

GROWTH AND CHANGE IN TORONTO'S NEIGHBOURHOODS:

The challenges of planning for growth and density in the
downtown and inner suburbs

February, 2017

ABOUT SOCIAL PLANNING TORONTO

Social Planning Toronto is a non-profit, charitable community organization that works to improve equity, social justice and quality of life in Toronto through community capacity building, community education and advocacy, policy research and analysis, and social reporting.

Social Planning Toronto is committed to building a “Civic Society” one in which diversity, equity, social and economic justice, interdependence and active civic participation are central to all aspects of our lives - in our families, neighbourhoods, voluntary and recreational activities and in our politics.

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GROWTH AND CHANGE IN TORONTO'S NEIGHBOURHOODS: THE CHALLENGES OF PLANNING FOR GROWTH AND DENSITY IN THE DOWNTOWN AND INNER SUBURBS

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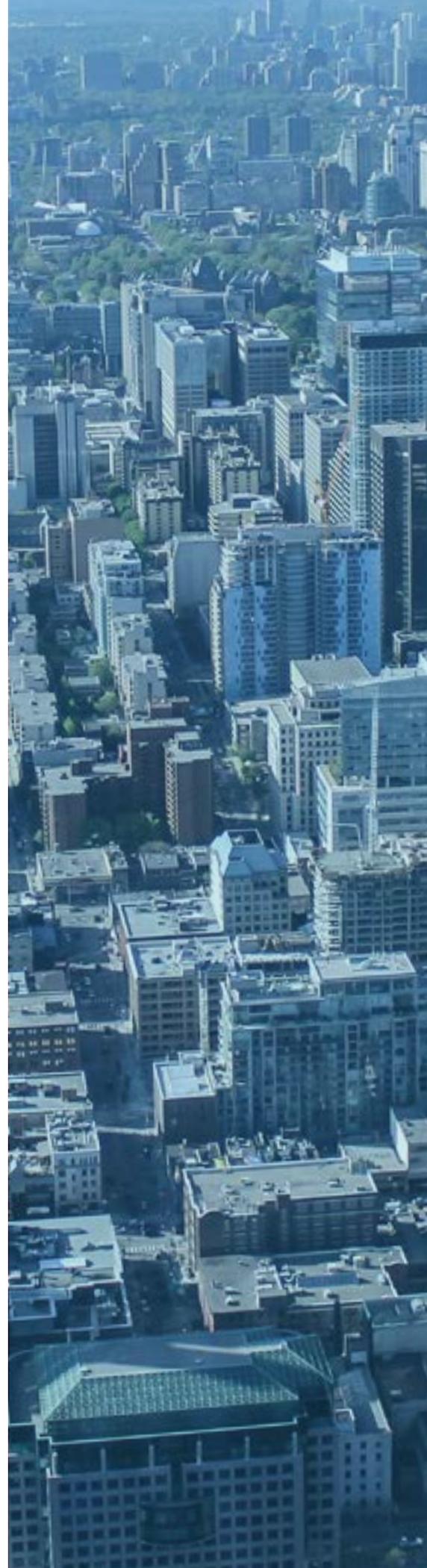
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2 Carlton St. Suite 1001
Toronto, ON M5B 1J3

REPORT AUTHOR

Dahab Ibrahim

REPORT LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Ravi Joshi



OVERVIEW

This report provides an overview of changes to the population and dwelling counts in Toronto, a review of the implications of those changes and recommendations on how to accommodate those changes. This report describes the changing landscape of Toronto as described by the census and the implications for our future priorities as a city.

HIGHLIGHTS

The landscape of Toronto is changing. Although Toronto's population has not shifted dramatically, the city's internal growth has certainly seen some fluctuation.

The expansion of Toronto's population continues to be characterized by a pattern of concentrated and vertical growth.

That change is focused on specific areas:

Considerable amounts of growth in key areas including:

- Downtown Core
- Bay Street Corridor
- The East Mall/South Etobicoke
- Willowdale and Bayview village
- Humberlea
- Agincourt

Toronto has also had its share of declines. Key locations in the city that are experiencing a declining population include:

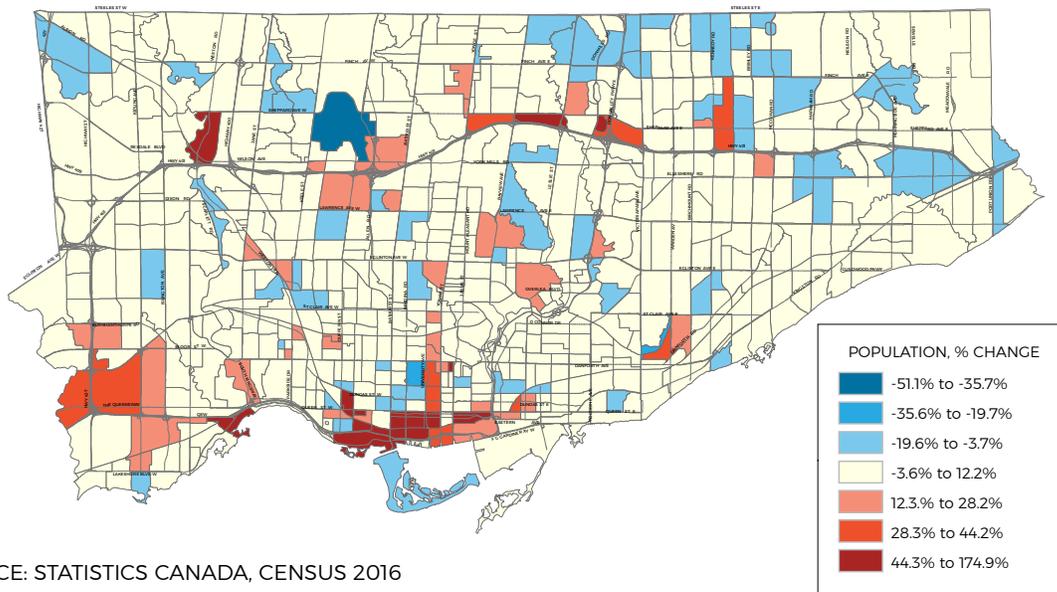
- Downsview
- West-Humber
- Highland Creek
- Agincourt

These changes put new stress on aspects of urban life in those communities, requiring greater attention to planning and social infrastructure.

