retail Unit		
	Number	Percentage
Owner	6	38%
Tenant	10	63%

Several of the businesses surveyed drew customers from all across the city, having created a niche market for specialized goods. However, some of these same shopkeepers suggested the Bloor/Lansdowne intersections stigma as a barrier to their businesses success.

5.2 Shoppers Survey

Eighty-three percent (83%) of shoppers surveyed live within the neighbourhood; however, under half (42%) of those surveyed purchased goods on the Bloor Strip more than 10 times a month. Surprisingly there was no correlation between shopping frequency on Bloor and perception of Street/Shop Appearance and Safety. There was, however, a negative correlation between the number of trips shoppers took to the Dufferin Mall and the frequency with which they shopped along Bloor Street. That is, those who shopped at more frequently at the Dufferin Mall tended to shop less frequently on Bloor. While this does not mean that Dufferin Mall is causing people to shop in the area less, it is an interesting relationship to note.

It is also interesting to note that, among those who shopped frequently on Bloor, the majority were using upmarket shops such as organic grocers or boutique coffee shops.

While some shoppers expressed concern about safety on the street, the total survey responses showed an average ranking of street safety as ‘good’ to ‘very good’—even among shoppers surveyed close to the Lansdowne/Bloor intersection. Interestingly, shoppers surveyed in both BIAs were more concerned about street and shop appearance than they were about safety. As can be seen in Figure 3, 50% of shoppers rated shop appearance as ‘poor’ to ‘fair’.

Table 2: Summary of Shoppers Survey Results

Percentage Who Ranked Neighbourhood in Poor/Fair Range	
Street Appearance	39%
Shop Appearance	50%
Safety	25%
Meets All Needs	43%
Overall Opinion	32%

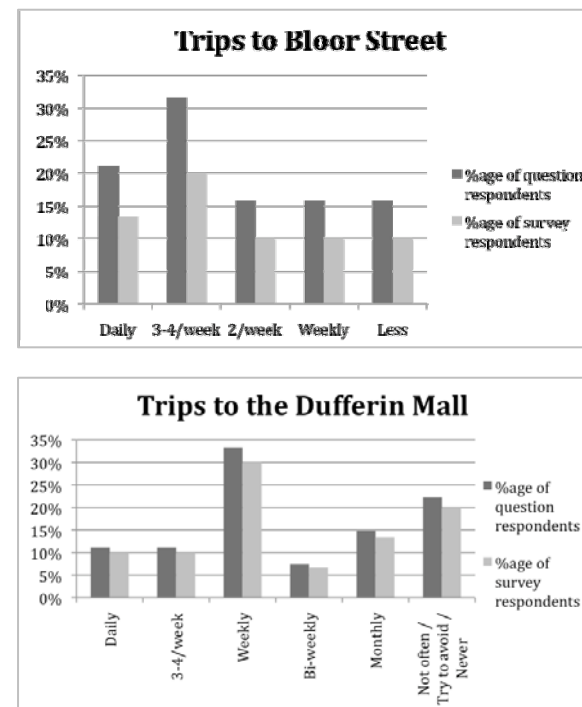
Almost a third of shoppers had a negative opinion of the neighbourhood and over 40% did not feel like the neighbourhood met all their shopping needs. This suggests that the perception of the neighbourhood by those using it is a barrier to getting more people on the street. However, only 25% of shopper’s surveyed were concerned about safety, which may suggest that crime is less of a barrier than other environment-related issues. This cannot be stated for certain though, because the shoppers currently using the street may have a different opinion of its safety than those who are not using the street.

5.3 Residents Survey

The socio-economic data collected in the residents survey indicates that the portion of the population surveyed is not representative of the neighbourhood. The following differences should be considered when interpreting the results:

- Household size is larger: 50% of households surveyed contained three residents, 29% contained four or more, and only 22% of households contained one to two people. In the study area as a whole, on the other hand, small households of one or two people account for 60% of the neighbourhood, and this number is increasing.
- Housing type is different: For reasons of accessibility, most of the households surveyed were single-family homes, semi-detached homes, or row houses. However, these styles of dwelling only represent 25% of the actual housing stock in the study area; three out of four private dwellings in the study area are apartments.

Figure 2: Residents Survey Results



- Income is higher: While in the complete study area, one third of private households earned less than \$30,000 in the year of the last census, only 4% of respondents reported earnings under \$30,000. 54% of respondent households reported earning over \$79,000. This might be partially due to the larger household size amongst resident survey respondents.

The perception of Bloor amongst those that answered our survey was poor. About 52% of respondents reported that the quality of retail stores along Bloor was poor, while 0% reported it as excellent. 43% of respondents reported feeling there were not enough stores along the Bloor strip.

In an open-ended question about why they do not frequent stores along Bloor Street, the top response (mentioned by 38% of respondents) was the poor selection of stores and products. Other common themes included: poor quality products (27%), unappealing stores (23%), and crime activity (23%).

Bloor does not serve as primary grocery destination for this population. Almost half of respondents reported purchasing the majority of their groceries at the Dufferin Mall, while only 7% reported doing the majority of their grocery shopping along Bloor Street.

The residents survey does not support the idea that the strip should (or could) compete with the Dufferin Mall for the provision of basic amenities, such as groceries; only 15% of respondents suggested they would like to see a full service grocery store along the strip. More common visions for the strip included independent shops, cafes, and restaurants: types of establishments that are already plentiful along the street. Some respondents qualified this redundancy by noting that they wanted establishments that fit a different niche (ethical coffee, organics, etc.) than those that currently exist along

“Neater, more attractive storefronts would be an improvement and would draw more people to the area.”

- Resident

the strip. Additionally, given the common reasons for not shopping on Bloor Street, many respondents were likely envisioning what were often termed 'higher quality' establishments.

With respect to shopping behaviour, 70% of the households surveyed shop along the Bloor strip. Of these households, 84% (53% of total respondents) reported shopping along the strip at least once a week. Respondents reported shopping at a wide variety of stores and most respondents reported shopping for food items during their shopping trips. The average expenditure during a shopping trip on Bloor Street was \$35.

Almost all respondents reported some trips to the Dufferin Mall, although 20% reported that they visit it infrequently or never, or try to avoid it. 19% of respondents reported the proximity of the Dufferin Mall as one of the reasons they do not shop on Bloor Street. Most respondents (55%) reported visiting the Mall at least once a week.

5.4 Key Informant Interviews

Criminal activities including theft, drug dealing and prostitution were among the top concerns raised by key informants as having detrimental effects on businesses operating along this corridor. As described by an area resident, "the pockets of illicit activity...discourage people from shopping [along the commercial corridor]." There were also complaints about the lack of police presence, which they suggested contributed to the ongoing illicit activity in the area.

Another more commonly discussed challenge facing Bloor Street was the lack of store variety and business mix to attract consumers living in the neighbourhood. "You recognize this as a resident: there are no essential services [along the commercial

street] for me” said an informant who also works in the neighbourhood. “I love the idea of being able to pick up stuff on the way home... and, I can’t do it. There’s nothing there for that”. Some key informants also expressed concerns about the presence of empty storefronts, which work against drawing local residents and others from outside the neighbourhood to shop in the area.

