GROUNDING CONDOLAND

Counteracting Future Decline

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FIGURE 1: Site Axonometric

ABSTRACT

A complex array of factors has facilitated a recent influx of housing in Toronto, specifically, in the form of mid to upscale condominiums. Many of these high-density residential developments appear to have affected the human scale and the integrative sense of community. Concord CityPlace, situated on Toronto's Railway Lands will serve as a site for analysis in this thesis. The question asked is whether speculation about CityPlace is correct that the development will ultimately deteriorate into slums. How might this happen? By drawing attention to the current conditions of decline at CityPlace, this thesis sets out to provide solutions, particularly in regards to site isolation and pedestrian accessibility and the use of outdoor urban spaces within and directly around the site.

How can such urban and architectural interventions help to counteract future decline?

By attracting CityPlace residents and others to the site, this proposal aims to increase accessibility, and diverse social interactions. This thesis will argue for a solution through urban design and architectural interventions, situated along three site borders. We will borrow and adapt ideas from Jane Jacobs' critical viewpoint of the modern city, and more specifically, her theory of *border vacuums*.¹ A debate with Jan Gehl's concept of *spaces for moving* and *places for staying*² and Richard Sennett's notion of the *open system*³ will then serve to enhance and give spatial form to Jacob's outlined themes.

FIGURE 2: Concord CityPlace - Physical Model

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FIGURE 3: Map of Concord Cityplace - Buildings and Streets on Site

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1960s, urban activist and writer Jane Jacobs introduced new ideas for city planning in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Jacobs criticized modern urban planning practices and offered a framework for evaluating the liveliness of cities, particularly through the discussion of various aspects and components of the city - sidewalks, streets, and neighbourhoods, to name a few.⁴ According to Jacobs, cities must be complex, diverse, and even chaotic, and avoid the rational separation of programs.⁵ Over the past 20 years, numerous condominium complexes have been constructed throughout Toronto. Because these towers were designed according to established modern planning principles, some of Jacobs' theories remain applicable over half a century later. Using her approach as a theoretical basis, we can analyze the nature of newly developed urban living conditions, and types of communities that these high-rises have engendered.

Various academic and media sources, including University of Toronto building science professor Ted Kesik, and the Toronto Star,⁶ have speculated that many Toronto condominiums constructed within the past 20 years are victims to future decline. Some reasons include a predominance of owner-investors, inadequate haphazard planning, and poor quality materials and construction methods.⁷ Concord CityPlace, situated on Toronto's Railway Lands, has been frequently discussed as a victim of these characteristics, and destined for decline. The construction of CityPlace began in 1997 and has since become the city's largest residential development project. Once completed, the site will house over 7,500 residential units within approximately 18 hectares of land. Concord Adex Developments, a division of Concord Pacific Developments, was the motivating force behind the site's redevelopment.⁸ According to Kesik in *Growing Up: Are Toronto's new condos built to last?* "When you're looking at

those glass towers there, you're basically looking at the slums of the future."⁹

In addition to the damaging conditions previously outlined, CityPlace suffers from site isolation, pedestrian density, and a lack of consistent outside visitors to the site, which means that the site is particularly vulnerable to decline. Jacobs asserts that, "Dull, inert cities, it is true, do contain the seeds of their own destruction and little else. But lively, diverse, intense cities contain the seeds of their own regeneration, with energy enough to carry over for problems and needs outside themselves."¹⁰ By lessening the sense of geographic isolation and therefore increasing activity and diversity within the site, could we not increase the liveliness and longevity of the CityPlace community?

"Different as railroad tracks, waterfronts, campuses, expressways, large parking areas and large parks are from each other in most ways, they also have much in common with each other-so far as their tendency to exist amid moribund or declining surroundings is concerned."¹¹ The focus of this study is CityPlace west of Spadina Avenue in Toronto, since it is bounded on three sides by isolating forces (Fort York, railway tracks, and the Gardiner Expressway). Defined by Jacobs as border vacuums, these are strong and often destructive urban forces that break cities up into different parts.¹² According to Jacobs, neighbourhoods bounded by border vacuums are more vulnerable to inactivity and decline.¹³ Can we adapt Jacobs' notion of border vacuums to improve the dialogue that exists between CityPlace and the city? How can we ultimately spatialize Jacobs' theories in regards to the site and any urban and architectural interventions we propose?

FIGURE 4: North Border Vacuum - Railway Lines

FIGURE 5: South Border Vacuum - Gardiner Expressway

FIGURE 6: Map of Concord CityPlace - Border Vacuums, Railway Lines and Gardiner Expressway

First, let us look to the work of architect and urban consultant, Jan Gehl, since it is a contemporary extension of Jacobs' core urban theories. In *Cities for People*, Gehl explains that cities should be lively, sustainable, safe, and healthy.¹⁴ Both *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space* and *Cities for People* propose guiding principles for the spatial design of urban public spaces with a particular importance placed on the human scale.¹⁵ In regards to architecture, we can also look to Richard Sennett's theories as another starting point. Sennett is a social theorist and sociologist who specializes in analyzing the built urban form and associated social and cultural experiences.¹⁶ In his essay, *The Open City*, Sennett builds on Jacobs' assertion that diversity and density are important components of good communities.¹⁷ However, Sennett diverges from Jacobs when he states, "Sympathetic as I have always been to her, here we part company; to me, the spatial forms density takes are what matter in stimulating people of the physical matters more in shaping the open city. Urban design, as design, does not figure much in her version of the open city; the art of design matters in mine."¹⁸ We can therefore look to *The Open City* for guidance when considering the architectural forms of this project.

If we follow and implement Jacobs' ideas including mixed uses, a range of building ages and types, and a density of people, can we also consider Jan Gehl and Richard Sennett as extensions of her urban, social theories, in order to investigate the issues of CityPlace, and offset future decline? Let us begin with a brief glimpse at Toronto's history and the evolution of tall buildings, particularly as a basis for understanding their relation to the human scale.

PART 1:

Evolution of Tall Buildings in Toronto

FIGURE 7: Toronto's Tallest Buildings

1.1

THE FIRST GENERATION TO TOWERS IN THE PARK

The architectural landscape in Toronto has developed drastically over the past century. Tall buildings in Toronto have evolved as a result of economic development, market demands, changes in planning regulations, design standards, increasing population, transportation methods, settlement patterns, and advances in technology. How did we achieve this tall tale? Toronto's earliest tall building was the Traders Bank Building, constructed in 1905. Located at King and Yonge Streets, this 14-storey tower was recognized as the tallest building in the British Empire. The Traders Bank Building influenced the construction of commercial towers in the area during the following decade. Tall commercial buildings were constructed in the 1920s, particularly on Bay Street, and at King and Yonge Streets. In the 1950s, residential buildings on Jarvis Street, George Street, and Dunn Avenue were built from eight to ten storeys high.¹⁹

As a result of new urban planning strategies, post-war population, urban growth, and technological developments in the 1960s, buildings were constructed at greater heights. Many of these tall buildings were based off of Le Corbusier's concept of "towers in the park." In *Toward an Architecture*, Le Corbusier explained that, "These towers, rising up at great distances from another, provide vertically what has up until now been spread over the ground; they leave vast open spaces that cast the axial streets, full of noise and faster-flowing traffic, far away from them. At the foot of the towers, parks unroll; greenery extends over the entire city."²⁰ In Toronto, many large blocks of existing residential neighbourhoods were demolished and replaced with this type of high-rise building, which were typically constructed in the middle of their respective lots, allowing for a significant amount of surrounding green space. The "towers in the park" design strategy particularly applied to commercial and apartment buildings.