This report looks to address a few of these factors. Firstly, the exceptional

increase in housing supply has occurred in a way that has a limited net effect on affordability, reinforcing the need for a coherent housing affordability plan that relies on more than market forces to address local needs. Inclusionary zoning policies that ensure real contribution from development will likely be a key factor in achieving this goal. Secondly, growth has impacts on communities that require engaged, community-informed strategies that address issues like gentrification and service planning. Thirdly, rapid growth near high-level transit nodes reflect planning on intensification in relation to transit capacity, but other areas of growth show that transit planning is not systematically addressing growing needs. Fourthly, the pace of growth has not been met by a simultaneous increase in community services, greenspace or community space, raising concerns about "social planning" in the context of the City's planning model. Communities in virtually all growth areas, both in the Core and in the inner suburbs, have reason to be concerned about the impact growth will have unless there is real investment in community amenities and community services. Lastly, traditional 'downtown' issues focused on growing service capacity to keep pace with growth are increasingly now inner-suburban issues as Etobicoke and North York become key sites of growth.

FIGURE 1 - TORONTO POPULATION CHANGE (%) 2016



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUS 2016

1. OVERALL POPULATION CHANGES

1.1- GROWTH

Toronto has seen an overall growth of 116,511 people in the 5 years since 2011¹. This is an increase of 4.5% of the population². The level of growth for each neighbourhood in Toronto can be identified in Figure 1. The areas of Toronto which have seen the most significant growth rates are the Water Front Communities and the Church Yonge Corridor.

1.2 HISTORICAL COMPARISON

In comparison to the 2006 census, when growth slowed, population growth in the past 10 years in Toronto has been consistent. Figure 2 shows the level of growth in each year from 1996 to 2016.

Although the level of growth has remained consistent to the past, the nature of that growth, specifically its location, has shifted immensely. Previously, the heaviest increase in population originated from the inner suburbs³, in 2011 these areas attributed for 92.4% of the population in Toronto⁴. There was evidence of a dissipation of this trend since the 2006 census, with a movement of growth in nodes near the city centre, which has been

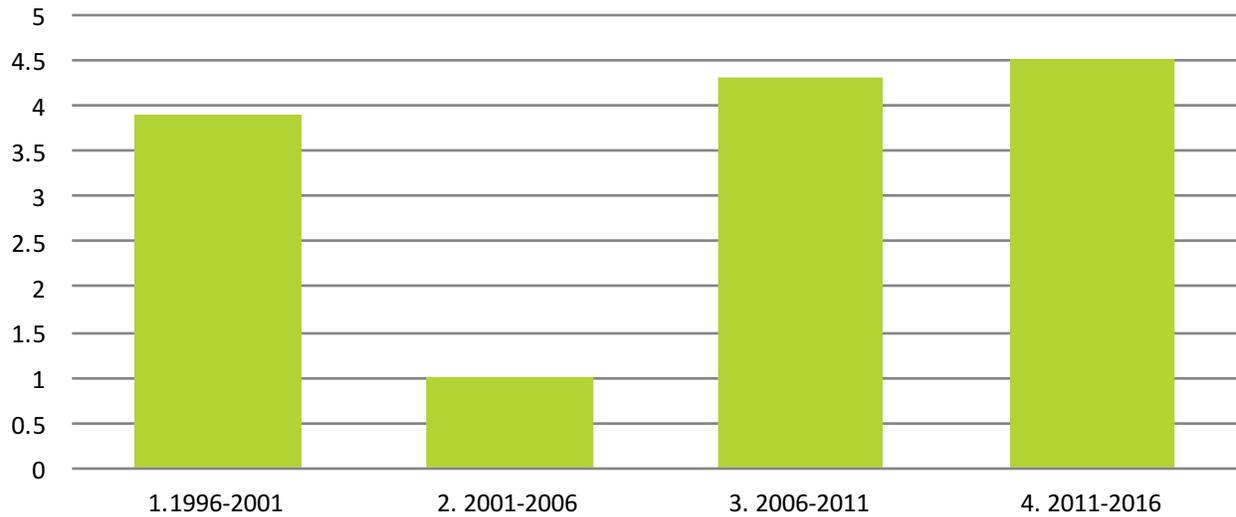
1 Statistics Canada, 2017

2 Statistics Canada, 2017

3 Toronto Foundation, 2016

4 City of Toronto. 2011 Census: Population and dwelling Counts. 2011

FIGURE 2 - TORONTO POPULATION GROWTH RATE (%) 1996-2016



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUS 2016

reaffirmed and intensified in the 2016 census. The extent of intensification of growth in the Downtown Core, Yonge and Sheppard, and Etobicoke is clear in the 2016 data. For example, the population in the Downtown Core jumped from 7.6% of the population in 2011 to 9.6% in 2016⁵. This reflects the location and amount of development proposals in Toronto. Toronto has seen over 11,615 floors of residential development proposed in the Downtown Core, amounting to approximately 75,000 new units upon completion⁶. To get a sense of the drastic amount of growth in the past few years, a similar level of development took Toronto 40 years to achieve (1971-2011), whereas the previous figures represent growth in just a 10 year span⁷.