When asked about their vision for the neighbourhood, many key informants indicated the desire to see a mixture of retail and commercial offerings and independent businesses along the corridor. In addition, several key informants highlighted the importance of encouraging new and existing businesses to serve a niche market and offer products and services that are not already available from retail chains in the neighbourhood.

Finally, many individuals envisioned frequent collaborations between different stakeholders in the community (i.e. businesses, social services, community groups) to address issues and challenges confronting the neighbourhood. One community group representative said, “I think fixing this neighbourhood is doable, with all the partners focused on it.”

Weak membership in local BIAs and low attendance at meetings were mentioned as areas for improvement. It was suggested that the business community work closely with other actors in the neighbourhood to collaborate in strategizing on local revitalization efforts. Some interviewees also expressed concern about the threat of rising property values and the potential displacement of businesses in the area. A final barrier to revitalization was the high number of vacant commercial spaces along the strip.

Many key informants indicated that people are the neighbourhood’s greatest asset and resource. This includes, but is not limited to: the local residents association, BIAs, school trustees, and other citizen and community groups comprised of leaders and activists who are “willing to tackle problems.” The City, on the other hand, invests in local infrastructure such as the library expansion project and the Dufferin subway station modernization project as suggested by a local politician.

It is important to note that the analysis of our key informant interviews was limited by the fact that we were unable to reach the ethnic community associations active in the neighbourhood. Although we attempted to make contact with many groups, we were not successful in our efforts.

5.5 Store Inventory

This commercial corridor extends from Montrose Avenue in the east to Lansdowne Avenue in the west with Dufferin Street dividing the Bloordale (west) and Bloorcourt (east) commercial district, as illustrated in Map 2. This corridor is characterized by a range of ethnically diverse independent retail, restaurant and service facilities catering to the basic needs of residents in the surrounding neighbourhood. The unique composition of commercial facilities has been influenced by the local settlement of immigrant groups including Portuguese, Greek, Italians and, more recently, Chinese, Vietnamese, East Indian and African. The retail structure of the Bloordale and Bloorcourt business area continues to reflect the past and present demographic of residents in the surrounding neighbourhoods.



The area's retail component is overshadowed by its service commercial component, which accounted for over half (52%) of all inventoried establishments along the corridor. 22% of all retail establishments in the area were full service and fast food restaurants, as seen in Map 3. As evident from Map 3, restaurant facilities are distributed evenly along the street. These restaurants primarily serve South Asian, East

Map 3: Map of Full-Service and Fast Food Restaurants along the Bloordale/Bloorcourt Commercial Corridor



In October 2008, there were 45 local grocers and meat markets in our study area, accounting for 12% of all businesses in the area. Locations of these businesses are illustrated in Map 4 below. Many of the local grocers also carry merchandise catering to the needs of the ethnically-diverse community living or coming to shop in the area.

Map 4: Map of Local Grocers and Meat Markets along the Bloordale/Bloorcourt Commercial Corridor



Despite a highly diverse retail environment serving mainly local residents, about 36 of the 389 stores in the Bloordale and Bloorcourt corridor were vacant at the time of the inventory: 14% of stores in Bloordal and 7% of stores in Bloorcourt. Locations of these vacant stores are illustrated in Map 5.

Map 5: Map of Vacant Stores along the Bloordale/Bloorcourt Commercial Corridor



A map of social service providers and ethno-cultural organizations along the commercial corridor is presented below:

Map 6: Map of Social Service Providers and Ethno-Cultural Organizations along the Bloordale/Bloorcourt Commercial Corridor



5.5.1 The Bloordale Commercial/Retail Corridor

In October 2008, approximately 119 commercial or retail establishments were located in the Bloordale Business Improvement Area. A summary of businesses by type in Bloordale is displayed in Table 4.

There is a concentration of furniture stores along the Bloordale retail corridor. The sale of used clothing, jewelleries, movies and bicycles are popular among second hand merchants in Bloordale. There appears to be an absence of commercial banks within the Bloordale business improvement area. Only a credit union and currency exchange commercial establishment were found to the west of Dufferin.

In October 2008, a total of 16 vacant commercial/retail units were recorded in the Bloordale business corridor. Several at-grade commercial/retail units appeared to be occupied by residential tenants.

Ethnic or cultural organizations situated in this commercial corridor include the Islamic Information Centre and Ethiopian Association of the GTA. Safehaven, an organization providing support to children and youth with disabilities, and the Music Therapy Centre are examples of non-profit community service providers in Bloordale.

Cheap rents and the concentration of artists in the neighbourhood are beginning to attract art galleries to the this section of Bloor. The Toronto Free Gallery, which provides a not-for-profit art space for local artists to “experiment, explore new ideas and question norms” on social, cultural, urban and environmental issues, has moved into a retail space formerly occupied by a local hardware store. The Mercer Union Gallery,

Table 4: Bloordale Business Area – Summary of Commercial/Retail Establishments, 2008

Commercial/Retail Classification	Number	Percent
Food Services and Drinking Places	26	21.8%
Food Stores	20	16.8%
Vacant	16	13.4%
Personal and Laundry Services	11	9.2%
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	7	5.9%
Religious, Civic and Professional Organizations	7	5.9%
Second Hand Merchandise	7	5.9%
Electronics and Appliance Stores	5	4.2%
Entertainment	5	4.2%
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	2	1.7%
Financial Services	2	1.7%
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	2	1.7%
Other Services	2	1.7%
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book and Music Stores	2	1.7%
General Merchandise Stores	1	0.8%
Health and Personal Care Stores	1	0.8%
Other Professional Services	1	0.8%
Public Administration	1	0.8%
Telecommunications	1	0.8%
Commercial/Retail Facilities in Bloordale	119	100.0%



Toronto Free Gallery

another artist-run gallery, opened in the Bloordale commercial corridor in the Fall of 2008.

5.5.2 The Bloorcourt Commercial/Retail Corridor

Bloorcourt is roughly twice the size of its western neighbour and so, not suprisingly, it offers many more commercial operations. Restaurants, cafés, and fast food places accounted for 23% of all commercial establishments in the Bloorcourt area (Table 5). The area has a concentration of professional offices that offer accounting, legal, real estate, insurance and photography services. Doctor offices are commonly found in 3 to 4-storey commercial complexes with local pharmacies nearby. The absence of banks in Bloordale is contrasted by their abundance to the east of Dufferin. There were 20 vacant storefronts at the time of our inventory.

5.5.3 Commerical Facilities not on Bloor Street

The Dufferin Mall, found on Dufferin Street between College Street and Bloor Street West, is primarily occupied by major anchors such as Wal-Mart discount department store, No-Frills supermarket, and the Beer Store. Some of the large format chain stores at Dufferin Mall depend on a business from a large regional market that is attracted by familiar and popular store names and regional advertising.

