"Second Tier Cool":
Residents' Experiences of a Mid-Size City's
Gentrifying Downtown

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

Ubiquitous depictions of life in a big city evoke images of young professionals enjoying craft beers on patios, eating out at trendy bistro-lounges, and biking on dedicated cycling lanes to work.   Positive portrayals of downtown living in mid-size cities however, are much more uncommon, and there is little in the literature that discusses the revitalization of these smaller urban centres. This research begins to fill the gap by analyzing the gentrifying processes of mid-size cities' downtowns, using the City of Kitchener, Ontario as a case study. Through observations, census data analysis, and interviews, the study addresses how residents' experiences of the downtown reflect both the gentrification literature and Kitchener's downtown plans. This research found that participants' experiences of living in the core revealed the distinctive upgrading trajectory of this smaller city and reflected elements of Kitchener's urbanity, the downtown's decline, and its mid-size status.

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The staff at the Dana Porter Library and the Kitchener Public Library provided invaluable help in locating library resources and archival documents, and supported me in creating the map (figure 1) located in my thesis. I would also like to acknowledge the City of Kitchener for granting me permission to use the map of Kitchener's Downtown Districts (figure 2), originally found in the *Downtown Kitchener Action Plan* (2012).

My thanks also extends to all my family and friends for their support throughout this process, and for occasionally (or at times with much greater frequency) indulging me in discussions about the Creative Class, gentrification, and downtown Kitchener.

Lastly, I am deeply grateful to all the participants in my study. Their articulate and insightful comments have formed the basis of this work.

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Preface

It's late August 2014, and I have just moved to Waterloo, Ontario after having lived in England for four years. I am feeling overwhelmed and disheartened by the car-dominated infrastructure and how suburban everything feels. I am in the car with my mother, and we are driving down King Street. As we navigate our way through downtown Kitchener, my mother quickly notices the handful of empty shop fronts and the people loitering on the sidewalks. She remarks that it seems like a rough place, but I am captivated by its griminess. Compared to its neighbour just minutes away, there is something decidedly more urban about this little downtown.

It's almost two years later, and I'm on the number 8 bus heading down Weber Street in the middle of a sunny Saturday afternoon in July. About five minutes after we've left Charles Street Terminal, Kitchener's downtown transport hub, three young women sitting behind me strike up a conversation as they notice the change of scenery. One of the women remarks, "It's, like, so much nicer just three blocks from the downtown. There's nice cars here, nice gardens…" As her voice trails off the conversation changes, but I'm left wondering how widely shared their perceptions are amongst the general population.

How many people still see the downtown the same way that Lori, one of my participants did, as "a homeless dump," or as a place of danger and decay? How many people don't see the upmarket Berlin restaurant, the Gilt cocktail lounge, or the quaint grocer, Legacy Greens when or if they ever come downtown? Do they notice the construction in the core, or the new condominiums that have been built? If they do recognize these changes, how many people see these new stores and restaurants as anomalies in a landscape of decline? While some, including many of my participants, recognized that downtown Kitchener was upgrading, others did not acknowledge that the city's core has been changing in significant ways.

The way that we often view revitalization is that downtowns are typically perceived as being in a state of one of two extremes: they are either a place of decline *or*

revitalization; downtowns are either successful *or* they are not. Thus in this moment of transition, I asked residents to speak to their perceptions of the downtown and to the changes underfoot in this mid-size city.

1. Introduction

Ubiquitous depictions of life in a big city evoke images of young professionals enjoying craft beers on patios, eating out at trendy bistro-lounges, and biking on dedicated cycling lanes to work.   In recent years, condominiums and lofts in trendy neighbourhoods in large metropolitan areas throughout North America have gained preeminence as popular housing choices for young, educated professionals. In Canada, the housing markets in both Vancouver and Toronto have experienced rapid growth as rent and property values continue to skyrocket. The centres of mid-size Canadian cities, in contrast, have experienced many decades of decline, their downtowns stereotypically replete with dive bars and discount stores. Widespread associations with urban living seem a far cry from the typical images of the downtowns of these much smaller cities.

Barring a few exceptions, mid-size cities generally lack the draw of larger cities. These urban areas, especially their downtowns, typically offer fewer amenities, fewer jobs concentrated in and around the core, and a car-dependent infrastructure. Here I use the terms mid-size city and smaller city interchangeably, both of which are defined as a city with a population between 50,000 and 500,000 (Bunting, 1987; Bunting, Filion, Hoernig, Seasons & Lederer, 2007; Lewis & Donald, 2009). Bunting et al (2007) described these mid-size city centres as lacking "the convenience and accessibility advantages characteristic of suburban locals" (p. 36). Filion, Hoernig, Bunting and Sands (2004) found that mid-size city downtowns are generally perceived as unsuccessful with a few exceptions such as Halifax, Nova Scotia and Burlington, Vermont. However, Lewis and Donald (2009) argued that smaller cities are not necessarily doomed to decline, and that these places do have the ability to attract new residents. In the media, newspaper articles describing the successes of the downtowns of mid-size cities in southern Ontario, notably Hamilton (Gee, 2015) and Kitchener (Cornell, 2016) indicate that at least a handful of mid-size urban cores in this area are experiencing much needed revitalization, restoration, and growth.

While the downtowns of mid-size cities certainly should not be slated to decline, their revitalization policies often reflect a mentality focused more on growth and less on inclusive or equitable revitalization. The downtown revitalization plans for Kitchener, a city of 219,153, aim to re-create a downtown experience that rivals that of much larger urban cores (Statistics Canada, 2011a). Even the goal of the *Downtown Kitchener Action Plan* reads: "to create one of the best downtowns in North America…" (City of Kitchener, 2012, p. 6). By emphasizing an experience-driven downtown defined by its live music scene and its unique restaurants and festivals, Kitchener has joined the ranks of cities across North America whose revitalization policies are based on cultivating culture and a sense of urbanity in their cores to appeal to a select demographic. Like many former manufacturing hubs, Kitchener, once 'Busy Berlin,' is attempting to stake its place in the knowledge-based economy. As the City of Kitchener hinges its revitalization on its imitation of much larger metropolises, residents' experiences of Kitchener's central city neither neatly replicate the image presented in the city's downtown revitalization plans nor the experiences of urbanites in more substantive cores.

1.1 Background

As members of the middle classes and the wealthy continue to move into city centres, displacing existing residents, there is a growing body of literature focused on gentrification, which is often understood as a geographical "class transformation." (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2008, p. 39). However, gentrification studies are primarily focused on metropolises, and there is little in this literature focusing on smaller cities (Bell & Jayne, 2006; Lees, 2006). As Lees (2006) has argued, the gentrification processes in larger cities do not neatly cascade and replicate themselves in smaller cities.

Authors such as Ley (1996), Rose (2004) and Zukin (2008) have explored the reasons that people move into city centres which include factors such as affordability, walkability, diversity, authenticity, and culture. However, their focus is consistently on larger metropolitan regions. Some characterizations of these gentrifiers portray them pejoratively as 'pioneers' who are essentially colonizing previously working class communities and neighbourhoods (Smith, 1996). Here the local bar becomes a gastro-pub

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and the hardware store is converted into a dog accessory boutique. However, authors from Rose (1984) to Brown-Saracino (2009) have argued that these theoretical polarized divides between gentrifiers and existing residents are often inaccurate and do not speak to the complexities of the gentrifier demographic.

These alleged preferences of incoming middle class residents have become tools for the municipalities of struggling downtowns that are placing increased focus and funding on producing culture and a sense of distinctiveness as a strategy for improving their depressed urban cores. Largely influenced by Richard Florida and *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2004)*,* these strategies assume that culture, whether in the form of art house cinemas, skate parks, or art galleries, will help build cities that foster the qualities of uniqueness and authenticity that will in turn attract young, middle-class professionals to their centres. As this has happened, municipalities have rebranded their downtowns as more than just shopping or work destinations, but rather as centres of 'vibrancy,' 'diversity,' and 'culture.'

These 'Creative City' based revitalization strategies have been widely criticized in the academic literature as a form of neo-liberal, state-sponsored gentrification and for their focus on moulding downtowns to appeal primarily to highly skilled and educated professionals, often at the expense of existing residents (Macleod, 2002; Peck, 2005; Rousseau, 2012; Zimmerman, 2008). Downtowns become playgrounds to attract professionals, who, in turn, will supposedly help both bolster the economy and revalorize city centre land. In these revitalization plans, the well-off inhabitants of cities are portrayed as little more than pawns of a neoliberal system, driven to city centres for the culture and consumption options. However, compared to larger urban areas, mid-size cities are at a distinct disadvantage because they lack the population size, density, and the number of cultural draws of larger cores (Lewis & Donald, 2009). Despite these drawbacks, mid-size cities are still attempting to capitalize on the appeal of the downtown lifestyle to attract people to their centres, even when such plans do not correspond with the city's reality (Waitt & Gibson, 2009).