1.3 THE CORE AND THE INNER SUBURBS

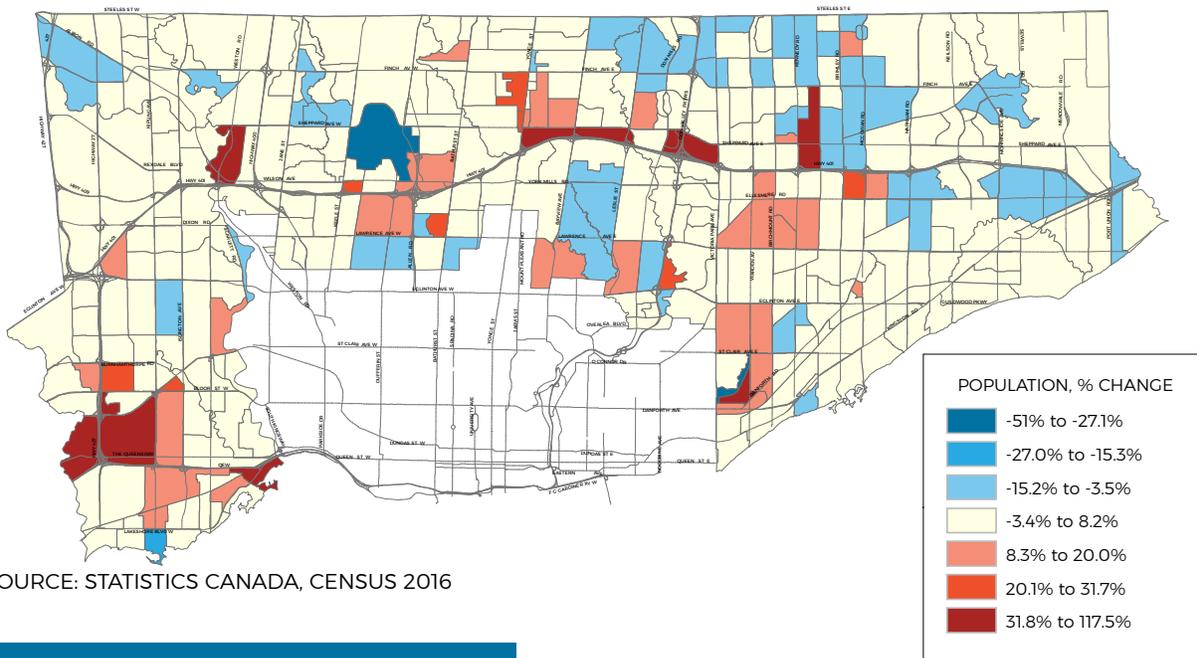
Each section of Toronto has historically been distinct in its character; their growth pattern also exemplifies that difference. Although we are seeing an increase of growth, how that growth presents itself in the various geographic regions of the city is diverse. Portions of the Downtown Core, North Toronto and Etobicoke have been exceptional growth nodes, experiencing a high concentration of growth while the inner suburbs are seeing a balanced mixture of growth and decline. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate how the concentration of growth differs between each area of the city, and how and where that growth is structured within each area.

5 Statistics Canada, 2017

6 City of Toronto. T.O.Core planning Toronto's Downtown. 2016

7 City of Toronto. T.O.Core planning Toronto's Downtown. 2016

FIGURE 3 - TORONTO POPULATION CHANGE (%) IN THE INNER SUBURBS 2016

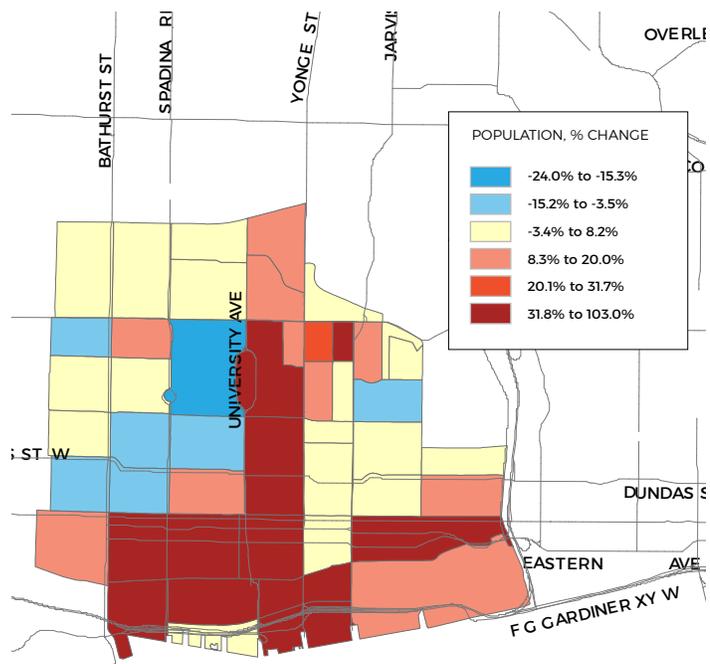


SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUS 2016

The differences in growth within Toronto can be attributed to many factors which include where developable land is in greatest supply and where economic opportunities are present in Toronto⁸. The City's Official Plan, which focuses growth in key areas in the city help facilitate these factors. New developments and population growth seem to reflect that plan⁹. The areas that have seen decline or insignificant growth in population also correspond to areas that were not planned for large scale residential growth¹⁰.