FIGURE 8:
Trader's Bank Building

FIGURE 9: Towers In The Park - Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin, Paris

The Toronto-Dominion Centre and many other commercial buildings constructed in Toronto's downtown core came to represent Toronto's increasing economic success at the time. Some high-rise apartment neighbourhoods outside the downtown area, such as Parkway Forest and Flemingdon Park, were also based off of this modernist building style.²¹ However, with substantial development came growing concern over the negative characteristics associated with the "towers in the park" model, particularly in regards to human scale. According to Toronto's *Tall Building Design Guidelines*, released by the City of Toronto in May 2013, these towers are said to have damaged the pedestrian's experience of the city in a number of ways. They failed to address the scale of the pedestrian, and did not provide animated spaces for walking, due to the strict division of functions, lack of mixed uses, and variations in storefronts. Also, the expansive green lots created extensive setbacks and undesirable gaps between buildings, and resulted in shadowed, desolate, and windy streetscapes.²²

In the *Tall Building Design Guidelines*, Toronto's "towers in the park" are said to have reduced pedestrian accessibility and thereby failed to enliven the city's public realm.²³ Such negative urban effects associated with this building type, and a consequent push towards suburban living, caused growing concern among social and urban activists in the city. Something had to be done. In 1970, a reaction came in the form of Harbour City, a master plan proposal for Toronto's waterfront.²⁴ We will now look to this project as a key step in the evolution of Toronto's tall building standards.

FIGURE 10:
Toronto-Dominion Centre

FIGURE 11:
Flemingdon Park

FIGURE 12:
Parkway Forest

1.2

EVOLVING STANDARDS

Described by Jacobs as “probably the most important advance in planning for cities that has been made this century,” Harbour City is an example of a local response to problems caused by tall buildings, and an alternative proposal for high-rise urban living.²⁵ The project was commissioned by the Government of Ontario and the Department of Trade and Development from architects Craig, Zeidler and Strong, in consultation with Jane Jacobs and others. The Harbour City proposal provides insight as to how Jacobs intended improving the urban living conditions faced by Toronto faced at that time. It offered a platform to implement many of her celebrated theories through the design of socially motivated urban housing. Canals and lagoons would be constructed to form a waterfront community of 60,000 people.²⁶ Craig, Zeidler and Strong designed modular units that could be arranged in various configurations, creating spaces for duplexes, single-family residences, stores, restaurants, and other required services. The use of cars within the community would be restricted, with garages housed outside its limits. Typical streets would be replaced with pedestrian pathways, bridges, and moving sidewalks.²⁷ Due to growing concern over lake pollution and the construction of the Spadina Expressway, Harbour City was not realized.²⁸

Nevertheless, this plan revealed an imaginative approach for ensuring a sense of community within high-density urban developments. Which strategies might we consider and adapt to CityPlace? Perhaps we should keep in mind the transformation of vehicular streets to pedestrian streets, mixed uses, and flexible architectural configurations to allow for changing uses overtime. We will revisit these ideas after the conditions of the site are considered in greater depth.

FIGURE 13: Harbour City - Site Model

FIGURE 14: Harbour City - Comparing Densities

The evolution of Toronto's tall buildings continued into the late 1980s, when the design standard was revised to consider the scale of the pedestrian. Towers in Toronto were more regularly built to street edges, and incorporated a mix of uses, with base buildings that also served to minimize shadows and unpleasant wind effects.²⁹ Although tall buildings have evolved considerably over time, we must still question the impacts that they have on urban living. More specifically, how do high-rise residential buildings currently function in terms of human scale, and facilitating connections between residents and the public, both socially and spatially?

FIGURE 15:
Divisions of Typical Tall
Building - Top, Middle, and
Base Building

1.3

CONDOMINIUM BOOM

Due to favourable economic conditions and technological advancements in building science, tall buildings are being constructed to increasingly greater heights. Toronto has seen an influx of tall buildings, specifically in the form of condominiums. The following images illustrate the impact of this condominium boom on Toronto's urban fabric between 1998 and 2012.³⁰

FIGURE 16: Toronto Skyline, 1998-2012

Building data firm Emporis, released an analysis stating that in early 2014, 116 condo developments were being constructed in Toronto, exceeding New York City by 84.³¹ The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) recently released a report revealing that, as of January 2015, the number of condominium starts achieved an eleven-month high.³² The increase in condo construction can be linked to Toronto's recent population growth. According to a TD Economics report released in January 2013, population growth in the downtown area tripled between 2006-2011, compared to previous census periods.³³

FIGURE 17: Condo Developments Under Construction, 2014

Despite improved standards of tall buildings, we can point out some lingering negative aspects of high-rise living. A relevant example for our discussion is the substitution of traditional streets and sidewalks with interior hallways. According to Jacobs, limited public interaction is associated with high-rise residential buildings. Sidewalks are essential for informal, public contact. However, condominium hallways limit this type of interaction. Within these buildings, interaction between residents is typically limited to a small number of floors, depending on where they live in the building. Furthermore, underground car parks may prevent car-owners from walking along the street. This type of public interaction, or lack thereof, is certainly not conducive for facilitating social interactions on site. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* Jacobs describes the social significance of basic encounters that occur on the city sidewalk,

“The sum of such casual, public contact at a local level-most of it fortuitous, most of it associated with errands, all of it metered by the person concerned and not thrust upon by anyone, is a feeling for the public identity of people, a web of public respect and trust, and a resource in time of personal or neighbourhood need. The absence of this trust is a disaster to a city street. Its cultivation cannot be institutionalized. And above all, it implies no private commitments.”³⁴

FIGURE 18: Sidewalk - Fort York Boulevard

According to the *Tall Building Guidelines*, tall buildings greatly affect inhabitants, as well as neighbouring public spaces,³⁵ and the construction of many condos has amplified any negative effects associated with tall buildings. Although building along the street edge, incorporating base buildings, and ensuring a mix of uses have all lessened the negative effects of tall buildings, designers and planners must ensure that relevant and useful programs are housed within base buildings, and that they interact well with the pedestrian realm. Also, we will see in the following discussion about Toronto's St. James Town that a diverse range of public services is necessary for the vitality and sustainability of high-density, high-rise communities. Since condos now take up so much of the architectural landscape of Toronto, they should be designed to last. We can potentially increase longevity by being sensitive to the human scale, and facilitate safe, lively, dense and diverse pedestrian realms with a mix of uses.

FIGURE 19: Condo Construction, Toronto

FIGURE 20: Perception of Toronto's Condo Boom

2.1

THE CURSE OF BORDER VACUUMS

In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs outlines “the curse of border vacuums,” which can be seen as an unresolved problem faced by CityPlace. This work was first published in 1961, and responds to a particular time and condition: the planning of American city neighbourhoods, which were dictated by 1950s urban planning policy. Jacobs discusses the border vacuum as an issue of planning, however, this thesis will identify it as a current issue on the site. Since CityPlace has already mostly been built, we will critique the site post-development, and the conditions that exist as a result of planning. “The other side of the tracks” is an expression used to describe the social conditions that result from railroad tracks as borders. Jacobs discusses the functional and physical negative consequences that borders have on the areas directly beside.³⁶

Two types of land surround border vacuums: general and special land. On general land, the public circulate, and wanders about, typically on foot. It often includes small parks and streets. However, on special land, public pedestrian activity is less common. This type of land can be public or private, and may or may not be accessible to people. Typically, pedestrians will travel along the peripheries of special land rather than through these sites.³⁷ Despite these conditions, *special land* is necessary as it supplies the city with people.³⁸ CityPlace is an example of special land.