The Galleria mall, situated at the southwest corner of Dupont Street and Dufferin Street, north of the Bloorcourt/dale area is anchored by a Price Chopper supermarket and a variety of retail and service establishments. In recent years, there have been plans to redevelop this site into a comprehensive mixed-use development, including residential uses, retail facilities and park space.

Table 5: Bloorcourt Business Area – Summary of Commercial/Retail Establishments, 2008

Commercial/Retail Classification	Number	Percent
Food Services and Drinking Places	61	22.5%
Personal and Laundry Services	40	14.8%
Food Stores	25	9.2%
Other Professional Services	20	7.4%
Vacant	20	7.4%
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	15	5.5%
Health and Personal Care Stores	12	4.4%
Financial Services	11	4.1%
Medical Services	10	3.7%
Religious, Civic and Professional Organizations	10	3.7%
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	9	3.3%
Electronics and Appliance Stores	8	3.0%
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book and Music Stores	7	2.6%
Entertainment	5	1.8%
General Merchandise Stores	4	1.5%
Other Services	3	1.1%
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	2	0.7%
Other Office	2	0.7%
Second Hand Merchandise	2	0.7%
Building Material/ Garden Equipment/ Supplies Dealers	1	0.4%
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	1	0.4%
Other	1	0.4%
Public Administration	1	0.4%
Publishing Industries	1	0.4%
Commercial/Retail Facilities in Bloorcourt	271	100.0%

5.6 Demographic Analysis

The Bloorcourt/dale retail strip contains roughly 400 business. Since the majority of these businesses serve local residents, it was important for us to understand the make-up of the local population. Using census data, we examining key characteristics of the population in our study area and compared these to the Toronto, Ontario and Candian figures. Detailed tables are displayed in Appendix VI of this report.

Map 7: Map of the Bloordale and Bloorcourt Study Area



The following section presents basic demographic characteristics of residents in the study area. More specifically, 2006 Census results on population, age and gender, household formation, housing characteristics, immigration and culture, language, employment, education, and income is summarized and discussed.

5.6.1 Population

The study area population is declining and residents are aging.

Total population in the study area declined by 6% from 53,040 in 1996 to 49,960 in 2006. During the same period, Toronto’s population increased by 5% while Ontario’s population rose by 13% as displayed in Table 6. The most significant decline in population was among those 0 to 14 years, which fell by 29% over the ten-year period. This is contrasted by a 13% increase in those over 65 years of age. Figure 3 illustrates increase in the proportion of older age groups from 1996 to 2006.

A majority (61%) of the study area population were working age in 2006.

Working age individuals (25 to 64 years) comprised 61% of the area’s population compared to 57% in Toronto. Children (0 to 14 years) and youth (15 to 24) together made up one-quarter (26%) of the study area population. Seniors accounted for 12%, as seen in Figure 4.

Figure 3: Change in Study Area Population, 1996-2006

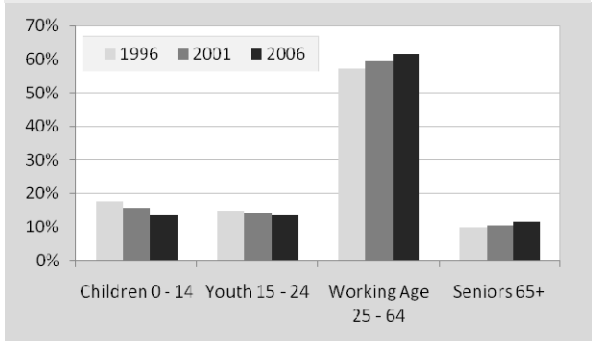
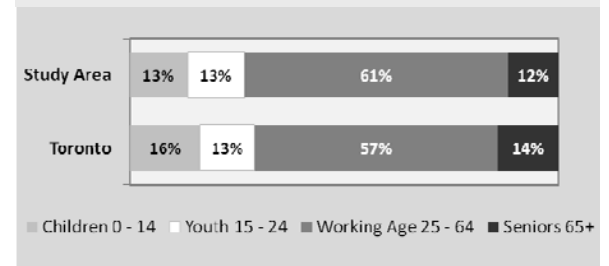


Table 6:

Population Change, 1996 to 2006	%
Bloordale/Bloorcourt Study Area	-6%
City of Toronto	5%
Ontario	13%
Canada	10%

Figure 4: Population by Age Groups, 2006



5.6.2 Household Size and Composition

Households are getting smaller.

Smaller households (those with one or two persons) comprised more than 60% of all households in the study area in 2006. This is similar to Toronto's average.

Non-family households are increasing.

Within the study area, the number of non-family households grew by 25% from 1996 to 2006. In contrast, declines were recorded in both multiple-family households (-10%) and one-family households (-1%) during the same period. Across the City, the number of multiple-family households grew by 20% while one-family increased by 7% and non-family households by 10% as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 5: Households by Size in the Study Area, 2006

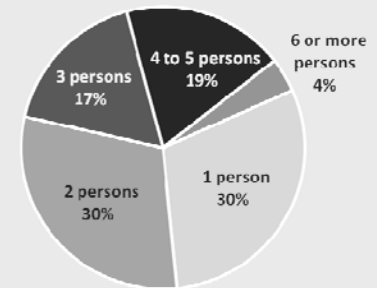
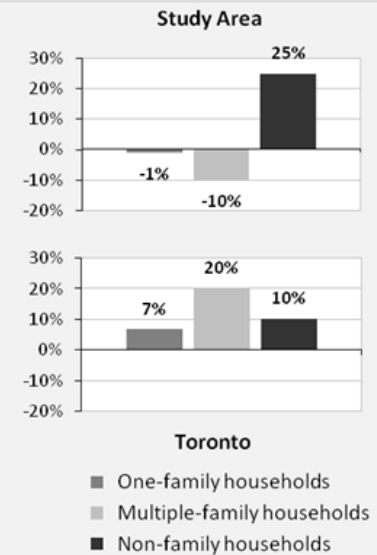


Figure 6: Growth in Households by Type, 1996 to 2006



The study area had a higher concentration of lone-parent and childless common-law couple families.

Compared to Toronto and Ontario’s average, the study area is home to a higher proportion of lone parent families that often face economic vulnerability and have greater demand for community support and services. The proportion of lone-parent families measured at 21%, of which 17% were female headed. Compared to the proportion of lone-parent families in Toronto (20%), Ontario and the nation (both at 16%), the rate is higher in the study area as outlined in Table 7.

In addition to the presence of lone-parent families, the study area had a considerably higher concentration of childless common-law couples (11%) in 2006, compared with Toronto as a whole (6%).

5.6.3 Housing Type & Tenure

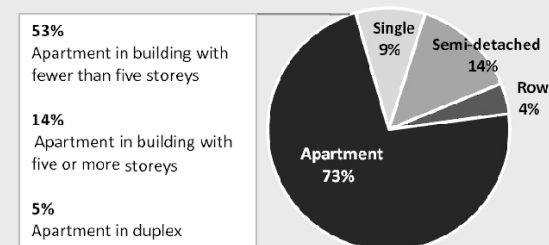
Three out of four private dwellings in the study area were apartments.