1.2 Purpose of Study

There is currently insufficient research on how gentrification processes affect mid-size cities (Lees, 2000; Lees, 2006). Although gentrification trajectories may be similar in cities of varying sizes, these processes do not necessarily neatly flow down the urban hierarchy (Lees, 2006). By interviewing residents of Kitchener, Ontario, I was able to draw comparisons between residents' experiences of the downtown to the literature on gentrification in larger metropolitan areas. Here I outlined the ways in which gentrification in Kitchener differs from gentrification in larger municipalities and the ways in which municipal revitalization policies juxtapose with the views of residents.

In this exploratory research, I address the question: to what extent are residents' experiences of the downtowns of mid-size Canadian cities reflected in the literature and in municipal planning policy? Using Kitchener, Ontario as a case study, the subsequent objectives of this research are fourfold: 1) To describe the upgrading processes that are underway in downtown Kitchener; 2) To compare the factors that influence residents' housing choice to the literature; 3) To analyse the difference between residents' experiences of the downtown and the gentrification literature; 4) To discuss the differences between Kitchener's downtown plans and residents' experiences of the downtown.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The idea that the downtown cores of mid-size cities may be popular places to live is uncommon in the literature, not least because of their often long-standing history of decline. However, as mid-size cities may be growing in popularity in Canada, due to both governmental policies (for example, the Ontario Places to Grow Act), and the increasing costs of housing in large Canadian municipalities, mid-size cities may soon confront some of the pressures facing larger cities. While successful revitalization may have once seemed like a distant aspiration for mid-size cities, these smaller towns and cities may soon have to address the negative impacts of downtown upgrading such as lack of affordable housing as well as physical and sociocultural displacement of existing residents. Subsequently, this research both updates recent work that focuses on the

downtown cores of mid-size cities and adds to the currently small body of literature that looks at the gentrification of these smaller locales.

1.4 Thesis Outline

 Chapter 1. Introduction

This chapter introduces my research topic, which centres on residents' experiences of downtown Kitchener in the midst of its upgrading.

Chapter 2. Literature Review This chapter begins by describing how mid-size cities are often neglected in the literature, particularly in the area of gentrification studies. This section then proceeds to describe the ways that gentrifiers are characterized in the literature, for example, as the Creative Class or as marginal gentrifiers. The next section goes on to look at the different reasons that people may move into cities' cores, including cultural and lifestyle factors. The chapter ends with a discussion of the literature that critically examines downtown revitalization strategies.

Chapter 3. Methods In Chapter 3, I outline and justify the research methods I used in my case study of downtown Kitchener. I explain why I addressed my research question using a mixed-methods approach including observations, Statistics Canada data analysis, as well as interviews.

Chapter 4. Context. In this chapter, I provide background information on downtown Kitchener. The chapter begins with a description of the downtown including its history, as well as a series of observations taken throughout the year. I then proceed to discuss the demographics of Kitchener's central city census tracts. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of Kitchener's downtown revitalization efforts over the last fifty years.

Chapter 5. Findings. Chapter 5 outlines the findings from the interviews I conducted with residents of central city Kitchener. This chapter is divided into three sections that look at why people chose to move downtown, their experiences living near Kitchener's core, and finally, their opinions on the city's revitalization.

Chapter 6. Discussion. In Chapter 6, I discuss my interview findings and I respond to my four research objectives. I begin by analyzing the trajectory of Kitchener's upgrading. I go on to discuss the reasons people choose to move to the downtown and compare these findings with past Kitchener case studies as well as to the broader literature. The third section looks at people's experience of living in Kitchener's central city neighbourhoods, and how features commonly associated with urbanity (e.g. diversity and authenticity) factored into residents' responses. The final section analyzes how participants' responses both complimented and challenged the image of the city presented in its revitalization documents.

Chapter 7. Conclusion and Recommendations The final chapter summarizes the key findings of my research and offers recommendations for municipal planners of mid-size cities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

To better understand downtown Kitchener's upgrading and the residents who choose to live in its inner city neighbourhoods, it is necessary, first, to look to the literature on gentrification, gentrifiers, and downtown revitalization. This literature review is divided into three sections. I begin by examining some of the literature on mid-size cities, gentrification and on the characterizations of gentrifiers. The second section of the literature review focuses on the consumption driven side of the gentrification debates. The third section critically examines cities' revitalization policies and points to some of the negative consequences of such policies in the post-modern, neoliberal city. Although the field of urban studies is highly dominated by scholarship on large urban centres, I have also incorporated relevant research on mid-size cities into each of the above sections.

2.2 Cities, Urbanites and Gentrification

In the popular imagination, large metropolitan areas have become symbols of progress, culture, and diversity. Housing in trendy urban neighbourhoods whether in the form of loft conversions or condo buildings has become a status symbol for young professionals, and individuals who live in large cities have myriad consumption opportunities at their fingertips. The authors of books such as *Intown Living—a Different American Dream* (Breen & Rigby, 2005)*, the Great Inversion and the Future of the American City* (Ehrenhalt, 2012)*,* and *For the Love of Cities* (Kageyama, 2011)*,* extol the virtues of metropolises and speak optimistically about the growing popularity of urban areas (particularly amongst the middle classes) in the new millennium as welcome progress from the suburban sprawl of the post-World War Two boom. The cities described are generally relegated to what Hall (2004) defined as global cities, such as New York and London, and sub-global cities such as Boston and Vancouver.

In contrast, mid-size cities and small cities have often been neglected in the field of urban studies (Atkinson, 2002; Bell & Jayne, 2006; Norman, 2013). These smaller cities may fit into Hall's (2004) definition of regional cities, with populations between

250,000 to 1 million, or of provincial cities, with populations between 100,000 and 250,000. Bell and Jayne (2006), however, have explained that the definition of a small city cannot be restricted to its number of residents: "Smallness is as much about reach and influence as it is about population size, density or growth" (p. 4). They go on to discuss how small cities are often viewed as poor facsimiles of their more substantive counterparts because of the common conception that cities are *supposed* to be large (p. 5). This idea is so prevalent that when we think of the urban we immediately think of the populous and expansive global metropolis. Furthermore, mid-size urban centres are often seen as lacking the advantages of bigger cities because of their low-density urban form and supposed lack of cultural amenities and diversity (Bunting et al, 2007, p. 28; Norman, 2012; Polèse, 2012).

However, some mid-size cities have more prosperous and dense cores, more diverse populations and more cultural amenities than one might often assume considering their smaller size and the stereotypical images of such these cities. In Halifax, Nova Scotia, for example, the average income in the census tracts of its small downtown has started to exceed the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) average (Grant & Gregory, 2015). Jayne, Gibson, Waitt and Bell (2010) found that some small cities can and do have culturally vibrant economies. Norman (2013) determined that based on an analysis of 80 small metropolitan areas in the United States (populations between 100,000 and 200,000), smaller cities have also become more racially diverse over the last thirty years.

Yet most of the literature discussing *why* people choose to move to cities is relegated to big cities. Here, the idea that select members of the middle classes, often referred to as the new middle classes, are drawn to urban cores is not a concept that is unique to the 21st century. When Ruth Glass coined the term gentrification in 1964, her definition evoked the individuals who were moving into working class neighbourhoods in London who she described as members of the middle classes. Smith (1996) noted the new middle class's proclivity for urban areas, which, in turn, has shaped their values and tastes. Similarly, Ley (1996) has described how the new middle classes are drawn to an urban lifestyle and seek out what he calls "the cosmopolitan opportunities of central city

living" (p. 4). Lees, Slater, and Wyly (2008) described this demographic as combining what they refer to as "a bourgeois work ethic with bohemian culture" (p. xx).

More recently, 'the Creative Class,' a term coined by Richard Florida, is frequently evoked to describe the middle class professionals who choose to live in urban cores and who are drawn by the culture and diversity typically associated with substantive metropolises (2012b). Similarly to past definitions of the new middle classes, Florida has defined this group by their professions where "[their] economic function is to create new ideas, new technology, new creative content" (2012b, p. 5). The Creative Class encompasses a broad swathe of professionals including engineers, professors, architects, financial sector and healthcare workers; in essence, anyone who has a job that reflects their higher educational qualifications (2012b, p. 8). However, Florida did not assume that Creative Class individuals would necessarily be drawn to large metropolitan areas such as New York or Toronto. In the book *Who's Your City?* (2008b) and on the ensuing website (2008a), Florida listed recommended cities in the United States and Canada for individuals at different life stages including young singles and mid-career professionals. Notably, this list included several smaller cities in both the United States and Canada such as Boulder, Colorado, Victoria, BC, and Guelph, Ontario. For young singles especially, city centres are often characterized as popular housing location choices. This demographic, often referred to as millennials, are generally attracted to the city centre (or alternatively to places with good public transportation links to the city centre) as a result of demographic shifts (ie. delayed child rearing and age of first housing purchase), lifestyle preferences, and economic necessity (Moos, 2015).