GENERAL LAND:

Where the public circulate and wanders, typically on foot. It often includes small parks and streets.

FIGURE 21: General Land Near CityPlace

SPECIAL LAND:

At CityPlace, public pedestrian activity is less common. This type of land can be public or private, and may or may not be accessible to people. Typically, pedestrians will travel along the peripheries of special land rather than through these sites. special land is necessary as it supplies the city with people.

FIGURE 22: CityPlace as Special Land

0 40 80 120 200M

Borders divide cities into parts. This is especially problematic when neighbourhoods become isolated by surrounding borders and cannot survive independently.³⁹ Jacobs states that these neighbourhoods must ensure a continuous mixing of different types of people, who gather for various reasons. It is this diverse mingling that generates safe streets.⁴⁰ Border vacuums should be transformed into attractive and lively areas that are always accessible. Areas of activity and places of social exchange should be positioned along the sides of borders. These interventions become connection points between the general land and the special land. According to Jacobs, the areas of activity should be accessible at night-time. Also, they are not required to be large in scale, but ought to be appropriately sized based on their function and on the scale of the pedestrian.⁴¹

Border vacuums enclose CityPlace on three sides, rendering it an unsuitable site for consistent liveliness. The site is what Jacobs calls a “one-way affair.” Residents of CityPlace will cross both ways through the border, more often than those occupying the neighbouring district.⁴²

FIGURE 23: Border Vacuums Surrounding CityPlace

0 50 100 150 250M

To combat border vacuums, Jacobs describes the need for strong neighbouring counterforces with a dense concentration of different types of people.⁴³ In regards to CityPlace, several counterforces exist east of Spadina Avenue. The Rogers Centre, CN Tower, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, and the Air Canada Centre are often lively, and create potential for attracting many people to the site.

FIGURE 24: Counterforces

0 50 100 150 250M

To respond to the border vacuums at CityPlace, we might consider a network that connects to the border, or as Jacobs calls it, a “terminus of generalized use.” It is important for this street to be well used by people from both the general and the special areas, otherwise it could cause a chain of inactivity in its surrounding areas. Activity is lowest closest to the border vacuum, and slowly increases with each street that is closer to surrounding livelier neighbourhoods.⁴⁴ According to Jacobs, the areas and buildings that connect directly and make “practical use” of the border or the sides of the border are unaffected by conditions of decay or poor quality that are often associated with borders.⁴⁵

FIGURE 25: Terminus of Generalized Use

0 50 100 150 250M

However, the functions of these interventions must correspond to their land type, whether it is special or general. According to Jacobs, it is important to create clear “partnership connections” between two corresponding interventions, ensuring frequent use. Jacobs provides an example of bicycle renting and bicycle riding as partnership connections, with the renting situated on general land, and the bicycle riding in the park.⁴⁶

Border vacuums at CityPlace will be made more accessible by implementing the following guidelines:

- ***Partner functions on both sides of the border (to facilitate clear, lively and frequent connections between the two areas)***
- ***Ensure strong counterforces (with large and diverse populations of people), with fluid linking blocks***
- ***Interventions should be clear, visible, and scaled appropriately to the pedestrian.***
- ***Must be functional throughout the year***

This leads us to consider how to implement this strategy at CityPlace through architectural interventions that are designed and placed according to their respective border vacuums.

2.2

HUMAN SCALE, SPACES FOR MOVING, AND PLACES FOR STAYING

So far, we have established liveliness as an important characteristic of cities. Jan Gehl's strategies for achieving liveliness through pedestrianization can be considered in relation to Toronto's condo boom and to more specifically to CityPlace.

In the early 1960s, an invasion of cars in the city prompted the pedestrianization of Strøget, a shopping street in Copenhagen. Gehl analyzed the street with regards to the human scale. His findings inspired a shift in urban planning in Copenhagen. He argues that spaces that consider the scale of the pedestrian are livelier as a result.⁴⁷

FIGURE 26: Strøget, Copenhagen, Denmark

In *Life Between Buildings, Using Public Space*, activity is recognized as an attraction in itself.⁴⁸ Gehl categorizes different types of activities as “come and go” and “stationary,” or “spaces for moving” and “places for staying.”⁴⁹ He states that, while there are typically more come and go than stationary activities, stationary activities are typically responsible for making streets lively. According to Gehl, we might propose that CityPlace would become more lively, sustainable, safe, and healthy through the incorporation of both types of activities.

Spaces for moving should be dynamic, multi-use spaces, and appropriately scaled to the human form, in order to animate the street. Sidewalks must be seen more as public, mixed-use spaces. Generally speaking, sidewalks within the site could be improved through increased flexibility and the incorporation of mixed uses, to facilitate a variety of functions. These characteristics applied to CityPlace are as follows:

- ***Dimensioning of Streets and walking distances***
- ***Variety of walking routes***
- ***Flexibility in terms of program***
- ***Mix of Uses***

The isolating conditions at CityPlace will be reduced by improving access points between the site and surrounding city, and by creating pedestrian and cyclist-oriented, mixed-use streets that will be located around and within the site, based on the need for connectivity and importance of creating diverse interactions within a lively public realm.

In *Cities for People*, Gehl also states that staying activities are essential for vibrant cities. If enjoyed by occupants, these spaces will feed life into the city.⁵⁰ The following conditions of successful *staying places* are particularly relevant for the improvement of CityPlace:

- ***Irregular building facades with canopies***
- ***Comfortable seating areas***
- ***Functionality throughout the year***

Staying places should incorporate irregular building facades, since they create interesting elements that can be observed at eye level.⁵¹ Buildings facing sidewalks should be designed at a 5-km/h scale. Toronto urban planning has given priority to car transportation and parking, which have provided unsuitable conditions for pedestrian travel. It appears that CityPlace was designed to be viewed from the Gardiner Expressway, at a scale greater than 60 km/h.⁵² Based on site observation, the site appears to feature a streamlined aesthetic with limited irregularity, and an overall order and pattern exists.

How do the sidewalks within CityPlace perform in terms of providing places for staying? Generally, condominium base buildings surround the sidewalks on site. These base buildings house residential units and a variety of private, and sometimes public services and create a connection and interaction between the sidewalk and towers.

However, more can be done to create permeable, attractive, and welcoming spaces for pedestrians. The existing services on site are mostly private, and do not generate much public energy and density on site. Life within the walls of the CityPlace condos is not adequately expressed along the sidewalks within the site. Since multi-story developments generally lack staying activities, planners should incorporate “quality” spaces close by.⁵³ Later, we will see how we can widen pedestrian and bicyclist spaces along the street, to allow for interventions and pedestrian travel.

It is also important to incorporate suitable and comfortable public seating areas when designing staying places. At CityPlace, limited publicly accessible outdoor seating exists, with the exception of some benches in Canoe Landing Park and edge conditions, which can double as seating.