Apartments accounted for 73% of all private dwellings in the study area according to 2006 Census results. Most of these apartments are situated in low-rise buildings with fewer than five stories. As illustrated in Figure 7, single-detached houses comprised only 9% of housing stock in the area while semi-detached dwellings and row houses constitute 14% and 4% respectively.

Table 7:

Lone Parent Families, 2006	%
Bloordale/Bloorcourt Study Area	20.5%
City of Toronto	20.3%
Ontario	15.8%
Canada	15.9%

Figure 7: Dwellings by Type in the Study Area, 2006



The area had a higher share of rental units.

Despite an increase in the homeownership rate from 46% to 49% between 1996 and 2006, dwellings occupied by tenants remained the majority. As illustrated in Table 8, tenant-occupied private or public rental dwellings comprised 51% of all dwellings in the study area in 2006.

An increasing proportion of owners and renters households are experiencing housing affordability challenges.

Housing is considered affordable when a household spends less than 30% of total income on shelter payments, as defined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. In 2005, the proportion of tenant and owner households facing housing affordability challenges were 49% and 31% respectively. As households spend an increasing portion of their income on housing, resources allocated for food, clothing and other daily essential diminish. In Toronto, housing was not affordable for 47% of tenant and 28% of owner households in 2006.

Table 8:

Tenant-Occupied Dwellings, 2006	%
Bloordale/Bloorcourt Study Area	51.4%
City of Toronto	45.6%
Ontario	28.8%
Canada	31.2%

Table 9:

Renter Households Facing Affordability Challenges, 2005	%
Bloordale/Bloorcourt Study Area	48.9%
City of Toronto	46.6%
Ontario	44.3%
Canada	40.1%

Table 10:

Owner Households Facing Affordability Challenges, 2005	%
Bloordale/Bloorcourt Study Area	31.4%
City of Toronto	27.7%
Ontario	20.8%
Canada	17.8%

5.6.4 Immigration

Half of the study area’s population are immigrants.

A total of 24,995 immigrants lived in the Bloordale and Bloorcourt study area in 2006, accounting for 50% of the area’s population. Between 1996 and 2006, the number of immigrants in the study area fell by 17%, outpacing overall population decline of 6%. The top five countries of birth for immigrants in the study area were Portugal (29%), China (9%), Italy (7%), Vietnam (6%) and India (3%). Of all immigrants in the study area, 58% arrived in Canada after 1981, 35% came between 1961 and 1980 while the remaining 7% immigrated to Canada before 1961.

Newer immigrants come from China, India, Brazil, Mexico and Colombia.

Among new immigrants (those arriving since 2001) living in the area, the majority of these individuals were born in Asia and the Middle East (47%) as illustrated in Figure 8. China (19%) is the most common birth place of recent immigrants followed by India (10%), Brazil (6%), Mexico (5%) and Colombia (4%).

As of 2006, visible minorities represented over one-third (36%) of the study area population. Chinese remained the top visible minority group comprising 10% of the area’s population. South Asians, Blacks, and Latin Americans were also common visible minority groups as outlined in Table 12. Consistent with area’s settlement history, over half (51%) of the study area population reported European ethnic origin, a figure much higher than Toronto’s average (at 35%).

Figure 8:
Study Area Recent Immigrants by Place of Birth, 2006

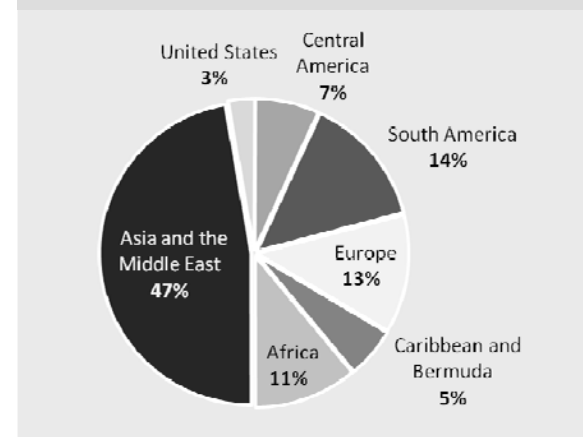


Table 11:

Percent of Recent Immigrants, 2006	%
Bloordale/Bloorcourt Study Area	7.4%
City of Toronto	10.8%
Ontario	4.8%
Canada	3.6%

Table 12:

Study Area: Top 5 Visible Minority Groups, 2006	%
1. Chinese	9.8%
2. South Asian	6.9%
3. Black	5.8%
4. Latin American	5.3%
5. Southeast Asian	2.5%

5.6.5 Language

A smaller proportion of study area residents have knowledge of English and/or French compared to the rest of Toronto.

In 2006, 91% of residents in the study area knew at least one official language, a share lower than the Toronto, provincial and national figures as outlined in Table 13. Of the 49,760 individuals that lived in the study area, 79% reported knowledge of English, 0.3% knew French while 11% knew both official languages.

Portuguese is the most common non-official language spoken.

About 38% of the study area population spoke a non-official language at home compared to 32% in Toronto, 15% in Ontario and 11% in all of Canada, as displayed in Table 14. In 2006, Portuguese was the single most common non-official language spoken in the homes of the Bloordale and Bloorcourt neighbourhood.

Table 13:

Know At Least One Official Language, 2006	%
Bloordale/Bloorcourt Study Area	90.6%
City of Toronto	94.7%
Ontario	97.8%
Canada	98.3%

Table 14:

Spoke a Non-Official Language at Home, 2006	%
Bloordale/Bloorcourt Study Area	38.3%
City of Toronto	32.4%
Ontario	15.4%
Canada	11.3%

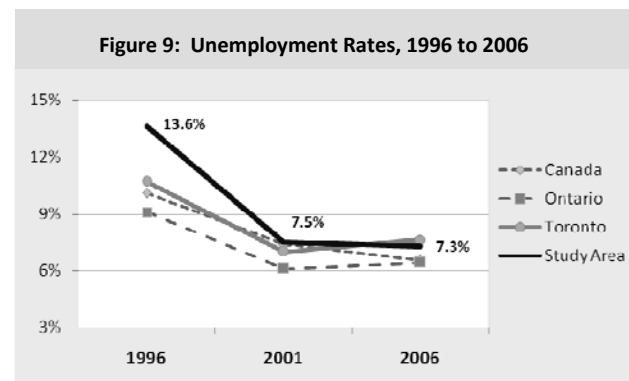
Table 15:

Study Area: Top 10 Non-Official Home Languages, 2006	Rank	%
Portuguese	1	14.8%
Spanish	2	3.6%
Cantonese	3	3.1%
Italian	4	2.7%
Chinese, n.o.s.	5	2.7%
Vietnamese	6	1.9%
Mandarin	7	1.4%
Greek	8	1.1%
Tamil	9	0.7%
Gujarati	10	0.7%

5.6.6 Labour Force Characteristics

Unemployment rate in the study area was higher than the 2006 national and provincial averages, but its declining.