This movement of educated professionals into city cores and the consequent displacement of existing residents has spawned the field of gentrification studies. Initially, gentrification was recognized as the process whereby members of the middle classes moved into working-class communities, renovated historic housing stock and displaced existing residents (Glass, 1964; Sabourin, 1989). This definition of gentrification is now considered outmoded and the term is now often used to refer more broadly to the transition or "upgrading" of what are often inner city neighbourhoods,

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resulting in changes to neighbourhood demographics and the built form. These changes may include the renovation of historic housing stock as well as new residential developments, in addition to an influx of an increasingly affluent and well-educated population (Davidson & Lees, 2005; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). In terms of new builds, Davidson and Lees (2005) argued that although the redevelopment of brownfield sites do not necessarily directly displace existing residents, such developments may cause indirect displacement due to the new units' prohibitively high costs, or due to socio-cultural displacement. Here the renovation of historic housing stock and the construction of new residential developments do not in and of themselves lead to gentrification. However, when coupled with increasing real-estate prices in central cities and the lack of political support for affordable housing, the result is neighbourhoods that are marked by their concentration of the middle classes or the wealthy (Lees, 2008).[1] In general, most of the gentrification literature focuses on these patterns in large cities, while there is much less in the literature on these same processes in smaller urban centres (Atkinson, 2002).

The stage model of gentrification was one of the first models that described the process of gentrification and established both a chronology of the process and the characteristics of the urbanites moving into revitalizing communities (Berry, 1985; Clay, 1979; Ley, 1996). Berry (1985) described how before gentrifying, such communities were generally home to working class retired people, singles, and settled families. This model characterized the first gentrifiers as artists, and, historically, members of the queer community who were willing to invest significant sweat equity into updating and renovating their historic homes (Clay, 1979; Ley, 1996). Professionals with jobs that were closely related to culture and the creative economy then followed, for example, journalists and professors. At these later stages, gentrification was described as more likely to have government support, and developers also began to invest in these neighbourhoods (Clay, 1979; Berry, 1985). In the final stages of gentrification, financial professionals and business people moved in (Clay, 1979; Ley, 1996, p. 192). The stage

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[1] The redevelopment of public housing into mixed-income developments, for example, is touted as a way for cities to mitigate the negative effects of gentrification. However, critics argue that these developments still ultimately reduce the number of affordable housing units, and that they are indeed another form of state-sponsored gentrification (Lees, 2008).

model of gentrification suggested there were a range of people drawn to the urban core; however, they occupied different neighbourhoods at different times. In contrast, Rose (1984) argued the stage model was too simplistic and neither accurately described the differences within the gentrifier category nor discussed the similarities between marginalized gentrifiers and the groups that they were displacing. These similarities included, for example, the need to live centrally and the more affordable cost of housing in particular neighbourhoods. The gentrifier category has been further divided based on gentrifiers' housing, where they live in the city, and on their demographics. Ley (1996) described how early gentrifiers were more likely to live in older housing stock and to support social liberalism compared to later-stage gentrifiers who were more likely to live in condominium developments. Dutton (2005) noticed that residents who lived in upmarket residential developments in Leeds were more likely to fit the profile of global gentrifiers without ties to the city. By contrast, residents who lived in older housing stock further away from the core were more likely to have a longstanding connection to the area.

In the literature, there are now several more specific terms to describe certain types of gentrification and gentrification related processes including 'studentification' (Smith 2005), 'youthification' (Moos 2014a, Moos 2014b; Moos, 2015), 'condofication' (Lehrer and Widitz, 2009) and 'familification' (Goodsell, 2013). In more recent years, gentrification studies have also expanded to include the gentrification of cites outside the global north (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005), of resort towns (Brown-Saracino, 2009), and also of smaller cities and towns (Paradis, 2000). As several of these authors have acknowledged, gentrification takes on a unique trajectory in different contexts. This cascade model, as Lees (2006) has argued, wrongfully assumes that gentrification processes, gentrification lifestyles as well as gentrification policies are the same in global cities as they are in small cities. Lees used the case study of Portland, Maine to describe how the cascade model does not take into account the unique context that determines the gentrification patterns and processes for individual cities. Similarly, Dutton (2005) also described how the rapidity of the gentrification process in Leeds was highly influenced

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by the city's economic circumstances, in this case, the rapid expansion of its tertiary sector.

2.3 Why Cities?

The study of gentrification as a consumption driven process typically describes the qualities attributed to or represented by particular neighbourhoods or communities that make such places desirable to the new middle classes (Caulfield, 1989; Lloyd, 2010; Zukin, 2008). Like the rest of gentrification studies, this area of research is generally focussed on the appeal of large urban cores. Here the reasons that are attributed to the popularity of particular neighbourhoods range extensively and include diversity, proximity to work, authenticity, and affordability.

The reasons influencing people's housing location choice often differ based on individuals' demographics and needs. Rose (1984) was particularly critical of assumptions that gentrifiers are attracted to the central city for only lifestyle reasons. She asserted that gentrifiers' housing decisions were often based on need. Here she cited examples of marginal gentrifiers, namely single parents, whose housing location in the central city made it easier for them to both work and assume childcare and household responsibilities. Two decades later, her research and interviews with Montreal condominium dwellers indicated that residents placed equal importance on practical and cultural factors when choosing their neighbourhoods (2004). Paradis (2000) found that in the small town of Galena, Illinois, existing residents ascribed more importance to the downtown's functionality, while newcomers were more drawn to its heritage and touristic atmosphere. Similarly, Bunting (1987) found that the reasons given by residents for their housing location choice in inner city Kitchener, Ontario were divided between lower-income immigrant families who were drawn to the housing affordability and ease of access to public transportation, and middle class newcomers who were drawn by cultural factors such as the historic housing stock and their opposition to the suburbs.

That inner city neighbourhoods in general are becoming increasingly popular housing location choices may be attributed in part to economic shifts. As the economy

has moved away from a manufacturing based economy to a knowledge-based economy, offices for knowledge-based industries have replaced manufacturing industries that were once located in the central city (Ley, 1986; Ley, 1996). As these professions are increasingly concentrated in and around downtown cores, the walkable neighbourhood, defined by Talen and Koschinsky (2013) as "a safe, well-serviced neighborhood, imbued with qualities that make walking a positive experience" attracts these white-collar professionals seeking proximity to work (p. 43). If we further take into account the typical gentrifier's profile as someone who supports both environmentalism and sustainability, then it makes sense that the creation of the walkable neighbourhood, and in turn, the cyclist friendly neighbourhood, has become an important component of urban revitalization plans (Danyluk & Ley, 2007; Vale, 2012). Subsequently, areas that are considered pleasant and accessible by foot often face increased gentrification pressures (Talen & Koschinsky, 2015). Unsurprisingly, Danyluk and Ley (2007) found that gentrifiers in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver were more likely to cycle or walk to work as compared to commuters from other areas of the city, even when distance to the downtown core was accounted for. However, these same residents in Toronto and Vancouver were also less likely to use public transport, despite their political support for these services.

Many of the characteristics that are now associated with cities, for example, diversity, creativity and authenticity, are vestiges of a time period when cities were refuges for social outliers (Caulfield, 1989). As the suburbs developed following the post-World War Two boom, living in the city centre for some people was an intentional rejection of the conformity, homogeneity and authoritarian hierarchies characteristic of the Foridst industrial economy (Ley, 1996). At this time, the suburbs were seen as the rightful home for the white, well-educated nuclear family headed by men who worked as lawyers, managers, engineers, salesmen, and in other professional positions (Berger, 1968). Caulfield (1989) echoed this sentiment when he determined that the migration to cities was a symbolic rejection of suburbia. Rose (1984) described how many of the people who chose to live in city centres at the time of her research, such as single parents and gay couples, did so because they did not conform with the norms of the suburban

lifestyle and the nuclear family. Even in the decades following the decline of the Fordist industrial economy, living in the city continues to be viewed as a symbolic opposition to the suburbs and to the conformity and tradition that they represent (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008).