Furthermore, Gehl has outlined the importance of cities to function despite climate and time of day, and therefore sheltered and interior staying spaces should be made available to the public.⁵⁴ Because Toronto experiences cold weather in the winter, warm, staying spaces must be constructed to maintain density and liveliness during colder temperatures. In regards to function, Gehl states that staying places in developed countries mostly house recreational activities, and that cafes and sidewalk cafes are especially conducive for staying.⁵⁵

FIGURE 27:
Venice: 5 km/h City

FIGURE 28:
Dubai: 100 km/h City

FIGURE 29:
CityPlace - View From
Gardiner Expressway

FIGURE 30: Seating In North
Field, Canoe Landing Park

FIGURE 31: Seating In North
Field, Canoe Landing Park

Thus, how can we incorporate these types of *staying places* at CityPlace? What other forms can stationary spaces take on, and how can the theory of *border vacuums* inform these spaces? By implementing Gehl's focus on the human scale and urban requirements for lively cities, we can help to prioritize the pedestrian in a predominantly car-centric area of Toronto. We will now collide Gehl's work with Sennett's idea of the *open city*, as a way to tackle the issues at CityPlace on a number of scales.

FIGURE 32: Café Culture

2.3

THE OPEN CITY

“The cities everyone wants to live in should be clean and safe, possess efficient public services, be supported by a dynamic economy, provide cultural stimulation, and also do their best to heal society’s divisions of race, class, and ethnicity. These are not the cities we live in.”⁵⁶
- Richard Sennett.

In *The Open City*, Sennett states that many modern cities are closed cities, constructed through closed systems. According to Sennett, closed cities are unsuccessful because they face uncontrollable economic forces, social concerns, and government regulations.⁵⁷ The system is finite, and identified through three significant characteristics: over-determination,⁵⁸ equilibrium, and integration.⁵⁹ What are these characteristics and how can we link them to CityPlace?

According to Sennett, over-determination is the act of ensuring controlled relationships between form and function.⁶⁰ Second, equilibrium is a result of the careful balance of expense and income in the city. Lastly, integration refers the act of designating specific roles to all components within the system.⁶¹ Closed systems have intricate infrastructures and systems for electricity, lighting, plumbing, and heating. The over-determination of programs makes it difficult for the building to adapt to different functions over time.⁶² Sennett states that, “Every part of a closed system has a place in an overall design; the consequence of that ideal is to reject, to vomit out, experiences which stick out because they are contestatory or disorienting.”⁶³ These characteristics are evident at CityPlace, as residential units are separately consolidated in the air, and there is not a significant degree of variation in terms of aesthetics and function throughout the site. Most of the towers on site house residential units along the top, and base buildings, mostly containing private services, along the bottom, adjacent to the street.

FIGURE 33: CityPlace as a Closed System

Sennett suggests that cities must be designed with open systems. Open systems are flexible and simple in form. To explain the concept of the open city, Sennett looks to Niklas Luhmann's social theoretical idea of *auto-poiesis*.⁶⁴ "This beautiful term indicates his belief that human beings create, through mutual exchange, the systems of value by which they live, and that the more they exchange with one another, the more individuated they become."⁶⁵ However, these are verbal exchanges. Sennett claims that buildings do not have a voice. He explains that a mutual exchange can exist between physical creation (architecture) and social behaviour.⁶⁶ The Georgian row house is an example given of an open system.⁶⁷

Sennett outlines three approaches to designing an open system, or in a larger context, an open city. The first approach is by making "ambiguous edges." Sennett describes two types of edges: boundaries and borders. A boundary is a space where urban elements terminate, and a border is a space that can simultaneously house a diverse set of people and built conditions. Boundaries are found within the streets and buildings of the typical modern city, particularly through the separation of private and public functions.⁶⁸ Porous borders are important because they can lead to mixing of different types of people. If community services are placed at the peripheries, boundaries become less clear and more permeable.

Does CityPlace have boundaries? If so, can we transform these restrictive spaces into permeable borders? The second approach to designing an open city is through “incomplete form.” Sennett explains that, “Form and function need to be lightly connected if not actually divorced.”⁶⁹ Through simple forms, we can ensure flexibility in function. If we separate the strict relationship between form and function, we can design structures, following Sennett, that have the potential to evolve with the city.⁷⁰ The last approach is to create an “unresolved narrative,” or incomplete logic. The urban landscape is typically developed according to a linear narrative, Sennett claims. He proposes that planning should be based on a non-linear process.⁷¹ In regards to CityPlace, these approaches are implemented by placing public community spaces at the borders of the site and by constructing simple and flexible interventions, which are designed and located according to the changing needs of the community.

Although Jacobs’, Gehl’s, and Sennett’s conception of what makes a successful city differ in some aspects, they are all similar through their resistance of Le Corbusier’s conception of the modern city. In Part 3 we will situate CityPlace in order to better understand the site, and in particular, its causes for potential decline. Material solutions will arise by adapting these above-mentioned social and urban theories.

FIGURE 34: Concord CityPlace

PART 3:

Situating CityPlace

FIGURE 35: Locating CityPlace in Toronto

3.1

HISTORY OF THE SITE

Before examining the current condition of CityPlace, let us first reflect on its history and surrounding context. The Toronto Railway Lands is a district of downtown Toronto, owned by the Canadian National (CN) and the Canadian Pacific (CP).⁷² In the 1850s, this portion of land near Toronto's waterfront was developed to house railway lines and infrastructure, for the purpose of transporting goods to and from the city. Via Rail, an intercity train service corporation, eventually became the only lasting occupier of the railway yards. In 1955, the Gardiner Expressway created an unattractive barrier between the waterfront and the rest of the city. In order to alleviate this constructed division, the Railway Lands area was redeveloped from the 1970s to the 1990s to house several attractions, including the CN Tower, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, and the Rogers Centre, formally known as Sky Dome, and the Air Canada Centre.⁷³

On the western portion of the Railway Lands, Concord CityPlace was constructed. This site houses ten blocks of large-scale, mixed-use buildings. The redevelopment of the Railway Lands has certainly improved connectivity between the city and its waterfront. However, the site remains still isolated as a result of neighbouring border vacuums.

Site accessibility and connectivity are important if we want to achieve diversity and frequent social interactions within the site. There are several reasons why CityPlace might decline overtime. If we determine how to improve the site in terms of isolation, then we could lessen the likelihood of such decline.

FIGURE 36:
Toronto Railway Lands, 1970

FIGURE 37: Toronto Railway Lands, 1990

FIGURE 38: Toronto Railway Lands, 2012

FIGURE 39: Locating the Railway Lands in Toronto

0 0.4 0.8 1.2 2KM

3.2

CASE STUDY:

A LESSON LEARNED FROM ST. JAMES TOWN

“It’s going to be St. James Town all over again,”⁷⁴ a sentiment expressed in the *Globe and Mail* article “High Stakes,” by the area’s former councilor, Adam Vaughn. St. James Town has often been discussed in relation to the future of CityPlace. The two sites share some significant similarities, which will become apparent through our discussion of the transformation of St. James Town from an attraction for young, middle-class singles to one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Toronto.