Of the 29,200 labour force participants in the study area, 92.7% were employed and 7.3% were unemployed. Although the study area’s unemployment rate is slightly lower than Toronto (7.6%), it is higher than figures recorded in Ontario (6.4%) and Canada (6.6%), as stated in Table 16. Between 1996 and 2006, unemployment rates in the study area declined from 13.6% to 7.3% as illustrated in Figure 9.



5.6.7 Employment within the Study Area

Retail sector jobs accounted for one in every five jobs within the study area.

Approximately 12,045 jobs were located in the Bloorcourt/dale neighbourhood in 2006. According to 2006 Census data collected for the study area, approximately one in every five jobs (21%) were retail trade related occupations, followed by educational services (12%), manufacturing (11%), health care and social assistances (9%), and accommodation and food services (9%).

Of all individuals that reported working at home in 2006 (22%) worked in the professional, scientific and technical services sector, while employment in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector was the second most common category.

Table 16:

Top 5 Industries in the Study Area	% of Employment
1. Retail Trade	20.7%
2. Educational Services	11.5%
3. Manufacturing	10.5%
4. Health Care and Social Assistance	9.3%
5. Accommodation and Food Services	9.1%

5.6.8 Education

A smaller proportion of study area residents had post-secondary education compared to Toronto.

About 44% of study area residents 25 years of age and older have a college or university certificate, diploma or degree in 2006. This figure is lower than Toronto (54%) and Ontario (47%) but similar to the national number (44%), as shown in Table 17. About 26% of residents in the completed high school or have an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma, as illustrated in Figure 10.

The area has a high proportion of individuals with post-secondary training in arts and communications technologies.

The share of residents with training in Visual and Performing Arts and Communications Technologies in the study area (13%) is well above Toronto’s share of 6% in 2006. The concentration of artists and individuals skilled in communications technologies can be a unique asset to the revitalization effort in the neighbourhood.

5.6.9 Income and Earnings

One-third of private households in the study area earned less than \$30,000 in 2005.

In 2005, about 32% of households in the study area earned less than \$30,000, a higher percentage than Toronto, Ontario and Canada as outlined in Figure 11. Another 44% of households earned between \$30,000 and \$79,999 while 25% of households earned \$80,000 or more. Compared to Toronto and Ontario, the study area had a higher percentage of lower income households and a smaller number of higher income households.

Figure 10: Study Area Residents Age 25 years and over by Highest Level of Education, 2006

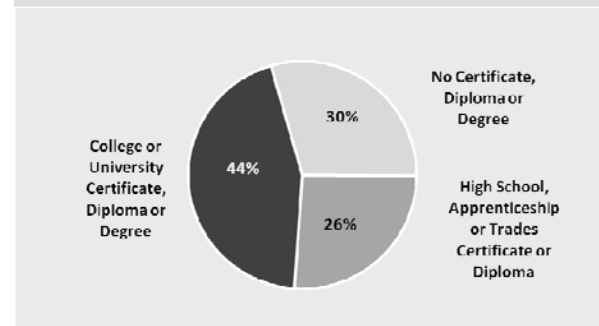
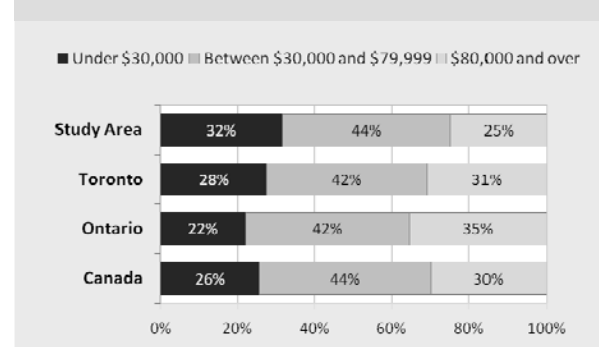


Table 17:

Percent of Population 25 Years and Older with University or College Education, 2006	%
Bloordale/Bloorcourt Study Area	44.3%
City of Toronto	54.2%
Ontario	47.7%
Canada	43.9%

Figure 11: Private Households by Household Income, 2005



The incidence of low income is an important indicator of the neighbourhood’s economic viability. Statistics Canada’s before tax Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) was used to measure low income in the study area and other comparable jurisdictions.

In the study area, 27% of the population in private households fell below the low-income cut-off point, compared to 24.5% for Toronto, 14.7% for Ontario and 15.3% for Canada in 2005 as outlined in Table 18. According to data collected from previous Census periods, incidence of low income in the study area has outpaced averages recorded in Toronto, Ontario and the entire nation. In 1995, one in three residents lived in low income. Although this ratio declined to 25% in 2000, incidence of low income in the study area has risen to 27% in 2005 (Figure 12). During the same period, Toronto’s share also grew from 22.6% in 2000 to 24.5% in 2005.

Figure 12: Percent of Individuals Living Below the Low Income Cut-Off, 1995 to 2005

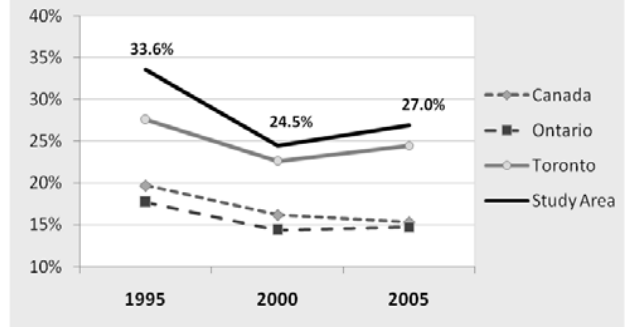


Table 18:

Incidence of Low Income, 2006	%
Bloordale/Bloorcourt Study Area	27.0%
City of Toronto	24.5%
Ontario	14.7%
Canada	15.3%

The following table offers a snapshot of demographic and socio-economic conditions of the Bloordale and Bloorcourt neighbourhood as discussed in previous sections. A complete table with all indicators can be found in Appendix VI.