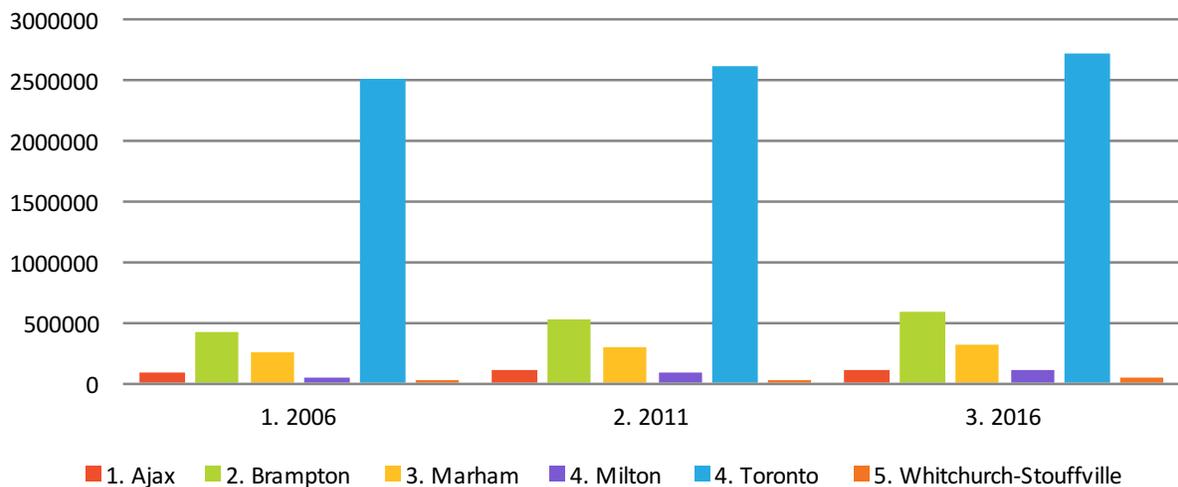
8 City of Toronto. Profile Toronto: How Does The City Grow. 2016
 9 Keesmaat, 2015
 10 Keesmaat, 2015

FIGURE 4 - TORONTO POPULATION CHANGE (%) IN THE DOWNTOWN CORE



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUS 2016

FIGURE 5a - **POPOULATION COMPARISON BETWEEN MUNICIPALITIES IN THE GTA**



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUS 2016

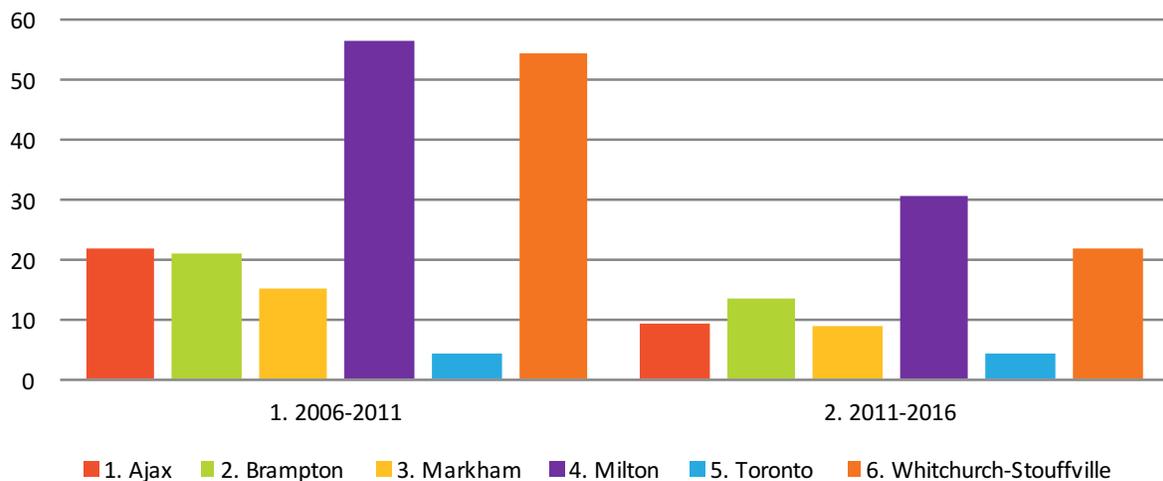
1.4 GEOGRAPHIC COMPARISON

When comparing Toronto to the GTA, Toronto is showing slower population growth, overall. Toronto only experienced a total population growth of 4.5%, whereas surrounding areas such as Milton and Whitchurch-Stouffville experienced over 20%¹¹. The surrounding municipalities have been attracting a higher level of growth than Toronto for many years. Despite this Toronto still remains the hub for activity as people often work and socialize in Toronto but live in 905 municipalities¹². Figures 5a and 5b present Toronto's growth in comparison to other GTA municipalities.

11 Statistics Canada, 2017

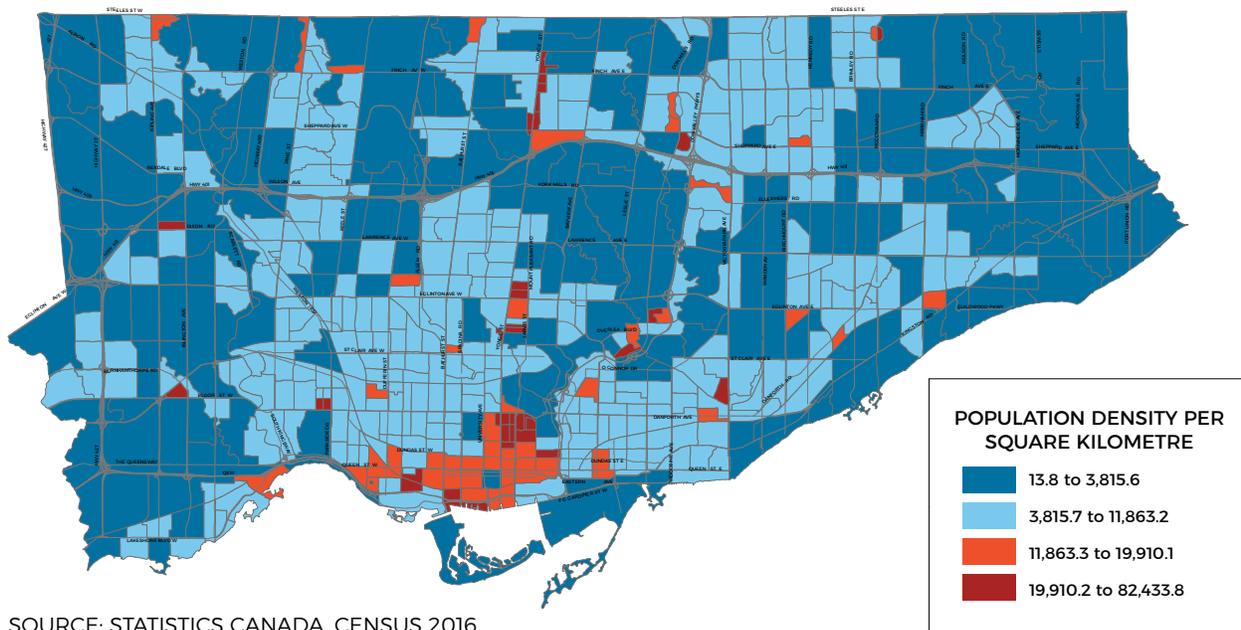
12 City of Toronto. T.O.Core planning Toronto's Downtown. 2016