Constructed between 1959 and 1976, the 8.2-acre site was developed to house eighteen buildings, comprising 7,000 units. In the 1950s, there was an influx of unmarried, young adults who belonged to the middle class. The main motivation behind the development of St. James Town was to accommodate this particular demographic. In *The Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat* paper titled *Social Infrastructure in Tall Buildings: A Tale of Two Towers*, C. Whitzman discusses the consequences of designing for a specific demographic in a high-density residential development.⁷⁵

“By the time the complex was finished, tastes had changed among this demographic bulge. Whitzman writes ‘Swinging singles’ found the lack of convenient shopping and street life in St. James Town a distinct ‘turn off.’” Most of this demographic moved out, which ultimately resulted in a surge of lower-income residents. According to the 2006 Canadian census by Statistics Canada, the neighbourhood’s average income of \$22,341 is one of the lowest in Toronto.⁷⁶

According to Whitzman, what were the reasons for this shift in occupancy? St. James Town was intentionally isolated from the neighbouring working-class community, which has since become gentrified. After the shift in occupancy, the site’s private services, mainly retail shops and banks, had closed. A vicious circle ensued: a lack of services failed to attract middle-class occupants and in turn, local businesses did not wish to

FIGURE 40: St. James Town
34

provide for a predominantly lower-class community. Whitzman argues that one the intended demographic lost interest partly because the private commercial and public services on site were insufficient for keeping them there.⁷⁷ The maintenance of these services was possible only while middle-class residents occupied the towers. Once lower-income residents of different ages began replacing these occupants, the social infrastructure declined.⁷⁸ Whitzman outlines the necessary requirements for a sustainable high-rise community. Firstly, a range of unit types for varying ages and income groups must be provided. Next, public spaces must be reserved for social interaction both inside and outside. Lastly, larger spaces for community meetings and functions must be provided on site.⁷⁹

How is CityPlace similar to St. James Town? Some similarities include geographic isolation, a high number of private services as compared to public spaces, and a great deal of renters of a particular demographic: young, middle-class singles. Are these similarities enough to cause speculation as to its decline? Perhaps we can predict that, like St. James Town, if the site is no longer appealing to young-middle class, transient residents, then the current public spaces on site will not be enough to keep them from leaving. The existing private businesses and services may then close or relocate. It is very likely then, that the many young middle-class residents will relocate to a site that is more conveniently located to services and amenities. We will now look at the site's damaging characteristics in greater detail. This analysis will bring light to the seriousness of the condition of the site, and the pressing need for appropriate solutions. We will now examine each cause for deterioration in greater depth and detail.

FIGURE 41: St James Town

FIGURE 42: CityPlace

3.3 FUTURE SLUMS?

At CityPlace, social, architectural, and economic reasons for the potential deterioration include: a high number of owner-investors and tenants, poor quality in terms of materials and construction methods, a significant number of units unsuitable for accommodating families, geographic isolation, and a poor social infrastructure and sense of community. Will CityPlace become the next St. James Town?

A COMMUNITY OF RENTERS

Approximately 50% of the occupants of CityPlace are tenants, with their units owned by owner-investors. This information was gathered in 2011 by Statistics Canada. CityPlace and condominiums directly south of the site were included in the 0012.01 Ontario census tract.⁸⁰ Toronto's real estate market is among the most expensive in the world, made so to some extent, by owner-investors. Condominium renting has become a realistic way for small families and young people to experience downtown living. The affordability of downtown condominiums is certainly a benefit for many urban dwellers, however the large number of renters has made CityPlace transient in nature. This becomes an issue for maintaining a sense of community. Generally, tenants may feel less inclined to invest in a community when there is no intention for long-term stay.

Ryan Bolton, writer and former CityPlace resident, describes his own social experiences in *Inside CityPlace, My Yuppie Life*. He claims that "the real issue, oddly, is the aloofness of community. The number of times that someone has hastily tried to hit the "close door" button in the elevator as I approach is almost humorous...no one smiles in the halls, and if you do, you tend to give the wrong impression, I guess."⁸¹ Residents may not feel part of the community as a result of a lack of other people coming into the site; who is then responsible for the future of Cityplace?

FIGURE 43:
Total Number Of
Private Households
By Tenure

FIGURE 44:
Number Of Private
Households By Age
(In Years)

THE DOMINANT DEMOGRAPHIC

According to Statistics Canada, CityPlace contains an outstanding number of 1-bedroom units not conducive for accommodating families. Of 3,780 condominium units in the census tract, 2,455 (64%) are 0 to 1 bedroom⁸². The majority of the units at CityPlace are not suited for families. There is a strong presence of the demographic of young adult singles, not motivated to socialize outside their immediate social circle. The result is minimal mixing between demographic groups.

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH WINDOW WALLS

Ted Kesik is an activist for good building practices particularly in regards to Toronto's recent condominium boom. In the paper, *The Glass Condo Conundrum* Kesik outlines the widespread use of window wall systems in many condominiums in Toronto. This wall system is often used because it is efficient and inexpensive in terms of construction and cost. The Ontario Building Code does not outline specific requirements for durability. Window walls are typically prone to water, air, and thermal leakage. Often, repair is required within 15-20 years after installation. One option for repair is to seal the joints, which lasts for only another 10-15 years. Another option includes the replacement and repair of elements. However, the replaced parts are often visible and aesthetically undesirable. Kesik speculates that low-quality condominium facades will lead to increased maintenance fees. Building units will depreciate in value, and will eventually be repurposed as low-income rental units.⁸³ The second option of replacing elements should be considered for the social development of CityPlace. Action can be taken to ensure that the aesthetic difference is intended, and designers can use this improvement as an opportunity to make the building more interesting.

FIGURE 45:
Number Of Occupied Private Dwellings By Number Of Bedrooms

FIGURE 46: Window Wall

FIGURE 47: More Durable and Energy Efficient Traditional Window

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

In addition to well-functioning sidewalks, CityPlace site must also have an adequate social infrastructure. Public services include: the Fort York Branch Toronto Public Library, sidewalks, and streets. The site's private services can be divided into eleven categories: green space, food, grocery, personal care and health service, medical, apparel, financial, transportation, toys, hobbies, pets, art, communications services, and others. According to Whitzman, businesses situated on a geographically isolated, primarily residential site are transient in nature.⁸⁴ CityPlace must then incorporate a range of versatile and flexible public spaces, which allow for staying activities. Current outdoor stationary spaces, according to Gehl's notion of places for staying include: Canoe Landing Park, Tim Hortons sidewalk patio, and edge conditions that allow for seating. This is very little compared to the number of private services.

SERVICES AT CITYPLACE⁸⁵

PUBLIC:

1. *Fort York Branch Toronto Public Library*
2. *Sidewalks*
3. *Future Public Services: Schools (Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board), Community Centre, Child Care Centre, Elementary Schools (Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board)*

PRIVATE:

4. *Canoe Landing Park*

Food:

5. *Tim Hortons*
6. *Hunters Landing*
7. *Fox and Fiddle*
8. *Liberty Shawarma*
9. *Citta Restaurant*

Grocery:

10. Sobeys

Personal Care and Health Service:

11. Evolve Hair Studio

12. Gemini Image Hair and Makeup Artist

13. Almari Couture

14. BrowMance: Brow and Wax Bar

Medical:

15. Premium Health Solutions

16. Metropolitan Pharmacy

Apparel:

17. Empire Customs: Custom Men's Tailored Suits

18. Chez Leon Drycleaning

19. Rouse Surveyors

20. Taza Real Estate

Financial:

21. Bank of Montreal

22. RBC Royal Bank

23. CIBC Banking Centre

Transportation:

24. Zipcar Location

25. Bike Share Toronto

Toys, Hobbies and Pets:

26. Pet Social: Supplies Boutique and Services

Art:

27. Jumblies Theatre

28. Art of Time Ensemble

Miscellaneous Services:

29. Mako Invent: Product Development, Design and Patenting

FIGURE 48: Services at CityPlace

Fortunately, all of the public services proposed at CityPlace have not yet been constructed, so there is hope. Block 31 is a city-owned vacant lot, located east of Canoe Landing Park. The city of Toronto has mandated the construction of two schools (Toronto District School Board, and Toronto Catholic District School Board), a community centre, and a childcare centre.⁸⁶ The city has also advised the construction of market housing. An agreement states that occupancy approval must be achieved by June 30, 2018.⁸⁷ Although the addition of these public services represents a positive step toward community development, success is not certain if there is an absence of proper public density on the site.