Table 19: Selected Demographic and Socio-Economic Indicators, 2006

Indicators	Description	Canada	Ontario	City of Toronto	Study Area
Population					
Total Population, 2006	--	31,612,895	12,160,280	2,503,280	49,960
Ten-year change in population, 1996 - 2006	--	9.6%	13.1%	4.9%	-5.8%
Family Composition					
Lone-Parent Families	as a % of all census families	15.9%	15.8%	20.3%	20.5%
Housing Tenure					
Occupied by Tenants	as a % of all occupied private dwellings	31.2%	28.8%	45.6%	51.4%
Immigrants					
Total Immigrants	as a % of total population by immigrant status	19.8%	28.3%	50.0%	50.2%
Labour Force Activity					
Unemployment Rate	% of people in the labour force that are not employed	6.6%	6.4%	7.6%	7.3%
Highest Level of Education (Population 25 years and older)					
College or University certificate, diploma or degree	as a % of population 25 years and older	43.9%	47.7%	54.2%	44.3%
Low Income					
Population with income below LICO (Low Income Cut Off)	as a % of all persons in private households	15.3%	14.7%	24.5%	27.0%
Spending on Shelter (Percent of households spending 30% or more of household income on shelter payments)					
Owner-occupied households	as a % of all owner-occupied private dwellings	17.8%	20.8%	27.7%	31.4%
Tenant-occupied households	as a % of all tenant-occupied private dwellings	40.1%	44.3%	46.6%	48.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Census

5.6.10 Summary & Analysis

Demographic Summary

The Bloordale/Bloorcourt neighbourhood is home to approximately 50,000 people, with immigrants accounting for over half of the population. Similar to other inner city neighbourhoods in Toronto, the area's population has declined by 6% between 1996 and 2006. Despite this vibrant and diverse population, the neighbourhood currently lacks a coherent identity.

Housing affordability has become a major concern: the area has a higher concentration of rental housing, representing over half of the local occupied private housing stock. With nearly half of tenant household facing housing affordability challenges, the need to address housing affordability issues is critical to maintaining social mix in the neighbourhood. This could become an important focus point for community organizations.

The neighbourhood has higher rates of unemployment, low-income and lone-parent families. This suggest the need to tailor employment and community support programs and services to high-need, vulnerable individuals and households of diverse ethnic-cultural background within the neighbourhood.

The area hosts a growing number of artists and galleries. While the level of education is lower in the study area than in the City of Toronto, the neighbourhood is home to a concentration of individuals with arts and communication technology training. These changes are neither wholly 'good' nor 'bad: while this artistic development can represent

early stages of gentrification, arts activities and related facilities generate also income, employment and economic growth by attracting visitors and tourists to the area.²

Commercial/Neighbourhood Summary

The Bloordale and Bloorcourt commercial corridor is home to a vibrant mix of stores and is well served by public transit. People in the area want to shop along Bloor but many do not feel that the commercial strip currently meets their needs. Furthermore, local crime is a deterrent for shoppers and perceived as a threat to shopkeepers.

High businesses turnovers and vacant storefronts are main challenges confronting this local business district. Retaining and attracting businesses to the area is necessary to improve the local business environment and strengthen the local economy.

The area is full of ethnic restaurants and local grocers selling ethnic goods and fresh produce. While the presence of retail chain supermarkets in nearby shopping malls may affect the sales of these small businesses, local grocers along this corridor also serve niche markets within this ethnically diverse population. Not only are locally owned independent stores more likely to provide ethnic goods not available at chain supermarkets, they are also more likely to establish personal relationships with residents of the community³. These businesses are important to local social and economic activity and should be nurtured.

"A lot of the stores along this strip represent the different cultures around it. That is a good thing."

- Resident

² Cars, G. (2008). The Role of Culture in Urban Development. In T. Haas (Ed.), *New Urbanism and Beyond: Designing Cities for the Future*. New York: Rizzoli Publications.

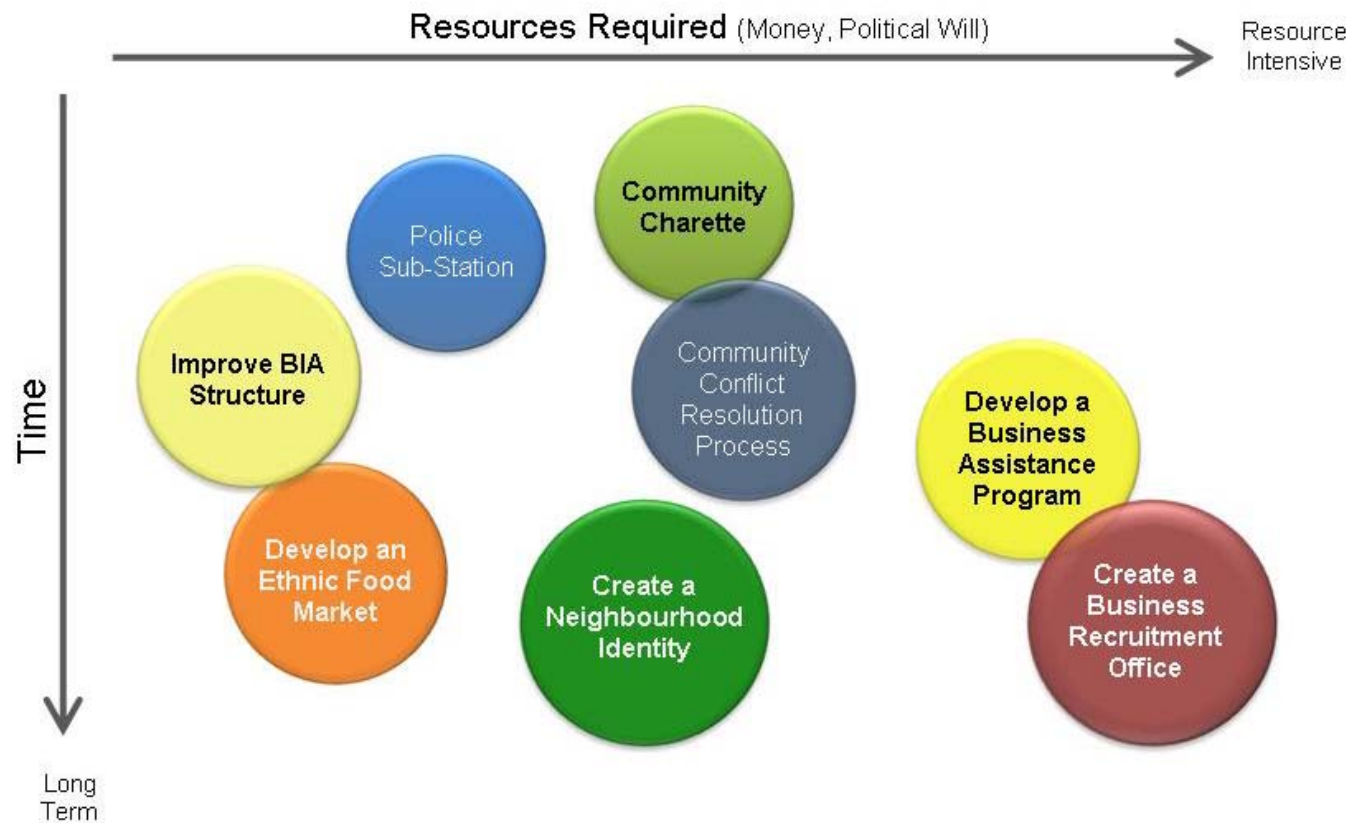
³ Rankin, K. (2008). *Commercial Change in Toronto's West-Central Neighbourhoods [Research Paper 214]*. Toronto: University of Toronto Cities Centre.