In a post-industrial society, artists are perceived as dictating the direction of consumer culture (Bell, 1976; Featherstone, 2007). In this way, particular urban neighbourhoods have gained popularity as they are associated with creativity as a result of their past history as artists' quarters (Ley, 2003; Lloyd, 2010; Zukin, 1982). Lloyd (2010) attributed the popularity of Wicker Park in Chicago to its association with a bohemian lifestyle, represented by the archetype of the humble artist who lives in the city because it provides an open and diverse environment and because the rent is inexpensive. Real estate developers, in turn, have capitalized on this association, and used it to increase the value of urban land. In this way, new residents can appropriate the artistic lifestyle without being artists, and real estate developers profit. Furthermore, as Lloyd explained, since capitalism is increasingly driven by continuous new research and development, capitalism works in "accentuating design, fashion, and flexibility, [and] exploits these [creative] energies in myriad ways" (p. 245). In this way, our current society has placed the artist on a pedestal and has idealized creativity not so much for its own sake, but for its central role as a driver both in promoting economic development and in its ability to revalorize urban land.

It is also important to note that during the period of post-World War Two suburban growth, living in the central city was often the only viable housing choice for members of marginalized communities, including recent immigrants, racialized minorities, and visible members of the queer community, who were often blatantly excluded from the suburbs (Alba, Logan, Stults, Marzan & Zhang, 1999; Hodge, 1995; Seitles, 1998). Today, the legacy of cities as havens for marginalized populations remains in popular culture's valorization of qualities such as diversity, authenticity, and creativity. Florida (2012b), for example, decreed that the Creative Class enjoys "organic and indigenous street-level culture," and people watching in demographically diverse urban

neighbourhoods (p. 135 & p. 148). These characterizations of the city remain popular even as many cities become increasingly unaffordable to the demographics who originally contributed to the popular images of the archetypal downtown.

The gentrification process often transforms the aesthetics of a neighbourhood and marks it as belonging to the new middle classes. These aesthetics are evident both in remodelled and renovated housing facades as well as in the types of stores present in gentrifying communities (Lees et al, 2008). While people may be drawn to cities by elusive concepts such as diversity, authenticity, and creativity, the manifestation of these characteristics often comes in the form of consumer spaces and consumption options. Beyond simply acquiring goods, one's consumption preferences generally represent one's identity, one's status and one's values (Jayne, 2006). Here consumption may mean anything from one's choice of restaurant or coffee shop to one's choice of housing location, which often, in turn, signifies one's class. To be able to say that you live in a certain neighbourhood speaks to your status, your values, and your identity. Zukin (2008) described how the consumption of organic or 'ethnic' products allow individuals to signal their uniqueness and opposition to mainstream, homogenising culture. Zukin also spoke to the class-based component of consumption where members of the gentrifying classes valorize, idealize, and romanticize the very qualities that had once signalled that a neighbourhood was working class. Jayne (2006) similarly described how middle class consumption choices have become a means for the middle classes to simultaneously control and appropriate working class culture.

In the same way that where one shops or eats is a reflection of one's values and one's class, where one lives in terms of both one's neighbourhood and one's individual dwelling unit also become a reflection of one's identity. For example, since the 1970s when middle class consumption patterns placed increasing value on the arts and historic preservation, loft buildings, often former artists' studios, gained increasing popularity first in New York and then in other global cities (Podmore, 1998; Zukin, 1982, p. 58). Furthermore, during the gentrifying process, middle class residents of historic neighbourhoods often work to return heritage houses to their original, 'authentic' state,

and in this process, they also signal their class (Jager, 1986). Podmore (1998) described how the popularity of lofts is the result of what she called "a symbolic system of imagery," where the lifestyle associated with loft living has been diffused through popular media's depictions of these spaces to cities throughout the world (p. 284). In this way, property developers do not just sell spaces to live, but also the idea of the urban lifestyle. As the gentrification aesthetic is replicated in cities throughout North America and western Europe, urban neighbourhoods have become increasingly generic and placeless and ironically more like the suburbs (Caulfield, 1989; Jager, 1986).

2.4 Selling (out) the City

Harvey (1989) discussed how the economic shift away from a Fordist, manufacturing based economy has formed the basis for municipalities' entrepreneurial governance models. Following the 1973 recession, the economy was characterized by deindustrialisation, high unemployment rates, spending cutbacks at all levels of government, and widespread privatisation (p. 5). This unregulated economic system has led to more competition amongst municipalities for funding and investment in order to generate jobs and capital (p. 7). This interurban competition has also placed pressure on municipalities to create cities where people will want to both live and visit, and subsequently, spend their money (p. 9).

From the 1930s through to the 1960s, cities' entrepreneurial strategies aimed primarily to attract large businesses and investments in a process that is often referred to as "smokestack chasing" (FCM, 2014). However, as the North American economy has moved away from a manufacturing based economy to a knowledge driven economy, knowledge sector workers are more and more valued as critical economic drivers (Becker, 1993; Mathur, 1999). Thus increasingly, cities' entrepreneurial strategies focus simultaneously on drawing in industry as well as attracting and retaining talent (Leslie & Catungal, 2012, p. 113). In this environment of inter-urban competition, city centre revitalization campaigns have become a tool for municipalities to promote themselves (Smith, 2002; Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2008). Whereas the gentrification characteristic of the 1950s and 1960s, sometimes referred to as classical gentrification, was a somewhat sporadic process largely carried out by individual homeowners, Smith (2002) has

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chronicled how the state has become increasingly involved in facilitating gentrification. This state-sponsored gentrification, which Smith (2002) referred to as gentrification generalized, is a process "fuelled by a concerted and systematic partnership of public planning with public and private capital" (p. 440).

Sometimes euphemistically labelled "revitalization" or "regeneration," gentrification on this scale has redefined the urban landscape through large-scale developer led projects such as high-end condominium developments in or near the central city rather than through the renovation of historic housing stock by middle class homeowners (Davidson & Lees, 2010; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). These transformations to the urban landscape take place on a much larger scale than in decades past and continue to both revalorize central city real estate and to change the social makeup of pre-existing communities (Davidson, 2007). Here Jane Jacobs' ideas, popular amongst planners (Filion, Shipley, & Te, 2007), such as the importance of mixed-use, dense, urban neighbourhoods, have been used as key tenets of successful city building, while discussions of social class-diversity have largely been ignored. Municipalities advertise their walkability, their cyclist-friendly infrastructure, and their diversity of historic buildings as they work to make their cores attractive to knowledge sector workers as well as investors who promise to provide tax dollars and to contribute to the city's economy.

Hannigan (1998) described how the 'fantasy city' made up of large-scale planned and themed urban entertainment complexes marketed to baby boomers and generation x'ers was a tool used to promote revitalization and consumption in the late 20th century. The developments he depicted, such as extravagant casino-hotels and multiplex cinemas, are at once glaringly artificial and plastic. Today, a more subtle and insidious form of urbanism has increasingly replaced these over the top displays of consumerism. Dedicated cycle pathways, public art, street festivals, and a dense urban form often characterize the vision for the contemporary city. However, like the fantasy city that Hannigan described, such urban environments are often isolated from the city at large and designed to encourage spending as well as investment. Here the qualities that have

historically drawn people to cities, and which are now offered, for example, in the form of carefully planned but nonetheless "authentic" outdoor shopping centres, have been used as real-estate drivers and as the stimulus for the revitalization of downtown cores and depressed urban neighbourhoods (Zukin, 2008).

Subsequently, gentrifiers' cultural tastes become the "unambiguous handmaiden of local economic change" (Brown-Saracino, 2009, p.16). Image production and spectacle are often used to highlight these cultural tastes, for example, through large-scale festivals such as film, visual arts, or music festivals. In this process, spectacle is also used as a lubricant for downtown revitalization and urban development (Pinder, 2000). Lehrer (2012) further discussed how place-marketing is often based on image production that is focused on the built environment (p. 99). In this way, the post-modern city, and in particular, its centre, becomes defined as a place of individual freedom, diversity, play and pleasure (Christopherson, 1994; Featherstone, 1994; Macleod and Ward, 2002). Here Harvey (1994) described how the modernist city, with its focus on "the communication of the permanence, authority and power of the established capitalist order" contrasted sharply with the post-modernist city "with its sense of the ephemeral, of display and of transient but participatory pleasure" (p. 376).