FIGURE 49:
Block 31 Design Proposal

FIGURE 50: Block 31 - Winter 2015

When completed, CityPlace will be the largest residential development ever created in Toronto. Development at such a vast scale will have significant effects both on the urban fabric and at the human scale. Therefore, it is rather crucial for CityPlace to adopt an urban program of sustainability and regeneration that avoids the ruin that it could potentially become; such as we have seen at St. James Town. We can respond to the identified urban issues at work in Cityplace by utilizing a spatial and urban practice that draws on the concepts of border vacuums, spaces for moving and places for staying, and open systems. Urban interventions will be constructed along the edges of the border vacuums, and a network in the form of a pedestrian and bicycle pathway will travel to and through CityPlace to connect these interventions.

PART 4:
Urban Actions

FIGURE 51: The Network

4.1

URBAN DESIGN PLAN

This thesis is proposing an urban design plan at CityPlace, consisting of a pedestrian and bicycle network, a series of pedestrian and bicycle friendly streets, and stationary zones which house interventions. The network begins at Portland Street and Queen Street West, and travels south to Puente de Luz and the proposed bridge, through CityPlace, and along Dan Leckie Way to Toronto's Waterfront Trail.

FIGURE 52: The Network

A shared spatial street strategy is being implemented into the existing context, specifically on the streets that coincide with the network and interventions. Shared space streets include: Portland Street, Fort York Boulevard, and Dan Leckie Way. Here, the curbs have been removed, traffic signs and paving types and colours have been limited, and bicycle paths have been added. The network mostly travels along these streets, except at particular points where it diverges to travel through CityPlace. The addition of bicycle lanes has required the narrowing of vehicular streets, and some lanes have been removed as a result. Lastly, interventions have been placed within created stationary zones. These typically branch off of the network or shared space streets, and are placed strategically according to the requirements of the conditions of each border vacuum. The use of consistent design elements, including stained concrete paving stones, cylindrical pedestrian-scaled lighting, and tree planters, help to harmonize the network.

FIGURE 53: The Network, shared space streets, and stationary zones

4.2

THE INTERVENTION

We are proposing interventions, or interactive staying activities, which create opportunities for social interaction. They house public recreational activities, public services, and points of interest along border vacuum edges. The interventions are programmed as follows:

Bicycle Sharing/Parking
Food Vendor + Seating
Small Garden Centre + Bicycle Sharing/Parking
Café + Bicycle Sharing/Parking
Ice Skate Rental + Bicycle Sharing/Parking
Semi-Sheltered Seating
Speakers' Corner
Outdoor Movie Theatre
Public Seating
Skating Rink/Wading Pool

They will ultimately serve as hubs for generating density and diversity, and will be spaces for contact between CityPlace residents and outside residents.

The walls of the proposed site interventions are inspired by the Bloch Building by Steven Holl Architects, an addition added in 2007 to the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. The complex wall system is made of structural channel glass, translucent insulation, and the inside layer of glass which has a stippling effect. The insulation and the stippling effect give the wall a reflective, satin-like quality. Sunlight refracts as it enters the gallery and creates a diffused lighting effect. At night, these walls create an enchanting glowing effect, which attracts visitors to the museum.⁸⁸

FIGURE 54: Bloch Building, Steven Holl Architects

At CityPlace, access to the site will be increased if the interventions are made visible. The Bloch building wall system has been incorporated into the pavilions and proposed bridge at CityPlace. The interventions will take on a lantern-like quality, which will guide visitors through the site. Visibility is especially important on either side of the border vacuums. The lighting effect will bring attention the bordering interventions, and may increase the likelihood for pedestrians to pass through.

Characteristics of Gehl's *places for staying* have been incorporated into the design of these interventions. We have incorporated irregular building facades, and overhangs and canopies at entrances that are scaled to the pedestrian. Also, comfortable seating areas have been provided, as well as sheltered spaces that allow for year-round use. These interventions are not constructed above 3 storeys, in order to accommodate our horizontal field of vision, as mentioned by Gehl in *Cities for People*.

The interventions will be constructed with precast hollow-core floor slabs within a steel structure, with connections that allow for relatively uncomplicated construction and deconstruction. The use of steel is expressive of the site's rail transport history. The structure of these interventions are flexible and incomplete, to accommodate the constantly shifting and transforming nature of cities.

FIGURE 55: Axonometric Connection Detail

BICYCLE RENTING/PARKING

FIGURE 56: Front Elevation

FIGURE 57: Plan - Ground Floor

0 0.4 0.8 1.2 2M

FOOD VENDOR + BICYCLE RENTING/PARKING

FIGURE 58: Front Elevation

FIGURE 59: Plan - Third Floor

FIGURE 60: Plan - Second Floor

FIGURE 61: Plan - Ground Floor

0 0.8 1.6 2.4 4M

SMALL GARDEN CENTRE + BICYCLE RENTING/PARKING

FIGURE 62: Front Elevation

FIGURE 63: Plan - Second Floor

FIGURE 64: Plan - Ground Floor

53

ICE SKATE RENTAL + BICYCLE RENTING/PARKING

FIGURE 67: Front Elevation

FIGURE 68: Plan - Ground Floor

0 0.5 1 1.5 2M

SEMI-SHELTERED SEATING

FIGURE 69: Front Elevation

FIGURE 70: Plan - Ground Floor

0 0.4 0.8 1.2 2M

SPEAKERS' CORNER

FIGURE 71: Front Elevation

OUTDOOR MOVIE THEATRE

FIGURE 72: Front Elevation

PUBLIC SEATING

FIGURE 73: Front Elevation

SKATING RINK/WADING POOL

FIGURE 74: Front Elevation

Since the City of Toronto would likely not have the budget to pay for or operate the proposed pavilions or bridge, Section 37 of Ontario's Planning Act can facilitate funding from developers. This section states that areas of the city can increase in density and height, beyond legal limits and in favour of developers, if valuable contributions to the community are ultimately provided. Developers responsible for future growth at CityPlace and within surrounding communities can be mandated by the City to contribute to the cost of this proposal. The City would own and build, but not pay for, the proposed interventions, and once the project is constructed, the CityPlace Residents' Association (CPRA) would work in partnership with the City to manage and operate the interventions.⁸⁹ The CPRA is a volunteer-based organization whose purpose is to improve community life at CityPlace. Here, they would be responsible for leasing out some pavilions to vendors on short term leases, with priority given to local vendors.

4.3

NORTH BORDER VACUUM: THE RAILWAY TRACKS

The railway tracks north of CityPlace create a significant border vacuum around the site, so much so that a bridge has been constructed in response to the city's requirement for the site to connect to the city. This bridge is called Puente de Luz, Spanish for "bridge of light", designed by artist Francisco Gazitua. This vibrant, yellow structure bridges the gap between Front Street West and CityPlace, and provides a passageway for pedestrians and bicyclists. However, after some observation, it appears that Puente de Luz is not occupied as frequently as adjacent north-south roads (Spadina Avenue and Bathurst Street).