6.0 Vision for Neighbourhood

In order to guide the recommendations set out in Section 7, we articulated a vision for the neighbourhood based on the feedback we received during the research process. We decided that all our recommendations should be working towards goals for the neighbourhood. These goals are listed below:

5. A diverse neighbourhood: accessible to residents and shoppers of different cultures and social status
 6. Better communication and integration between all community organizations and institutions
 7. Cooperation amongst all community stakeholders
 8. Safety: personal and social safety
-

7.0 Recommendations



Recommendation 1: Improve BIA Structure & Develop a Business Assistance Program

It is our opinion that the current BIAs have proved to be ineffective and unrepresentative. Results of the shopkeepers, shoppers and residents surveys demonstrate that the area is perceived of as unclean and unattractive: two issues that the Business Improvement Areas have been working on for several years. Moreover, our interviews with shopkeepers revealed that many are unaware of the activities of the BIA or view their work as useless. While we believe that the two BIAs have good ideas and are well intentioned, it seems that in their current form they have not succeeded in representing diverse voices of the local business community or effecting substantial local change. We suggest some changes to increase participation and efficacy of the Bloordale and Bloorcourt business improvement groups.

To improve involvement and representation in the BIAs, an active recruitment and engagement program should be established. Members of the BIA executives should canvass all the business in the area, encouraging owners to attend upcoming meetings and enquiring about issues they would like to have on the agenda. The BIAs should consciously court the businesses that are perceived as problems in the community, encouraging them to come to each meeting. In the future, a newsletter should be delivered to all member businesses one and two weeks before meetings; email is not sufficient.

Bloordale and Bloorcourt BIAs should engage with each other far more than they currently do. Our evidence suggests that the problems in each neighbourhood are virtually the same. Members of each association should find projects that benefit both

"And the BIAs function in a very peculiar way too. They are their own entity, and they're really about business owners who very rarely have an investment or a stake in the community at large."

- Resident and social service rep

agencies and work together more closely. Although BIG is a forum in which common ideas and concerns can be discussed, we feel that it is important to expand this collaboration into the work of the BIAs. Projects such as lighting, streetscaping and policing should not be organized and financed separately by each BIA. Rather, if cheaper and more effective options for these issues can be achieved together, these opportunities should be pursued.

It is our opinion that the Bloorcourt and Bloordale BIAs should hire a paid staff member whose position should be to promote the area and encourage businesses to participate in City programs. Initiatives such as the façade improvement program require businesses to take part individually; in these areas the participation has been low, although interest is high. Language barriers and insufficient knowledge or resources to complete the grant application may deter businesses and property owners from participating in the façade improvement program. A paid staff member could help businesses to navigate the steps required to secure these funds and improve the area. A paid staffer could also be charged with organizing the community charette that is outlined in the following section.

Action Items:

- Outreach to business in the area to come to meetings
- Pursue joint opportunities with neighbouring BIA
- Hire a paid staffer to organize larger projects and co-ordinate city programs

Case Study: "The Lakeshore"

"The Lakeshore" is an effective and representative body that encompasses four separate BIA in Toronto's west end. The organization has created a website that generates revenue from advertising and provides information on volunteering opportunities and cultural events in the area. It has also consulted design professionals to create a vision for the community that is being implemented in stages.

The individual BIAs along lakeshore Avenue have a high participation rate at meetings and distribute a newsletter to homes and businesses in the community. Their organization and initiatives are a model for the BIAs in our area.

Recommendation 2: Organize a Community Charette

Complaints of unattractiveness and uncleanliness along Bloor are commonplace in our research. To combat the disorganized and unpleasant visuals in the area, a unified and contemporary design vision should be created. We suggest a community charette be organized, in consultation with an architecture and landscape architecture firm, to create a vision for the streetscape and built form of Bloor. While these plans will likely be far too expensive to implement in one stage, an incremental plan paired with the 50/50 streetscape improvement program offered by the City, and potentially exploiting the Ontario Planning Act's Section 37 monies resulting from pending development, could make these plans feasible. Without an approved plan, government initiatives cannot offer funds to improve the neighbourhood; therefore, it is essential that the two BIAs act quickly to create a vision that can be used to guide future developments along Bloor. It is essential that this charette be open and accessible to all members of the community: care should be taken to advertise widely in a diversity of languages, to host the event in a central and accessible location, to hold the event during an evening or weekend, to offer translation, and to provide childcare. This should not be a session in which businesses control the discussion.

Action Items:

- Organize charette with design firm
 - Involve all sectors of the community in the creation of design vision
-

Recommendation 3: Create a Neighbourhood Identity

Toronto is a city of neighbourhoods and in the downtown core almost every space has a name. For example to the east of Bloorcourt/dale is Koreatown and to the west is Bloor West Village. However, in our conversations with shoppers, store owners and key informants, our study area was consistently reported as having no coherent identity. One store owner mentioned that he had polled people in the Bloordale neighbourhood on where Bloordale was located; he found people were ignorant of the area's name. Furthermore, during our shoppers survey we encountered a similar indifference to the neighbourhood, as shoppers did not have an imaginary of the neighbourhood as a cohesive place and expressed puzzlement over what would constitute the Bloor Strip that serves the neighbourhood⁴. The creation of a neighbourhood brand would help to combat the indifference and resulting apathy residents feel towards their environment, as well as help counter the current negative perception of the neighbourhood.

While we acknowledge the problems associated with neighbourhood branding⁵, in the case of this neighbourhood we feel that there can be a process of community building through the creation of a new neighbourhood identity. Currently not all groups feel

⁴ This lack of neighbourhood identity can also be found in: Rankin, K. (2008). *Commercial Change in Toronto's West-Central Neighbourhoods [Research Paper 214]*. Toronto: University of Toronto Cities Centre.

⁵ As Jensen, O.B. (2005). "Branding the contemporary city – Urban branding as regional grown Agenda," *Regional Studies Association Conference*, May 2005. shows, branding can become simply an economic development tool that does not address quality of life issues.

"What neighbourhood?"

- Resident

ownership over their neighbourhood because many do not view it as being a cohesive environment. This is demonstrated by the negative responses in the residents survey as well as in the conflicts between groups reported by key informants.

Building a common identity or story can be a powerful tool for bringing people together.⁶ BIG has already begun to gather groups into one forum and to bring the neighbourhood to the attention of the city through a festival; if combined with the creation of a common vision for the neighbourhood, this presents an opportunity to not only create a neighbourhood vision, but to market it to the entire city.

Through a process of meetings involving all the stakeholders in the neighbourhood a vision for the neighbourhood can be articulated and a plan can be assembled for promotion through the BIG festival. However, in order for such a vision to accomplish the goal of an inclusive community, all groups, especially currently marginalized ones must be a part of the process. Otherwise communities will continue to exist in isolation from each other and people will not feel ownership over their neighbourhood.

It is our opinion that, properly done, the creation of a neighbourhood identity could not only serve to combat current negative perceptions of the neighbourhood, but also to help create a local sense of community. The BIG festival and organization provide an excellent opportunity to begin this process.