FIGURE 5b - **GROWTH RATE (%) COMPARISON OF MUNICIPALITIES IN THE GTA**



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUS 2016

FIGURE 6 - TORONTO POPULATION DENSITY PER SQUARE KILOMETRE 2016



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUS 2016

2. OVERALL DWELLING CHANGES

Toronto is becoming known for the rapid growth of condominiums, and in this census release we can definitely see the role condos have had in altering the density of neighbourhoods. Figure 6 presents the dwelling density across neighbourhoods in Toronto. Currently the neighbourhoods of Mount Pleasant West, St. Jamestown, and Church-Yonge corridor experienced some of the highest density levels in Toronto.

The average density rate in Toronto has gone up to 4,334.4 per square kilometre representing a 4.5% increase from the previous census in 2011¹³. There has been a high concentration of dwellings in the Downtown Core, and North Toronto. When comparing the number of new homes created to the population growth we can see that average family sizes in the Downtown Core are smaller than other areas of Toronto. This becomes understandable when we consider the large amounts of condo developments in the Core, many of which do not accommodate for large family sizes.

FINDINGS

A statistical snapshot of the Toronto landscape has now been presented, but what does this mean for communities and municipal planning? The accommodation of a growing population without a growing city area (Urban Sprawl) should be an important concern for municipal planners. The city appears to be growing successfully by increasing housing within currently developed areas. The City of Toronto's Planning and Growth Committee has been tracking development proposals, and it is clear that large amounts of residential units are being built. They have identified over 311,300 residential development proposals between 2011-2015 with over 85,000 residential units being built in that time period¹⁴. This is putting it on track to hit the density targets set out by the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, largely through development in the core of the city.

Accompanied by this concentrated growth and development comes various social impacts. Massive growth demands strong

and directed planning. City planning initiatives and committees identify a vision of city growth that represents what they call 'complete communities'. 'Complete communities' are neighbourhoods that enjoy affordability, accessibility, and opportunity, in relation to living, working and socializing within the city¹⁵. As the city grows we have to be more mindful of ensuring complete communities and that those communities support the needs of all individuals from various socio and economic backgrounds. Large-scale growth like we are witnessing in Toronto, especially in the Downtown, North Toronto and North York, raises concerns about various social issues for residents especially those residents living in poverty. Major concerns around this growth are:

- Gentrification
- Lack of affordable housing
- Transit
- Lack of amenities and greenspace

14 City of Toronto. Staff Report: how does the city grow- update 2016

15 City of Toronto. Annual 2013 Report.

GENTRIFICATION

Visible indicators of gentrification are not always present when walking through neighbourhoods in Toronto. Toronto is constantly reinventing itself and shifting but gentrification can come with very real consequences for the original residents of that neighbourhood. With the population influx into the Downtown Core as it becomes an increasingly attractive place to live, the adjacent areas are becoming prime space to settle. These adjacent areas, although more modest than the Core, have seen an average growth of 4.9%¹⁶. For people who live in these areas it is not just a reinvention of space as new residents move in, it also has very real economic and social impacts. Gentrification has been identified as a factor that reduces low income populations in areas that were previously affordable to them¹⁷. The new residents also alter the socio-economic make-up of neighbourhoods, which in turn affects the services needed in the area and the costs of those services¹⁸.

Areas today that are currently experiencing the beginning of gentrification or in the midst of it include:

- Parkdale
- Palmerston/Little Italy
- South Riverdale

Active engagement of residents is imperative in the management of growth and the impacts of gentrification. Ensuring that low-income residents are able to play a role in shaping the changes to their community and its effects on them, as well as how to guide those changes so that they are not impacted, should be the priority for city planners. Many communities facing gentrification have taken grassroots approaches and developed local associations that attempt to protect the social, cultural, and economic diversity of their areas by making sure the changing population landscape, and the development that comes with it, is of benefit to all residents¹⁹. Community planners should be looking to engage those voices in the decision making capacity of the city so that growth comes with an image of positivity and avoids the fears about dismantling communities that are associated with gentrification.

16 Statistics Canada, 2017

17 Walks &Maaranen, 2008

18 Walks &Maaranen, 2008

19 Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust,2016

LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Gentrification not only affects certain areas of the city, it also has a wider impact on the general affordability of the city as a whole. The more an area gentrifies the stronger its correlation to rising house prices²⁰.

Existing residents are not able to afford homes in their current neighbourhood and are in need of new affordable housing; this in turn puts more families on an affordable housing waiting list that already has over 90,000 families.²¹ Gentrification has compounding effects on the city by removing previously affordable housing and simultaneously creating the need for new affordable housing. The concentrated growth in the areas identified by the census demonstrate the very real pressure Toronto is facing. Increases in the supply of housing have had limited impact on affordability as rental rates closest to the areas with the highest growth remain among the highest in the city²².