Often inspired by *The Rise of the Creative Class,* downtown revitalization policies aim to shape their city centres around consumption delivered under the rhetoric of creativity, vibrancy, and authenticity. For example, Florida (2004) argued that a city's economic success rested on what he referred to as "the 3T's of Economic Development." These three T's are: 1) technology, meaning the high-tech industry and innovation; 2) talent, which he also referred to as human capital; and 3) tolerance, a culture of acceptance and openness to diversity. Over the last decade, Florida has disseminated this creative class economic development theory across North America, including to cities whose economies are struggling to adjust to the decline of manufacturing. Peck (2005) has scathingly critiqued *The Rise of the Creative Class,* 'creative cities,' and creative class based revitalization strategies. Peck described how the use of culture in cities'

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revitalization campaigns is simply another manifestation of the neoliberal city, designed simply to promote spending.

Following decades of decline, Creative Class based revitalization strategies are the latest in the line of many attempts to revive depressed downtowns of mid-size cities. Before the Second World War, mid-size cities, and specifically their downtowns, were retail and community hubs for their regions (Filion, 1995; Friedrichs and Goodman, 1987; Mercier, 2003). However, as retail moved to malls on the city outskirts, the downtowns of mid-sized cities began to decline and their former niche was lost (Filion, 1995). After this point, North American downtowns generally failed because they were unable to compete with the benefits of suburban retail, such as the convenience of malls and the easy car access of these shopping centres (Bunting & Filion, 2000; Bunting et al, 2007). Practical how-to books such as *Main Street Success Stories* (Dane, 2007) and *The Living City* (Gratz, 1994) offer examples of successful case studies for struggling downtowns. However, mid-size cities strive to offer the same amenities as larger urban cores, and creative industries generally remain concentrated in larger cities (Polèse, 2012; Waitt & Gibson, 2009).

Polèse's (2012) research of 135 cities in Canada found that the few smaller cities that were able to attract creative industries generally had the advantage of either an attractive natural setting or proximity to a larger metropolitan centre. Polèse also concluded that there is little evidence that arts-related activities were key to attracting knowledge industries, and that there was little relationship between culture and employment growth. Several other authors have similarly been dubious about the benefits of creative industries and the role of these industries as an impetus for cities' overall economic prosperity (Lewis & Donald, 2009; Reese & Ye, 2011; Waitt & Gibson, 2009). Lewis and Donald (2009) described how smaller cities should focus on liveability and sustainability for both new and existing residents rather than on attracting the Creative Class. It is unrealistic for these smaller cities to increase their levels of diversity, their amenities, or for the city to generate a technology sector, which are all features that will supposedly attract educated professionals. Similarly, Reese and Ye (2011) concluded that

public policy, as opposed to economic policy or a desirable setting, was a better predictor of a city's economic health. Bell and Jayne (2006) advocated the benefits of small cities such as their compactness, walkability, human scale, and community-feel. Filion et al (2004) emphasized that revitalization attempts in mid-size city downtowns should focus on characteristics such as, "historical character and street-level activity," that differentiate downtowns from the suburbs (p. 340). As many of the above authors have argued, creative class based revitalization strategies are not effective in encouraging the revitalization of smaller cities. Waitt and Gibson (2009) also found that in the mid-size city of Wollongong, Australia, roughly 90 kilometres south of Sydney, creative class based revitalization strategies contrasted sharply with the city's masculine, working class ethos. While the city was attempting to revitalize and gentrify inner city neighbourhoods, the only regeneration that actually occurred happened on the outer edges of the city that were closest to Sydney.

Played out in the built environment, many argue that Creative Class based revitalization policies further polarize the urban landscape, creating spaces that are only designed for a certain demographic (Macleod, 2002; Rousseau, 2012; Zimmerman, 2008). Zimmerman (2008), for example, described how Milwaukee closed down ninety percent of its swimming pools due to lack of funding, while at the same time spending $200,000 on a public art installation in the downtown (p. 241). Similarly, Rousseau (2012) explained how the revitalization practises in Roubaix, France rebranded its city centre to appeal to the new middle class rather than the city's local, working class population. This gentrified landscape also creates spaces of exclusion for those who are unable to afford particular stores, cafes or restaurants. In a study conducted in Melbourne, Australia, Shaw and Hagemans (2015) found that there were fewer goods and services in gentrifying neighbourhoods, that were accessible or affordable for the community's existing, working-class residents.

Here it becomes evident that the post-modern neoliberal city is designed to appeal to the desires of the middle classes and the wealthy rather than the needs of all (Mitchell, 2001). Within this context, the city is responsible for enabling consumption and

preserving the urban aesthetic (MacLeod, 2002). As cities increasingly rely on consumption as a source of profit and tax revenue, belonging in the city is determined by one's ability to consume, or what Christopherson (1994) termed "consumer citizenship." MacLeod (2002) described how in Glasgow, the visibly poor threaten the city's consumption spaces, and as a result, their behaviour and presence are increasingly policed. Those who are unable to take part in this consumption economy are subsequently demonized and excluded. More broadly, this has often led to the cleansing of downtown cores of homeless and otherwise marginalized populations. As public and private money is invested in creating downtown shopping districts, particularly in large urban cores, these urban areas are oftentimes policed in ways similar to private suburban malls (Amster, 2003; Mitchell, 2001). This focus on appearances and on consumerism has created cities that according to Mitchell (2000), focus "[on] the maintenance of surfaces, the promotion of order at the expense of lived social relations, and the ability to look past distress, destruction, and marginalization to see only the good life (for some) and to turn a blind eye towards what that life is constructed out of" (p. 8). In the postmodern city, Mitchell (2001) also wrote that there is movement away from the struggle for "universalizable justice" (p. 61) or to be phrased another way, cities have become increasingly focused on individual emancipation rather than collective freedom (Byrne, 2005).

However, this vision of the city as divided between the have's and the have not's, may be too polarizing, creating the illusion of a stark division between classes that is often much blurrier in reality. Here the boundaries between gentrifiers and existing residents may be more ambiguous than often assumed (Paton, 2014; Rose, 1984). Rose (1984) observed that marginal gentrifiers often have similar needs to the groups that they displace, thus distinguishing them from wealthier incoming residents. Paton (2014) interviewed working-class Glaswegians, and similarly found that these long-time residents sometimes shared similar tastes and aspirations to the gentrifiers who were moving into new developments in historically working-class neighbourhoods.

Brown-Saracino (2009) challenged the homogenising view of gentrifiers as pioneers, intent on colonising the city's core and taking over the urban landscape with little or no regard to existing residents or the current built form. This author's work focused on four diverse communities in the United States including the rural town of Dresden, Maine and the tourist town, Provincetown in Cape Cod. Based on interviews with gentrifiers, Brown-Saracino's proposed two alternative archetypes: the social preservationist and the social homesteader. The social preservationist is actively concerned about the negative effects of gentrification on the local population and wants to maintain the existing culture of the neighbourhood. The social homesteader occupies a more moderate position and is defined as "preserving authenticity and ensuring progress" (p. 10). These archetypes paint a more nuanced picture of the gentrification process and of the relationships between gentrifiers and existing residents. Rose (2004) similarly identified four distinctive groups of middle-class condo-owners in a traditionally working class neighbourhood in Montreal. Rose divided this demographic based on their views of social class diversity, namely their opinions on the construction of public housing in their neighbourhoods. In this process, she established four distinct categories: the ignorant/indifferents, the Nimbies, the tolerants, and the egalitarians.

2.5 Summary

The consumption side of the gentrification literature examines the reasons that members of the middle classes choose to live in cities and includes factors such as lifestyle preferences and functionality. However, this literature is predominantly focused on the gentrification processes in large cities, and there is little in the literature that examines why people might choose to move to smaller municipalities or their experiences in these smaller cores. Furthermore, while there may be some literature on creative-economy based revitalization strategies in mid-size cities, there is again little research on how residents of these cities view such regeneration policies.

3.Methods

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explain and justify my research design, which consisted of a case study of downtown Kitchener with a mixed-methods approach. This chapter discusses the ethics and validity of my research and explores the three approaches to data collection that I used: census data analysis, observations, and interviews.

3.2 Research Question and Objectives

My research was guided by the following question: to what extent are residents' experiences of the downtowns of mid-size Canadian cities reflected in the literature and in municipal planning policy? Using Kitchener, Ontario as a case study, the subsequent objectives of this research were fourfold: 1) To describe the upgrading processes that are underway in downtown Kitchener; 2) To compare the factors that influence residents' housing choice to the literature; 3) To analyse the difference between residents' experiences of the downtown and the gentrification literature; 4) To discuss the differences between Kitchener's downtown plans and residents' experiences of the downtown.