Action Items:

- Hold community consultations on creating a new neighbourhood identity
- Rename BIG festival

⁶ Sandercock, Leonie (2004). *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities in the 21st Century*. New York: Continuum.

Recommendation 4: Develop an Ethnic Food Market

As witnessed in nearby Dufferin Grove Park, markets can be an excellent community building tool and help to bring people to the neighbourhood. In order to draw on the strength of the neighbourhood's immigrant population identified in our demographic analysis and its diverse mix of restaurants identified in our store inventory, we suggest the establishment of a market that builds on the variety of food types available in the neighbourhood; this could draw in a range of participants including the African, South Asian, South American and European communities as well as clients of the neighbourhood's social services. This market would not only sell produce, but also cooked goods.

The cooked goods portion of the market provides an opportunity for increased involvement of currently disadvantaged groups. As seen in the Community Cooks case study the neighbourhood's existing restaurants can be used as sights for unemployed persons to become active and cook goods for sale at the market. This will bring them into contact with the community at large and provide an opportunity for income generation.

Once a space can be found for the program, organizers must approach the various communities in the neighbourhood and all the social services in order to find people willing to participate. This should not mean solely disadvantaged communities; all people should be encouraged to participate in the program. We suggest that the market be located around the stigmatized towers in the Dovercourt-Bloor area to help bring the community in contact with each other.

Action Items:

- Find unused restaurant space available for cooking
- Approach various communities including local social services to find participants
- Locate site for market
- Promote market to the community

Case Study: Parkdale Community Cooks

The Parkdale-Liberty Economic Development Corporation ran a Community Cooks program that provided employment opportunities for current unemployed recent immigrant women. This program made use of unused cooking facilities in restaurants during off-hours to provide space for cooking of goods to be sold at the local farmer's market. This brought women currently uninvolved in the community into contact with each other and with a source of income.

Recommendation 5: Create a Business Recruitment Office

As evident from our research and observation, the Bloordale and Bloorcourt commercial corridor has a number of vacant and underutilized buildings and retail spaces. This presents opportunities for new businesses to move into the neighbourhood, potentially broadening the range of businesses providing affordable goods and services along this commercial corridor. We recommend that a community-based business recruitment office be established to a) connect with local landlords and provide assistance to secure tenants and b) create a marketing plan to attract businesses to the area in collaboration with the local BIAs, business owners, landlord and residents. Work undertaken by this office should be governed by a Board of Directors comprising local residents, members of the local BIAs, social service providers, and other stakeholders. The marketing plan should incorporate strategies to advertise and promote the availability of retail spaces, sites and buildings for commercial and other employment uses through different media such as websites and newsletters.

Local residents expressed the need for diversification of retail and commercial offerings along the Bloordale and Bloorcourt strip. The business recruitment office should be mandated to attract businesses that cater to the needs of local residents and shoppers drawn to this commercial strip from other parts of the city. Staff at the office should work closely with local landlords, especially those with vacant units to attract and contact desirable tenants. In addition, staff should reach out to new businesses and employers in the area, offering assistance to recruit workers and establish business partnership with existing residents and retail and commercial facilities along the corridor.

Action Items:

- Recruit and select Board of Directors
- Hire staff to connect with local landlord and project manage the development of a marketing plan

Proposed Film Studio

In February 2008, a community meeting was held at the West Toronto Collegiate on Lansdowne Avenue to discuss the possible development of a film studio with ancillary uses such as music studios and graphic arts businesses on a brownfield property west of the Bloordale BIA near Sterling Road. The development proposal, if approved by City Council, would bring approximately 1,000 to 1,500 jobs to the area.

Staff from the Business Recruitment Office can approach the Film Studio and ancillary businesses to offer assistance in recruiting local labour force and purchasing goods and services from establishments along the Bloordale/Bloorcourt corridor.

Recommendation 6: Undertake a Community Conflict Resolution Process

This section of Bloor Street—especially at Bloor-Lansdowne—has been stigmatized as a ‘problem area’. While it is of course important to identify real threats to community safety, it is also important to avoid projecting this ‘problem’ status onto individuals and groups who pose no threat to community safety—who may, in fact, be experiencing threats to their own safety. Undeservingly painting individuals and groups with the same brush can itself be a safety threat and can lead to unintended exclusion.

Throughout our research, community members articulated their vision of an inclusive community, in which everyone can feel welcome; a community in which everyone can access services, find and keep a home, occupy public space, and feel personally and socially safe. In order to ensure inclusivity during an effort to revitalize a conflicted area—such as Bloor-Lansdowne—it is important to ensure all voices are heard. While one party might perceive a group clustered on the sidewalk or in a park as loiterers deterring business, the ‘loiterers’—given the chance to voice their perspectives—might explain that the place functions as a gathering spot...Or maybe they are dealing drugs. But miscommunications and antagonistic relationships of this sort can only harm business success in the area.

This section of Bloor is used by many groups in a variety of ways. By bringing businesses, residents, social service users, and politicians into one conversation, a community conflict resolution process can help expose these diverse practices, improve community relations, and work toward a plan that can help make the street safer for everyone. Such a process might be design oriented, or may focus simply on communicating to understand how space can better be shared.

Case Study:

In 2007 a series of community meetings took place regarding activity on the corner of Queen St. West and Bathurst St., outside the St. Christopher House Meeting Place Drop-in. Residents and businesses had raised safety concerns related to drug dealing and, while they shared their concerns about community safety, members of the Meeting Place took issue with being unjustly labeled as dangerous. The meetings focused on improving relations between residents, Meeting Place Members, and businesses—business representatives were especially interested in improving community relations between these groups. Meeting participants collaborated on developing design options for the corner that met everyone’s needs. The meetings were considered a success and with financial support from the BIA and the City of Toronto, the design changes were made to the front of the Meeting Place¹.

¹ All information taken from St. Christopher House. Annual Report: 2007-2008.

Action Items:

- Secure financial support from the BIAs
- Secure organizational and financial support from the City—BIAs should take action in requesting City involvement
- Create a community board to develop a vision for the process
- Strategize about how to ensure dedicated participation from all parties

Recommendation 7: Lobby for a Police Sub-Station

While we believe in minimal police presence, our surveys and interviews repeatedly highlighted crime as the local issue of number one concern. Each of our recommendations will help to create an inclusive neighbourhood that may reduce crime as a secondary effect; however, given our research results, it is our opinion that it would be irresponsible to provide a revitalization plan for this area that does not include an aspect to deal directly with crime. We advocate for the insertion of a police sub-station along Bloor. This substation would increase police presence in the area and is more permanent than a few officers being detailed to walk the street.

To ensure that a police substation does not become a permanent and draconian institution in the area, we recommend that a citizen review panel be installed to annually determine if the need for the substation remains. The presence of a sub-station may in itself change people's opinions of the street and could change the patterns of use among marginal and non-marginal groups.

Action Items:

- Use crime data to make case for increase police presence
 - Lobby police for sub-station
 - Create board to review the need for and efficacy of the station
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