In particular, the Downtown Core, which already has the greatest volume of growth, is also experiencing the most development proposals. However, as there is no mandatory affordable housing or inclusionary zoning legislation currently

in effect for those developments, there is no assurance of new affordable housing being built that enables lower-income Torontonians to find homes in these areas of growth. Toronto can negotiate contributions to affordable housing development through Section 37 agreements under the Planning Act. Section 37 gives the City authority to offer any new development specific benefits (height and density expansions) in return for community benefits²³. These range from greenspaces, public art, creating or improving public service facilities or constructing affordable housing units in and around the areas of development²⁴. However, communities often opt for benefits that enhance their shared amenities such as streetscape improvements and parks over other benefits such as affordable housing²⁵. Toronto Chief Planner Jennifer Keesmaat noted that section 37 is not able to meet the need for affordable housing in Toronto, and estimated that over 12,000 units of affordable housing could have been built in the last 5 years if, instead of negotiated agreements for general community benefits, there had been a mandatory inclusionary zoning policy in place²⁶. With the lack of construction of new affordable

20 Horak, 2010

21 Shapcott, 2013

22 Better dwelling, 2017

23 Gladki Planning Associates, 2014

24 Gladki Planning Associates, 2014

25 City of Toronto. Staff Report: Section 37 45(9) review community benefits secured in 2013 and 2014.

26 Powell, 2016



housing that accompanies rapid urban growth, the City clearly needs stronger tools and mandatory policies if it is going to address the growing need.

In the absence of these tools, lower income Torontonians face increased housing pressures, with over 100,000 residents paying over 50% of their income in shelter costs²⁷, tenants facing poorer living conditions and residents experiencing increased pressure to locate away from transit, amenities and services. For many Torontonians, the goal of 'complete communities' seems remote.

The City has long proposed inclusionary zoning as a viable solution that would aid the affordable housing market. Inclusionary zoning requires new developments that are built at market-rate to dedicate a percentage of their

units to affordable housing²⁸. This tool is especially applicable to a city like Toronto where development is rapid and affordable housing needs are high²⁹. Inclusionary zoning has been shown to work in many American jurisdictions with similar market conditions³⁰. Ontario legislation that permits municipalities to enact inclusionary zoning policies recently passed the legislature and should come in to force soon³¹. Ensuring that the City takes action to implement local inclusionary zoning by-laws is one of the best ways to guarantee that 'complete communities' emerge, with a mix of incomes, rather than continuing the recent trend of segregated communities and concentrated low-income residential areas.

27 Mah, 2009

28 Mah, 2009

29 Mah, 2009

30 Mah, 2009

31 Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Ministry of Housing, 2017



TRANSIT

Toronto has some of the highest levels of congestion and one of the longest commute times in North America³². 33% of all jobs are located in the Downtown Core³³, making congestion and wait times an ever-pressing issue. Residential growth downtown helps to increase proximity to work for downtown workers and increase counter-flow transit use for those working outside the area. As the population densities increase in other areas, with high levels of vertical growth in condominium developments at other growth nodes, the location of transit networks and the level of frequency of already existing lines need to be considered.

Figure 7 shows a population change map by census tract overlaid with the Toronto transit map. It is evident that the current structure of higher order transit correlates well to high population density areas, especially the newly intensified neighbourhoods, reflecting effective growth planning in the context of the

capacity of our current subway system.

Sustaining that transit capacity may be challenging, however. The proposed City budget for 2017 calls for transit service decreases in many areas of high growth³⁴. Cuts to bus and streetcar routes like 35, 108, 534, 29, 121, 11, 51, and 43 will adversely affect virtually all of the high growth areas in Toronto. Current system changes also fail to increase service to address overcrowding in these high growth areas. Even in the Downtown Core many streetcars and bus lines are set to decrease service, while many others lack the service increases needed to accommodate the increasing population and overcrowding on those surface routes. In transit deserts in areas of Toronto such as Etobicoke North, Etobicoke Centre and Scarborough East, passengers can wait over 30 minutes for a bus, yet these areas are also facing transit service reductions, despite continued demand³⁵.