3.3 Case Study

By selecting a case study, I was able to engage in an in-depth analysis of my research question and gain a rich understanding of a specific geographical locale (Wicks, 2010). Yin (2012) defined case studies as originating from "the desire to derive a(n) (up)close or otherwise in-depth understanding of a single or small number of "cases"…" (p. 141-142). Here researchers such as Lloyd (2010) and Rose (1984; 2004), for example, have used case studies to explore the tensions within gentrifying communities. Baxter and Jack (2008) have asserted the importance of "binding a case," meaning that the subject of the study should be clearly defined (p. 546). Hakim (2000) wrote, "case studies are the social research equivalent of the spotlight or the microscope: its value depends crucially on how well the study is focused" (p. 59). I restricted my study by location, central city Kitchener, and by the group that I studied, residents of Kitchener's inner city neighbourhoods.

According to Flyvbjerg (2006), there are two common but erroneous assumptions often made about the validity of case studies. The first is they are not useful because they are not generalizable, and the second is they are only valuable as preliminary studies. However, the same author counters these claims by asserting that simply because research is not generalizable does not preclude its capacity to add value to the literature. Furthermore, Berg and Lune (2012) have suggested that since case studies create an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon, they also provide the grounds to better understand similar phenomena (p. 241). Since case studies are able to provide more in depth analyses in comparison to other research methods, conducting several of these studies may provide the basis for mastery of a specific subject (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

As downtown Kitchener is in the midst of significant growth and development and as one of the sites included in several previous studies, this location provided a rich context for my research. Over the last sixteen years, this mid-size city has changed significantly and its built environment is continuing to develop. Since 2000, there have been several developments in downtown Kitchener including the founding of three satellite university campuses, the establishment of several high tech company offices, as well as the creation of multiple, higher density residential developments, notably the Kaufman Lofts and the Arrow Lofts. More recently, Google has opened a dedicated office space downtown in the redeveloped Breithaupt Block, and a couple of new condominium buildings have also been costructed in the city centre. In the near future, the completion of the Light Rail Transit (LRT) system will likely further increase development in the city's downtown (see Chapter Four for a more in depth discussion of Kitchener's downtown development).

Downtown Kitchener is also included in several studies that examine the downtown revitalization of mid-sized cities (Bunting, 1987; Bunting & Phipps, 1988; Filion, 1995; Filion & Bunting, 1993; Filion, Bunting, Frenette, Curry & Mattice, 2000; Sikora, 1988). Both Bunting (1987), and Filion et al (2000) have discussed some of the factors influencing residential housing choice in downtown Kitchener. By selecting a case study that has already been the site of past academic research, I have both updated and added to the existing literature that has been published on Kitchener's city centre and

on its revitalization.

3.4 Data Collection

I used three primary methods of data collection in my research: census data, observations and interviews.

3.41 Census Data

Compilations of statistics from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) and from the 1991 to 2006 censuses create a portrait of the changing demographics of downtown Kitchener.[2] Census data, when used in isolation as a research method, is often used to establish trends, either over a period of time or for a specified area. For example, Bereitschaft (2014) analyzed statistics from 70 mid-size cities in the United States and used census data to determine demographic trends over a ten-year period. However, when used in isolation as a research method, statistics alone are generally unable to address *why* certain changes or trends are occurring. Bunting (1987), for example, used census data *and* survey results in her study of downtown Kitchener. Similarly, I used Statistics Canada data in my research in addition to interview findings to provide a richer basis for my case study.

I analysed census data at the census tract level and at the census metropolitan level. According to Statistics Canada, a census tract is defined as follows: "[a]n area that is small and relatively stable. Census tracts usually have a population between 2,500 and 8,000 persons. They are located in census metropolitan areas and in census agglomerations that have a core population of 50,000 or more" (2011e). Census metropolitan areas, in turn, are defined as "[a]n area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a core. A census metropolitan area must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the core" (Statistics Canada, 2011d).

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[2] Data from the National Household Survey (NHS) has been widely criticized. Response rates for the NHS were 68.6% compared to 93.8% for the previous 2006 Census. However, Statistics Canada chief statistician Wayne Smith maintains that although the data is not of the same quality as the 2006 census, the results are still usable (Isfeld, 2015).

3.42 Observations

  Observations made up a minimal part of my research; however, they provided important context for this study. Both Lloyd (2010) and Zukin (2008) used observation as a data collection method as they explored some of the reasons that members of the middle class are attracted to specific urban areas. These authors observed the urban landscape in neighbourhoods in Chicago and New York City respectively. They noted how the consumption offerings shaped and are shaped by the residents of the surrounding neighbourhoods. As part of my data collection, I observed the activity along King Street in Kitchener's core at various times of the day, week, and year as well as the general downtown streetscape. I primarily engaged in qualitative observation, defined by Creswell (2013) as "when the researcher takes field notes on the behaviour and activities of individuals at the research site" (p. 190). During this stage of data collection, I was "a complete observer," (Creswell, 2013). This is a style of observation that is also referred to as "non-participant observation," meaning I did not participate in the activities being watched (Handley, 2008). I used an unstructured observation method where I went into the field with an idea of what I would be observing, in this case, the activity on King Street in downtown Kitchener, while also open to the possibility of other themes emerging (McKechnie, 2008).

3.43 Interviews

  The majority of my data is from interviews, which Berg and Lune (2012) defined as "a conversation with a purpose" (p. 105). Here I acknowledge both the interviewee *and* the interviewer shape the direction of the interview and determine its results. In the words of Holstein and Gubrium (2004), interviews are "active meaning-making ventures" (p. 157). As a method of data collection, interviews often provide a greater level of depth compared to other methods. Considering the majority of research previously conducted on mid-size cities has used survey results or census data (Bereitshaft, 2014; Bunting, 1987; Norman, 2013), interviews provide an additional means of examining this understudied subject.

Participant Recruitment

 The two criteria for my participant selection were that participants be residents of downtown Kitchener or its inner city neighbourhoods and that they be over 18 years of age at the start of my study (See Figure 1 for the geographical boundaries of my study area). Participants were recruited using a combination of different methods, including snowball recruitment and publicly displayed recruitment posters in businesses and organizations in downtown Kitchener. Both of these recruitment methods have potential drawbacks and may exclude particular groups. For example, snowball sampling often reflects existing social or professional groupings, and therefore excludes individuals who are not part of these existing networks (Noy, 2008).

Table 1. Sources of study participants.

Sources of Study Participants	# of participants
Public recruitment posters	0
Social network	3
Snowballs from social network (NOT including participants)	6
Snowballs from participants	6

 In my research, snowball sampling proved to be the most effective recruitment method (Table 1). I initially interviewed three people from my social network—these participants included a student from the University of Waterloo and two acquaintances. I also elicited help from my social network to refer me to people from *their* existing social networks in order to obtain a broader range of participants. This technique resulted in six interviews. My participants also referred me to additional participants—six in total. From my public recruitment posters, I received three replies. However, of these, none resulted in useable interviews as the respondents did not meet the study criteria or did not respond to follow-up emails. In my research, my sample size was determined using theoretical saturation, which occurred when I started to see similar themes emerge repeatedly (Bloor & Wood, 2006).

During the recruitment process, I told members of my social network who lived in the Waterloo Region about my research. If they expressed interest or indicated they knew someone who might be willing to participate in the study, I e-mailed them an informational letter with additional details, including relevant contact information. Several people within my social network responded, informing me they had neighbours, co-workers, family members, or friends who would be interested in participating in my research. I then e-mailed a recruitment letter to my social contact who then forwarded the letter to the potential participant(s). If this person were interested, my social contact would forward me their e-mail address or telephone number. I would then e-mail or call them to schedule an interview. In exchange for their time, I purchased a non-alcoholic beverage for the participant at the interview location.

Participant Sample

In total, I interviewed 15 people, all of whom were residents of downtown Kitchener or surrounding inner city neighbourhoods at the time of research. Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of participants. Based on this map, one of the participants lived in census tract 17 (which comprises the majority of the downtown), four lived in census tract 16, six lived in census tract 11, two lived in census tract 10, one participant lived in census tract 10, and one participant in census tract 18. In total, six participants lived within the boundaries of the downtown proper. All participants lived within 800 metres from downtown's boundaries (see figure 1).