FIGURE 75: Puente de Luz Bridge

The following graph compares the number of people walking and biking north and south along Spadina Avenue, Puente de Luz, and Bathurst Street at Front Street West on a Sunday and Monday, at three different times throughout the day. On average, most people travel along Spadina Avenue (S). At these times, less people travel across Puente de Luz (P), as compared to Spadina Avenue and Bathurst Street (B). We can conclude that, on average, more people travel around CityPlace than through it.

FIGURE 76: Graph Showing Pedestrian and Bicycle Movement Through and Around the Site

FIGURE 77: Site Plan - North Border Vacuum

In response, we are proposing a strategy that consists of urban design, architectural interventions, and an adjoining bridge. The purpose of this strategy is to create an attractive option for pedestrians and cyclists in the area, to increase diverse social interactions and liveliness at CityPlace.

Portland Street has been transformed into a one-way shared space street, with bicycle lanes on either side. The parking lot directly north of the proposed bridge has been transformed into a public plaza and a space for pavilions. Since the entrance to the proposed bridge is east of Portland Street, the network has been rerouted from Portland Street through the parking lot, to the bridge.

Seating pavilions are situated in the space between the network and Portland Street. They are staying places. Also, from this point, the pedestrian has a clear line of sight to pavilions across the tracks, which may inspire continued southward travel. The pavilions on the south side of the tracks are programmed with a flower shop, which has a partnership with gardens on the proposed bridge. Semi-sheltered seating is provided as well, for people to observe activity taking place on the bridge. The placement of these pavilions could potentially lead visitors to the public library, which may help better populate an important public service on site. Additional pavilions have been placed on Front Street, adjacent to the entrance of the bridge. These interventions work in partnership with the bridge and with CityPlace. They house flower shops, bike rental units, and skate rentals. The bike rental units work in partnership with the path that travels south through CityPlace, to Toronto's Waterfront Trail, and the skate rental pavilion is paired with the proposed skating rink on the pathway between the Parade condos.

FIGURE 78: Sectional Perspective - Portland Street Facing South

Why does Puente de Luz not experience as much foot traffic as the mentioned adjacent streets? How can the current conditions be improved through rethinking the bridge? Puente de Luz is located at the bottom of Portland Street. Typically, this street does not experience as much pedestrian activity as Bathurst Street and Spadina Avenue. Also, the existing ramps are not long and arguably uninteresting. In *The Image of the City*, Kevin Lynch describes the necessary conditions for an edge to perform as a seam: “An edge may be more than simply a dominant barrier if some visual or motion penetration is allowed through it – if it is, as it were, structured to some depth with the regions on either side. It then becomes a seam rather than a barrier, a line of exchange along which two areas are sewn together.”⁹⁰ The proposed bridge represents a penetration through the border vacuum, which stitches CityPlace to the city. It is positioned alongside the existing bridge. This is an unconventional strategy, especially because the existing bridge is relatively new, as it was completed in 2011. However, this thesis sets out add to the existing urban fabric, with minimal site interference or demolition. By retaining as much of the site as possible, we can observe and understand the history and development of CityPlace overtime.

The existing north ramp has been removed, and entrance stairs have been added. Stairs have also been added to the south access to the bridge. The addition of stairs allows for the option of a more direct route through to the other side. The proposed bridge bends in form to align with the existing path just south of the tracks, between the Parade Condos. This more indirect route is provided for cyclists, wandering pedestrians, or those who wish to participate in community events.

When Jacobs discussed how to program border vacuums in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, one option she proposed was a café located on the side of the city, and partnered seating on the adjacent side (special land). This idea has been incorporated at the north end of the bridge. A café is proposed on the city side, which has been partnered with seating constructed within the bridge’s entrance stairs.

FIGURE 80: Plan - Level 2

FIGURE 81: Plan - Top View

0 2 4 6 10M

The primary objective of the proposed bridge is to create appealing spaces for pedestrians and people on bikes to travel freely through to and through CityPlace. As suggested by Sennett, the bridge will house public community services, which facilitate a mixture of people within a particular environment. It consists of two levels, with several connection points between these levels. The main level houses a pedestrian/bicycle path, bicycle racks, interior space that can serve as a community meeting room and warming hut during the winter months, and some community plant and flower gardens. The second level includes more community plant and flower gardens, skateboard ramps, and playgrounds for children. Before the proposed bridge bends, a passageway between the two bridges creates an opportunity for pedestrians to cross through.

FIGURE 82: Outside Render Showing Bicycle Racks

FIGURE 83: Outside Render Showing Community Gardens and Cafe Seating

FIGURE 84: Inside Render Showing View Of Proposed Bridge From Puente De Luz Bridge

FIGURE 85: Inside Render Showing Upper Level With Skateboard Ramps

FIGURE 86: Outside Render From Spadina Avenue

4.4

SOUTH BORDER VACUUM: UNDER THE OVERPASS

The Gardiner Expressway provides access to downtown Toronto, and contains 14 ramps and 342 spans. It mostly runs adjacent to Lake Ontario, from the Queen Elizabeth Way at Highway 427 and the Don Valley Parkway. It is raised above ground, to east of Dufferin Street.⁹¹ Spaces under the expressway are created as a result of the elevated structure and overhead spans. These spaces are often dark and not well suited for pedestrian use.

The Gardiner Expressway borders the south edge of Canoe Landing Park, and acts as a significant *border vacuum* between CityPlace and the land south of it. We are proposing that the space under the highway overpass can become pedestrian friendly and therefore livelier as a result of the network which passes through, as well as partnering interventions situated along either side of the border. The network will pass under the Gardiner Expressway to the waterfront, and pedestrian-scaled lighting will extend throughout the entire network. However, more lighting is provided under the highway overpass to increase pedestrian safety.

The interventions are placed along the south border of Canoe Landing Park and on Dan Leckie Way (between Queens Quay West and Lake Shore Boulevard West). Food vendors and bicycle rentals are situated along Dan Leckie Way, and they share a partnership with events taking place at Canoe Landing Park. The bicycle rental pavilion is partnered with CityPlace, since it now hosts a bicycle friendly network from which people can travel into the city. These pavilions are placed on the west side of Dan Leckie Way, to ensure a clear line of sight to the pavilion in Canoe Landing Park.

Canoe Landing Park, formally known as CityPlace Park, is 3.1 hectares in size, and contains walking paths and multi-purpose areas for sports and other recreational activities.⁹² The

design of Canoe Landing Park was a collaborative effort between experts in the field of landscape design and art. Canadian artist and novelist Douglas Coupland designed the park's public art installations.⁹³ However, these artistic works are not effective for regularly engaging the public. Fortunately, the CityPlace Residents' Association (CPRA) has made considerable efforts to do so. The CPRA is a volunteer-based organization whose purpose is to improve community life at CityPlace. CPRA organizes various events throughout the year. The events are successful in terms of creating excitement and activity in the community and adjacent communities. Some examples of events that take place in Canoe Landing Park include: the biweekly market that occurs from June to October, occasional movie nights, and a number of seasonal events.⁹⁴

When events are not taking place, the vast size of Canoe Landing Park appears overwhelming to the human scale. An intervention within the park will help to break up the scale and provide interest for people walking from Toronto's waterfront. The unrestricting form of this intervention allows for a variety of programs, including performances, a speakers corner, a public seating space, and an outdoor movie theatre. Some events that already take place at Canoe Landing Park can be held within this intervention. Also, with public seating, a staying place is provided for CityPlace residents and visitors. The intervention is visible from the partnering interventions on Dan Leckie Way.