In addition to population related issues within Toronto, the surging population

32 Toronto Foundation, 2016

33 City of Toronto. T.O.Core planning Toronto's Downtown. 2016

34 TTC riders, n.d.

35 Spurr, 2015

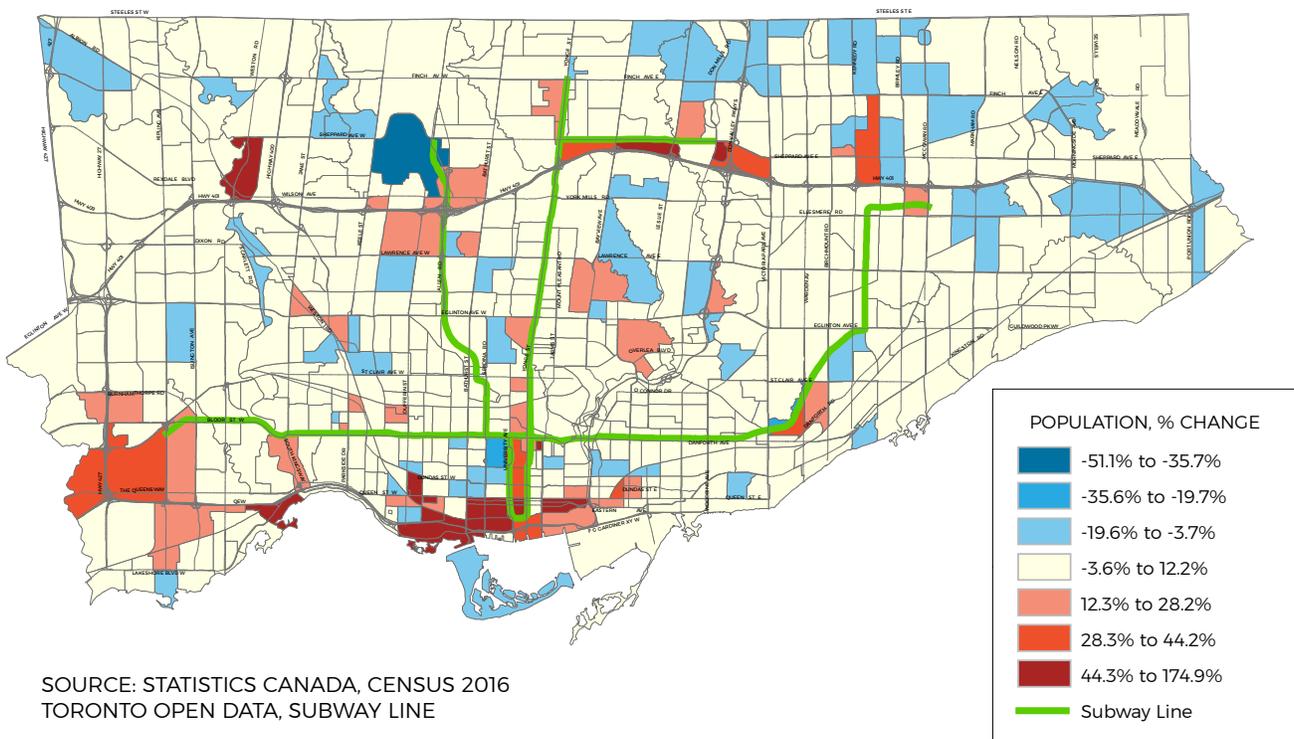
in the surrounding GTA will also add stress on transit and increase congestion. Toronto needs a concrete plan on how it will adequately manage a transit system that some say are failing residents and hindering progress³⁶.

Current city spending plans, such as maintaining an elevated Gardiner expressway at considerable additional cost, raise questions about the decision to allow

continued shortfalls in the transit system's capital budget. Given the role transit plays in the high growth areas of the city, as well as in the lives of lower income residents and the environmental sustainability of the city, focusing investment in this service appears to be a sound strategy for success if our growing city is to address the needs of all residents.

36 Grescoe, 2012

FIGURE 7 - TORONTO POPULATION CHANGE (%) WITH SUBWAY LINES 2016



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUS 2016
TORONTO OPEN DATA, SUBWAY LINE

GREENSPACES AND AMENITIES

The Yonge Street Corridor, although it is known as the economic hub, is also being re-imagined as a healthy community to live, work and play. Encouraging residential developments through zoning was intended to facilitate this change. However, a lack of planned public space and greenspaces creates increasing challenges if these growth areas are to be seen as healthy communities³⁷. There is a lack of community space and greenspace in the Core, and rapid rates of growth place increased pressure on existing parks and amenities.

Section 37 agreements have produced some community benefits that address amenities and greenspace in exchange for height and density increases, but these benefits are limited compared to the rapid rate of growth.

Community amenities such as recreation, child care, libraries, and human services have experienced a similar strain as a result of rapid development in major growth areas such as the Downtown Core, Willowdale East, and the East Mall.

This strain will worsen as population concentration in the key areas continues to rise. Issues facing community amenities include aging infrastructure, a lack of appropriate physical space, and a lack of affordability for new services and programs³⁸. An essential aspect of livability, as identified by the City's T.O.Core study, is having adequate community and recreation services. Despite this, community amenities in high growth areas have not kept pace with residential development to ensure needs of current residents are met, and that future residents are adequately planned for.

The pace of development and population growth far outpace the growth of greenspace in the city³⁹, and this continual mismatch between most population concentrations and greenspace is set to worsen if the growth patterns in the current census continue. In addition to the total amount of greenspace provided, it is important to understand what forms of greenspace are needed. The city secured \$ 8,660,000 dollars in community benefits for park land improvements and privately owned public space in 2013-14⁴⁰, but the

37 City of Toronto. Enhancing community services & facilities, 2016

38 City of Toronto. Enhancing community services & facilities, 2016

39 City of Toronto. T.O.Core planning Toronto's Downtown. 2016

40 City of Toronto. Staff Report: Section 37 45(9) review community benefits secured in 2013 and 2014.

process for allocating those funds and for planning of greenspace need to be robust enough to keep pace with rapid growth and changing needs.