The following demographic information describes the participants in terms of their age, housing type, highest levels of education achieved, car ownership, and the length of time that they have lived in Kitchener's central city neighbourhoods. Of these participants, eleven were between the ages of 20 and 35, and the remaining four were between 36 and 55. Ten participants rented their current residences and five owned their homes. Four participants lived in single detached houses, while the remaining eleven lived in apartments. Apartments varied in ownership structure and included two participants who lived in co-operatives, two who lived in condos, and the remaining seven who lived in rental apartment buildings. Just over half of the participants owned a
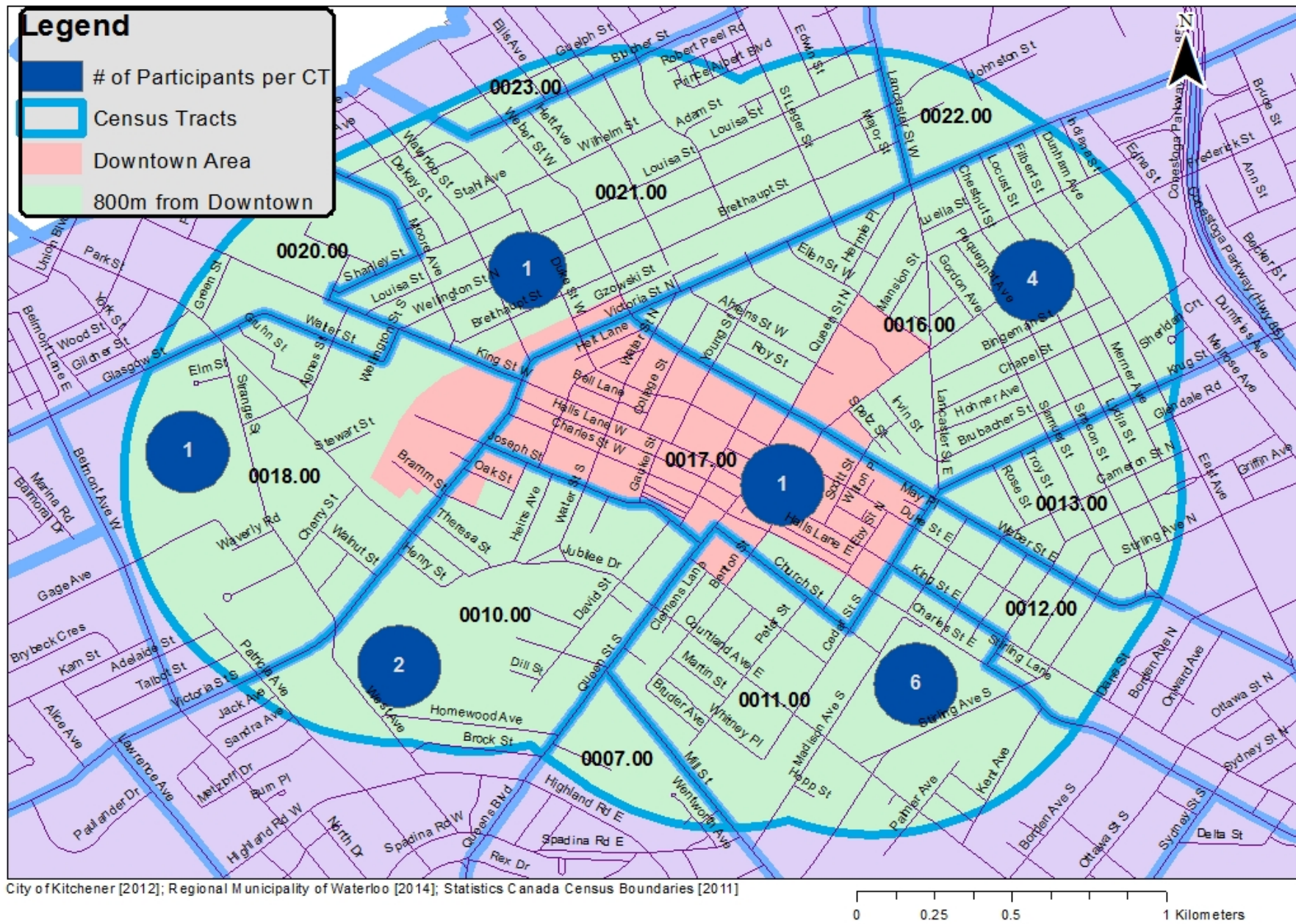
Figure 1. Number of participants per census tract

car. Of the people I interviewed, participants had a variety of education levels ranging from high school diploma to Masters' degree. Participants also had a wide range of occupations, and ten of the participants could be classified as members of the Creative Class based on their professions. Seven participants had lived in downtown Kitchener for less than two years, three had moved between three and six years ago, and the remaining five had moved to the downtown between seven and twelve years ago (See Table 2 for participant demographic information).

Table 2. Participant demographic information

Participant Pseudonym	Age	Type of Housing	Rent or Own	Car Owner	Duration of Residence in DT Kitchener	Number of Visits DT/Week
Alex	36-55	Apartment	Rent	Y	3-6 years	4-5x
Ashley	36-55	Apartment	Rent	Y	0-2 years	7x
Dan	20-35	Apartment	Own	Y	0-2 years	9x
Emanuel	36-55	House	Own	Y	7- 12 years	4-5x
Erin	20-35	Apartment	Rent	Y	0-2 years	2-3x
Heather	20-35	House	Own	Y	0-2 years	3x
Josh	20-35	Apartment	Rent	N	0-2 years	2x
Katherine	20-35	Apartment	Rent	N	3-6 years	7x
Kelly	20-35	Apartment	Rent	N	3-6 years	7x
Liam	20-35	Apartment	Rent	N	7-12 years	5x
Lori	36-55	House	Own	Y	7-12 years	0x
Megan	20-35	House	Own	Y	0-2 years	3x
Nicole	20-35	Apartment	Rent	N	0-2 years	3-4x
Sarah	20-35	Apartment	Rent	N	7-12 years	5x
Steve	20-35	Apartment	Rent	N	7-12 years	3-5x

Interview Format

Participants chose the interview location. In my study, all interviewees chose either their home or a coffee shop in downtown Kitchener such as Coffee Culture, Queen Street Commons or Balzac's. Interview length ranged from 30 minutes to just under two hours, and the average length of an interview was approximately 50 minutes. Only one interview was conducted with two participants (a couple), all other interviews were conducted individually.

During interviews, I used a semi-standardized interview format, which is theoretically situated between the standardized and unstandardized interview (Berg & Lune, 2012). In a semi-standardized interview, the interviewer typically asks a list of predetermined questions; however, unlike the standardized interview, the interviewer may explore certain questions in greater depth if the opportunity arises. The semi-standardized interview structure accommodates subjects' varying perspectives and provides the space for researchers to adapt their questions to reflect participants' worldviews. In turn, this style may also help participants feel more at ease during interviews, and may help to diminish the adverse effects of the researcher's education level, race, or gender on participants with different backgrounds (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 113).

While creating the questions used in an interview and deciding on their order, Berg and Lune (2012) suggest starting with easy, non-threatening questions, for example, questions about the community where the participant lives. These queries may then be followed by questions relating specifically to the study, after which the researcher may make more sensitive queries. In order to validate interviewees' responses, Berg and Lune suggest that throughout the course of the interview, the interviewer should repeat questions but word them differently (p. 119).

I incorporated Berg and Lune's suggestions discussed above in my semi-standardized interview questions. I initially asked participants basic demographic questions; for example, about the approximate location of their residence or how long they had lived in or near downtown Kitchener. The questions progressed to queries relating to housing choice and participants' feelings and opinions about downtown Kitchener. The final section of the interview focused on more in-depth and critical questions related to interviewees' opinions on Kitchener's downtown revitalization and the city's revitalization policies. The first two interviews were conducted as a pilot test to ensure that the interview questions flowed smoothly and were easy to understand. Based on these first two interviews, I slightly altered the order and wording of some of the

questions to ensure that certain questions were more straightforward. I also parsed out some of the questions so that they became two or three more simplified questions, rather than one long, complex query.

3.5 Data Analysis

After all the interviews had been conducted, I began the data analysis. Data analysis is a multi-step process that involves transcribing interviews, reading through the data collected, coding, and finally interpreting the data. During the coding process, I read through my transcripts to identify patterns present. At this stage, it is common for unanticipated themes to emerge, which, in turn, add to the complexity of the results (Creswell, 2013). Here the researcher identifies themes that emerge from the data rather than themes that the researcher may have hypothesized before the data collection began (Berg and Lune, 2012, p. 155). During this initial phase of data analysis, I used open coding, a process used in the interpretation of qualitative research where the researcher identifies as many different categories in the interviews as possible. While using an open coding method, multiple concepts may be assigned to a single statement (Benaquisto, 2008). Through the process of open coding, some of the ideas that emerged were grouped into categories. Once these categories were developed, they were further broken into subcategories. Following open coding, I used axial coding, which Wicks (2010) defined as: "the process of relating categories to their subcategories" (p. 154).

3.6 Ethics and the Role of the Researcher

As my research involved human participants, in this case, residents of central city Kitchener, my data collection procedures were submitted in June 2015 to the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo for approval prior to beginning data collection. In order to ensure research is ethical, it is important to ensure the research being conducted in no way harms the participants either psychologically or physically (Berg & Lune, 2012).