FIGURE 87: Site Plan - South Border Vacuum

A Stained Permeable Precast
Concrete Unit Pavers
(80 x 120 x 240 mm)

C Tree Planter

B Cylindrical Street Lighting
(120 x 3,500 mm)

D Street Water Drain
(340 x 280 mm)

FIGURE 88: Sectional Perspective - Dan Leckie Way Facing North

4.5

ACCESS TO THE COUNTERFORCE

In *The Curse of Border Vacuums*, Jacobs explains the need for strong counterforces to combat severe border vacuums.⁹⁵ CityPlace has strong neighbouring counterforces east of Spadina Avenue. The CN Tower, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Ripley's Aquarium of Canada, Rogers Centre, and the Air Canada Centre, each receive at least 1 million visitors per year.

Visitors of Attractions/Year:

CN Tower: Over 1.5 million/year⁹⁶

Metro Toronto Convention Centre: Over 1 million/year⁹⁷

Air Canada Centre: Over 2 million/year⁹⁸

Ripley's Aquarium of Canada: Over 2 million/year⁹⁹

Rogers Centre: 3.5 million/year¹⁰⁰

Spadina Avenue is a street, and, according to Jacobs, would not be considered a *border vacuum*. However, this portion of Spadina Avenue is a high-traffic, 50 km/h, six-lane arterial road. It feeds cars from the city onto the Gardiner Expressway. Pedestrian density appears to decrease south of King St. W, and this portion of Spadina Avenue appears to have a greater car to pedestrian ratio. For the purpose of this study, we will treat Spadina Avenue as a small border vacuum, in order to take advantage of the strong counterforces that exist adjacent to it.

In regards to *border vacuums*, Jacobs states that, "the blocks close to borders should be especially short and potential street use extremely fluid".¹⁰¹ The blocks have not been shortened, since this project proposes to work with the existing built forms, however, pavilions located on either side of Spadina Avenue are located within 100 metres of each other. This is a short and comfortable walking distance, and also allows for an unobstructed line of vision between the two sides. Also, the proposed shared space street plan allows for a fluid path for pedestrians and bicyclists.

FIGURE 89:
Rogers Centre and CN Tower

FIGURE 90:
Metro Toronto
Convention Centre

FIGURE 91:
Air Canada Centre

Along Fort York Boulevard and Bremner Boulevard, on either side of Spadina Avenue, bicycle lanes have been added and some vehicular lanes have been eliminated. The parking lot beside the CityPlace Presentation Centre on Bremner Boulevard has been repurposed to hold pavilions. These pavilions house bicycle renting, and are in partnership with the network that travels into CityPlace. The pavilions along Fort York Boulevard on the west side of Spadina Avenue are in partnership with the mentioned counterforces. They house food vendors with seating, and additional seating in separate pavilions. Since the site's counterforces bring in so many people during events, the pavilions are placed strategically to pull crowds of people across Spadina Avenue and into CityPlace. With the shared space pedestrian pathway and lit up interventions, crowds of sports fans and concert and event goers may feel inclined to take the short trip to CityPlace.

FIGURE 92: View of Spadina Avenue from Fort York Blvd.

FIGURE 93: Site Plan - Connecting to the Counterforce

A Stained Permeable Precast
Concrete Unit Pavers
(80 x 120 x 240 mm)

B Tree Planter

C Street Water Drain
(340 x 280 mm)

D Cylindrical Street Lighting
(120 x 3,500 mm)

FIGURE 94: Sectional Perspective - Fort York Blvd. Facing West

PART 5:

Postscript and Acknowledgements

5.1 POSTSCRIPT

This study is based on assumptions that CityPlace in Toronto will inevitably decline into near slums. We have hypothesized that by increasing site accessibility and providing opportunities for people to gather, we can draw CityPlace residents and outside residents into proposed public spaces within and around the site. CityPlace will become livelier and more socially diverse as a result. The proposed methods for solving these problems include urban design and architectural interventions, located along and across site borders. However, limitations exist as a result of the complex topic and broad scope of work, particularly in regards to the incomplete nature of the site. A primary limitation is that the final form of Block 31 is unknown. This is a central portion of the site, and knowing its future would have certainly improved and increased the validity of the proposal.

Much of what Jane Jacobs was critiquing in the 1960s has been incorporated into Toronto's current urban planning policy. However, her theory of border vacuums still offers a valid and fascinating point of view from which we can understand and combat the site's challenging, dividing forces. Gehl and Sennett provide more contemporary references, and have served to fill in the gaps when required.

A proposed bridge serves to improve connections to CityPlace, from north of the site. However, another option could have been to deck over the railway tracks. This solution would span a greater distance and provide a variety of access points, on which public spaces and interventions could have been situated. Access to the site would improve, and the border vacuum could have been eliminated. Although this strategy comes with its own cost and technical challenges, it has been successfully implemented in a number of cities, such as New York City and Chicago, to name a couple, and still stands as a possible solution for CityPlace.

FIGURE 96: Morningside Heights, New York City (as mentioned in *The Curse of Border Vacuums*), St. James Town, and CityPlace. These images highlight the comparable block sizes, and establish the validity of comparisons made between these sites.

0 100 200 300 500M

This thesis could have also proposed to remove the Gardiner Expressway, south of the site. Debates have taken place since the 1990s to remove this central portion. However, the idea has always been shelved. Recent focus has been placed on a deteriorating eastern portion of the Gardiner, where it connects to the Don Valley Parkway. Toronto Mayor, John Tory, is strongly against the option of tearing down the Gardiner, and has expressed his interest in a hybrid option, which involves repairing some and demolishing the rest. While Tory is mayor, it is safe to say that the central portion will not be torn down, and will remain a border vacuum for CityPlace. Tory has emphasized the importance of the Gardiner in regards to worker accessibility and productivity. He believes that continued or increased congestion will decrease productivity and threaten jobs, thereby negatively impacting the city's economy.¹⁰²

The success of this thesis, its strategy and proposed interventions to ward off the potential deleterious effects that CityPlace will suffer is likely dependent upon the success of Toronto's waterfront revival, which aims, among other things, to make lake access less onerous.

FIGURE 97: Toronto Waterfront Public Promenade Proposal, Dtah.

Public and private stakeholders must work hand in hand towards the proposed street enhancements. Although it is impractical for the City to purchase or expropriate private property to promote open spaces, it can regulate, in conjunction with local Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) and open private spaces, to attain an orderly, fluid, and attractive milieu.

In order to solve the issue of occupant diversity, living units ought to be enlarged to accommodate more owner families. This is of course very difficult to do ex post facto. More realistically, future construction must provide for more affordable, subsidized family size units, in order to generate said diversity.

FIGURE 98: Axonometric of Enlarged Housing Unit

Would the city support well thought out interventions and enhancements? It is suggested that it will, since it is always in the City's interest to maintain and enhance its tax base. A decaying community leads to a deteriorating property tax base and to an unhappy property taxpayer that will not stay or dwell long in the community.

Inevitably, the mentality of short-term gain and profits, leading to long-term pain must be flipped on its head to encourage short-term pain (cost and amenities) for the long term gain of a vibrant, self-sustaining and highly socialized community. This of course takes politicians, and their colleagues with vision and resolve who must look beyond the cyclical four year electoral cycle. A city or community and their infrastructure require good planning practices decades in advance. Else, history will judge poor planning rather harshly.

5.2

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