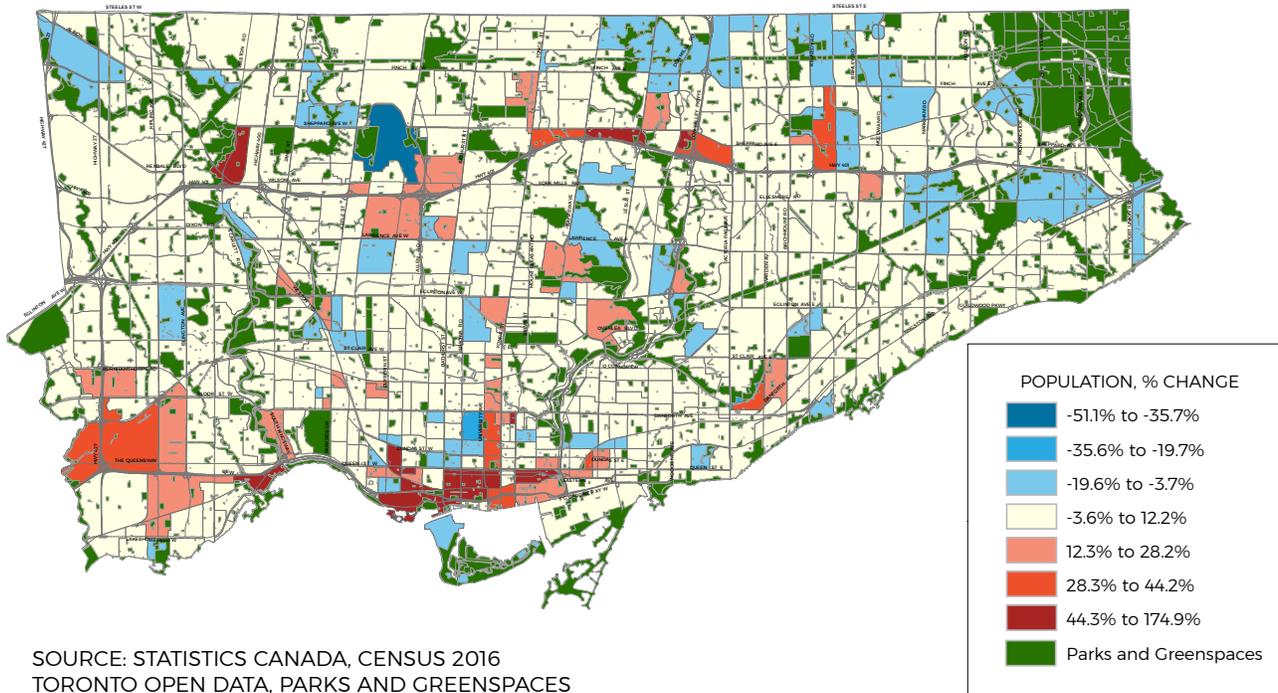
The City's Official Plan celebrates the variety and quality greenspaces, and sees them as integral to permanently attracting people and business internationally⁴¹. The Official Plan cites a parks system as a way to preserve access to greenspace. However, much of Toronto's greenspace is in the form of large open ravine areas that are outside many of the areas of greatest

growth⁴². The poor supply of greenspace in these areas cannot be fully addressed by the preservation and enhancement of the other public spaces and greenspaces elsewhere in the city especially as the concentration in the city's Downtown Core, the Bay Street Corridor and Willowdale/ Bayview Village continue. There should be a focus on ensuring a certain level of public space and greenspace in the Downtown Core, North Toronto and North York, through policies that reflect the needs of the number and types of residents who live there.

41 Keesmaat, 2016

42 Keesmaat, 2016

FIGURE 8 - TORONTO POPULATION CHANGE (%) WITH PARKS AND GREENSPACE 2016



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUS 2016
TORONTO OPEN DATA, PARKS AND GREENSPACES

NEW NODES OF GROWTH AND THE SUBURBS

Although the greatest growth has been taking place in the city's core, and this report has been heavily focused on that growth, the City needs to extend its vision to all areas of the city especially the pockets of the inner suburbs that need planning and policy support. The Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal notes the considerable ongoing volume of vertical poverty in the inner suburbs⁴³.

Developments occurring outside the Downtown Core has been centralized in specific avenues and nodes as outlined by The Official Plan, but important challenges exist for all neighbourhoods⁴⁴. The "complete community" vision of having people be able to live work, and socialize within their neighbourhoods

needs to be applied to the inner suburbs as much as the Downtown Core⁴⁵. With growth largely concentrated in a small number of neighbourhoods, the City will need other change processes to drive the development of "complete communities" in other areas.⁴⁶ A combination of micro and macro level focus in city planning is necessary to ensure individual neighbourhoods do not get left behind.

Interestingly, there are a few areas of the city that have experienced sharp declines in the population. These areas include Downsview, West-Humber, and, in particular Agincourt, which has experienced both growth and declines. The characteristics of these neighbourhoods remain similar, but what has attributed to their decline is unclear and requires further research.

43 Stewart, Bowen, Martin, Thorne, & McClelland, 2012

44 Keesmaat, 2016

45 City of Toronto. T.O.Core planning Toronto's Downtown. 2016

46 City of Toronto. T.O.Core planning Toronto's Downtown. 2016

CONCLUSION

If the census data has made anything clear it is that growth needs guidance! In North York, North Toronto, and the Downtown Core, new challenges are emerging with unprecedented growth. Social planning, with proactive investment in community services, greenspace and community amenities are clearly needed. Engaged strategies for community planning are necessary to address the pressures of growth on capacity and on the community. Furthermore, effective strategies that address affordability are increasingly important as growth skyrockets but “complete communities” remain elusive. Continued investment on transit is needed as growth successfully tracks high order transit systems, but cuts to surface routes are threatening sustainability. Finally, pressure on the City Planning Division, with chronic limitations to staffing and

resources should be addressed to ensure that we can develop sound strategies to address these issue proactively⁴⁷. Toronto’s growth can yield significant benefits, but coherent strategies to harness growth and plan for it comprehensively and effectively will be the key to ensure these benefits are realized. Toronto has a strong history in pro-active community planning; we are at a point in time and growth where that strength needs to be a driving force⁴⁸. How the City navigates and works within these pressures needs to be the prime focus of community planning, and is imperative to producing the vitality the city is known for. It is evident that no change in the city comes without a ripple effect. The effect of the increase and concentration of the population in certain centres stretches far beyond those areas and has a major influence on the direction and the needs of the city as a whole.

47 CUPE Local 79, 2016

48 City of Toronto. T.O.Core planning Toronto’s Downtown. 2016



SOCIAL PLANNING TORONTO RECOMMENDS

- Engaged community planning to address gentrification
- Implementation of an inclusionary zoning by-law
- Transit investments in increased services that serve Toronto's growing needs
- Effective investment in greenspace and amenities with planning that draws on community priorities
- Allocating more resources and staff to city planning divisions
- Stronger consideration of not just growth planning but proactive social planning that prioritizes diversity and is conscious of the needs of existing residents
- Ensuring that the vision of 'complete communities' encompasses the needs of lower socio-economic groups

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