



From Settlement to Integration: Immigrant Placemaking in Suburban Toronto

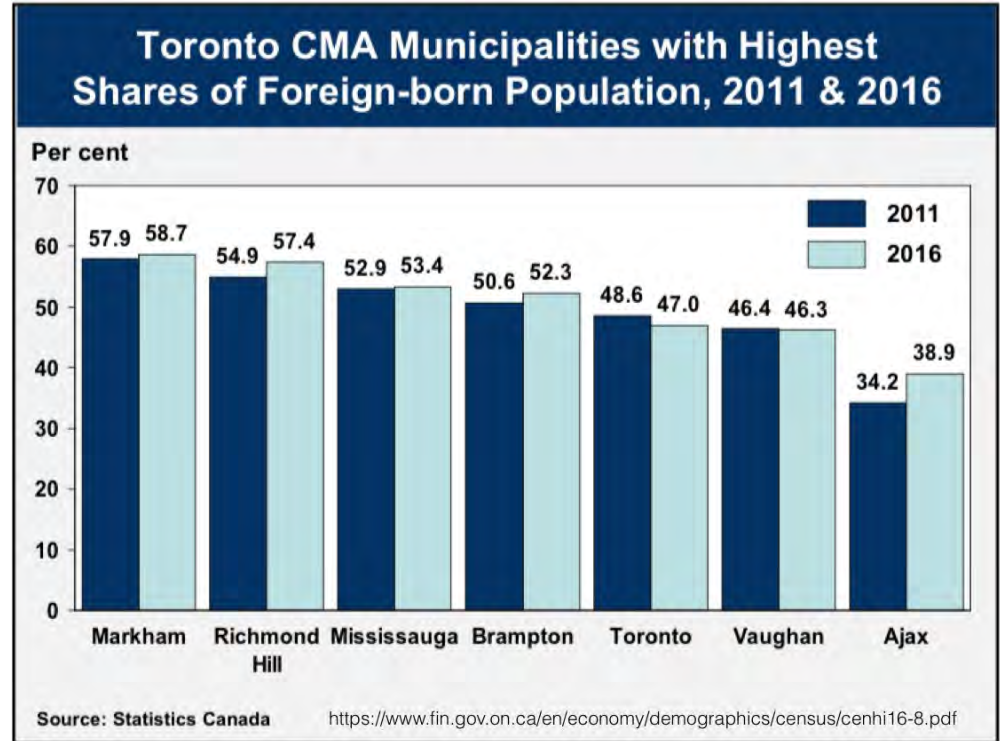
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Setting the Context

- Contemporary immigrant settlement pattern: from the inner city to the suburb



Setting the Context

- Conventional suburbs are often thought of as ‘placeless’ and at odds with diversity
- Immigrant communities are reshaping suburban spaces with new identities and new meanings
- Space & place: whose voice and whose rights?

Placemaking

1

Not to focus exclusively on the built environment; instead combine descriptions of *spatial configuration with the relationships, feelings, and functions embedded within it* (Bradley, 2018; Friedmann, 2010);

2

A process that capitalizes on a *community's stories, assets, and collaborative spirit* and enhances the environment to *meet the needs of the community* as defined by its citizens (Harney, 2006; Friedmann, 2010; Schuch & Wang, 2015);

3

A process that fosters *respect for diversity*, creates opportunities for *dialogues including all community member* (Toolis, 2017; Thomas et al., 2015) and considers *power imbalances* (Eckenwiler, 2016; Nejad & Walker, 2018; Shibley, 1998);

4

Hence, placemaking is considered as a *social, economic, cultural, political, and physical construct* with the aim of creating *empowering relationships between people and places* (Lombard, 2014; Schlappa, 2015; Nejad & Walker, 2018)



Research Questions:

1. What are the key characteristics of suburban ethnic placemaking? How do immigrant groups negotiate their space and rights?
2. What is municipalities' role in facilitating/impeding immigrant placemaking practices? What are the effective placemaking strategies that can not only support immigrant communities but also benefit the society at large?

5

Municipalities

81

Intercept surveys

8

Case studies

77

Interviews

112

Clusters

3,800

Businesses

Ethnic Succession & Readaptation

- Readaptation of post-war strip malls in inner suburbs
- Built form impedes placemaking opportunities, but immigrant businesses sustain community life
- Business improvement strategies



New Community Spaces

- Spatial capital
- Social infrastructure
- Institutional completeness









Creating “Third Places”

- Spaces conducive to social interactions
- Ethnic-oriented programming & services
- Intercultural shared spaces for diverse users





Sense of Belonging, Identity, and Place

- Cultural expressions through architectural features and public arts
- Inscribe a place with meaning
- Authenticity vs. commodification of culture
- Place identity is fluid and evolving



Negotiation of Space & Place

01



Incompatible land uses

Insufficient recognition and invisibility

02



03

A change has been proposed for this site.
A Development Application has been submitted to amend the Zoning By-law to allow a retirement home with retail at ground level.

Proposal summary:

1.7 Units 12 parking 41 m ² area	55 Units 157 m ² Retail	150 Units 28 Units

District & Ward: Scarborough - Agincourt Ward 41
Site Address: 25 Glen Watford Drive
Applicant: K&E Corporation
Application File #16-172663 ESC 41 OZ

For information & to tell us what you think:


COMMUNITY PLANNER:
Colin Ramdani
416-303-6111
colinr@toronto.ca

ONLINE:
www.toronto.ca/cpl
File # 16-172663 ESC 41 OZ

IN PERSON:
A meeting has not yet been scheduled.
Details will be posted here and online as they become available.

PLATE # NOT FINAL

Lack of proper community outreach & consultation



*“This area ... definitely **gets missed**. And sometimes **people don’t know** that we have such a concentration of ethnic stores and Caribbean stores and South Asian stores. I definitely think our area **should never be forgotten**.”*

*“There’s a **discrepancy** in terms of what the [community] wants to do ... and what [the city] wants them to do.”*

*“So it’s been **difficult to reach out** to them [the Punjabi community] and get them to come [to public consultation].”*

Challenges & Opportunities: Implications for Municipalities

- Suburbs are increasingly no longer 'sub' urban spaces
- Retrofitting suburbia as municipal priority
- The need to prepare for the continuous demographic shifts caused by global migration
- Contested narratives at the intersection of cultural recognition, commodification, everyday multiculturalism, and intercultural bridging

Challenges & Opportunities: Implications for Municipalities

- 01** | Revisit municipal policies, engagement processes, programming, & service deliveries
- 02** | Avoid tokenism in traditional public consultation approaches; adopt a community-powered process
- 03** | (Re)invest in social infrastructure & public spaces
- 04** | Transition from co-ethnic bonding to intercultural bridging
- 05** | Social equity & inclusion in all decision-making



Thank you.



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Suburban place-making amidst diversity