While recruiting participants, I explicitly identified myself as a researcher and I explained the purpose of my research. Interview participants also received both an

informational letter as well as a consent form. These documents explained my study, ensured that participation was voluntary, and outlined the rights and responsibilities of the researcher and interviewees. These rights included the participants' rights to be anonymous in the context of the research and the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Berg & Lune, 2012). I also provided participants with the contact information of both of my advisors, Dr. Laura Johnson and Dr. Robert Shipley, as well as the contact information for the University of Waterloo Office of Research Ethics. Throughout my thesis, I have used pseudonyms to protect participants' anonymity.

3.7 Verification and Validation

There are several strategies that I used to promote the validity of the research including triangulation, documentation of the research process, and the presentation of contradictory information. The first of the strategies I used was triangulation, whereby the use of multiple data sources increases the study's validity. As Berg and Lune (2012) have suggested, varying data collection methods provide different perspectives on the same topic (p. 6). Thus by combining several research methods, the researcher is able to gain more thorough knowledge on the subject, in my case, through the use of census data, observations and interviews.

The documentation of the research process is particularly important in qualitative research. This helps to ensure that were the study to be conducted by another researcher following the steps outlined, that researcher too would likely be able to draw comparable conclusions (Berg and Lune, 2012, p. 56). I wrote field notes during the interview stage to record my observations and impressions of the interviews. Additionally, by presenting contradictory information in my results section, I indicated my willingness as a researcher to acknowledge data that does not conform to my hypothesis, thus contributing to my own and the study's integrity.

3.8 Limitations

Limitations refer to the flaws of the research design (Calabrese, 2012). Given that my sample size was relatively small, consisting of only 15 people, I was unable to

represent the full range of downtown residents in my interviews. However, by explicitly describing the demographics of my participant sample, and by also discussing the demographics of the downtown and surrounding inner city neighbourhoods as a whole, the reader is made aware of this discrepancy.

3.9 Summary

By using the data collection methods outlined above, I promoted a research design that was both ethical and valid. During this process, I assembled relevant data to address my research questions and objectives. Here interviews with residents of the central city neighbourhoods of a mid-size Canadian city, combined with observations and census data, provided the opportunity to add another layer of complexity to the existing literature on the upgrading processes of the cores of smaller urban areas.

4. Downtown Kitchener Context

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter provides context for my case study of downtown Kitchener. The first section of the chapter presents a portrayal of the downtown based on its history as well as observations from throughout the calendar year. The subsequent section includes a description of the demographics of downtown Kitchener and surrounding inner city neighbourhoods as compared to the Kitchener Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). This chapter also includes a summary of Kitchener's past and current downtown revitalization plans, and an account of the ongoing development of the city centre.

4.2 Downtown Kitchener History and Observations

In 2011, the City of Kitchener had 219,153 inhabitants, and its population has been growing steadily (Statistics Canada, 2011a). Like many other mid-sized cities in southern Ontario, Kitchener was once a manufacturing hub, earning it the title 'Busy Berlin.' Factory buildings, including furniture factories, button factories, and shirt factories, were established just outside of the city's retail and civic centre in the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century. However, as North America's economy shifted away from manufacturing, many of these factories, including the Emil Vogelsang's button factory, McBrine luggage factory, and the Hydro City Shoe manufacturer had permanently closed by the end of the 1960s (Mills, 2002). In the decades following, the number of people employed in Kitchener's factories steadily waned.

In 1962, the Fairview Park Mall opened amidst growing concerns that downtown Kitchener would soon start to lose business to this and other suburban malls. In the following decades, between 1961 and 1981, inner city Kitchener neighbourhoods lost between 20 and 30 percent of their populations, and in the process, downtown businesses also lost customers (Sikora, 1988). Based on a study conducted in the late 1980s, Sikora (1988), however, found that people were still drawn to the downtown for its unique

amenities such as the Farmer's Market, its public facilities such as the Kitchener Public Library, and for shopping. In contrast, the downtown was rarely frequented for its restaurants, bars, or cultural amenities (p. 132-133). From the 1960s to the late 1980s, Kitchener remained a distinctly blue-collar town whereas larger Canadian municipalities were beginning to adjust to the new, post-industrial economy (Sikora, 1988, p. 122). However, in recent years, Kitchener has shifted away from its identity as an industrial hub as its downtown has experienced growth in the technology sector. The core now boasts Google's national research and development headquarters as well as several other high tech companies and start-ups. Changes are also well underway in the downtown's real-estate sector and include the conversion of several former industrial buildings to high-end lofts as well as the construction of a handful of new condominiums.

The backbone of downtown Kitchener runs for eighteen blocks along King Street, intersecting with Victoria Street to the west and Cedar Street, just beyond the Kitchener Market, to the east. In the Downtown Kitchener Action Plan, approved by municipal council in 2012, the downtown is divided into four districts: the City Centre District, the Market District, the Civic District and the Innovation District (City of Kitchener, 2012)(See Figure 2). The downtown core, located primarily along King Street in the City Centre District, is made up of an eclectic assortment of stores, restaurants and cafes. A trip down King Street reveals both the closed storefront of Budds', a downtown Kitchener clothing store and mainstay since the 1920s, as well as the newly opened Berlin, a higher-end restaurant that serves local cuisine. The streetscape presents what some might call a seeming mishmash of combinations of old and new, cheap and expensive, and includes a dive bar, a fair trade clothing store, a Western inspired saloon, and several closed shop fronts and surface parking lots.

Figure 2. Kitchener's downtown districts. Source: City of Kitchener, 2012

The more expensive of these stores and restaurants have all opened since 2014. Gilt, for example, describes itself as "a new contemporary restaurant in the heart of Kitchener's Innovation District," and sells a range of fancy cocktails (Gilt Restaurant, 2016). Rhapsody Barrel Bar is a restaurant, café, live music venue and clothing shop, which opened early in 2016. This venue sells expensive t-shirts and also offers a premium whiskey selection. The Walper Hotel (TWH) Social opened in 2015 in the basement of the hotel located on the corner of King Street and Queen Street, and portrays itself as bringing "a contemporary sophistication to Downtown Kitchener… in an upscale casual atmosphere" (TWH Social, 2016). A 2016 CTV news report, "Old meets new in downtown Kitchener rejuvenation," described how business owners in the downtown are tying to take advantage of both the surge in the technology sector as well as the completion of the several new condominium buildings. In this report, the general manager of the Walper Hotel commented on the transformation of Kitchener's

downtown: "Over the past few years, we have seen a massive uptrend in terms of the interest, in terms of the demographic, in terms of who is interested in downtown and who wants to come downtown" (CTV Kitchener, 2016). These changes are reflected in the increasingly upscale restaurants, bars, and stores that are opening in the core.

As my observations of King Street further evinced, there are certain moments of the day and even times of the year when you might even be able to say downtown Kitchener is thriving. If you come to downtown Kitchener on a warm Saturday evening during one of Kitchener's many summer festivals—perhaps during Summer Lights held towards the end of June, you will find that several blocks of King Street are closed to motorized traffic to accommodate the food vendors, fire blowers, musicians and dancers. Festival-goers have the chance to go on a night time cycle, replete with glow sticks, make something out of play dough, explore an art installation, or visit a maker-space, which is set up in one of the alley-ways behind King Street where visitors can create light-up necklaces.

Outside of Kitchener's summer festivals, the downtown is often busiest at lunch hour. In the middle of the week, employees venture out of their offices in and around the downtown core to go to the Duke Food Block for an Indian curry or for a fresh sandwich, or to one of the cafes along King or Queen Street. If the weather is warm enough, people sit outside City Hall on the brightly painted chairs that the city puts out in the spring. Sometimes at lunchtime during the summer there are musical performances outside of City Hall as well as a hot dog stand to entice passers-by.

However, even at what are supposedly peak times, there are also signs of the tensions between the downtown's revitalization trajectory and the core's identity as a hub for social services and marginalized people. At the Summer Lights Festival in June 2016, for example, an older man with a straggling white beard was drinking directly from a large bottle of wine. After two police officers approached him, presumably to tell him to stop drinking in public, a confrontation unfolded. A few moments later, the man was handcuffed. As the man continued to argue and resist, he was brought to the ground and held until a police van arrived. In other instances, even when the city's more

marginalized members are not at the fore, there is still evidence that downtown Kitchener has not completely upgraded. Even on warm, summer weekday evenings, the bars in the downtown only have a handful of customers—there is a rarely a wait for a table, even on one of the patios. Although there may be a steady stream of customers, it is also clear that downtown Kitchener is far from becoming the city that its downtown plans envision.

The tensions between Kitchener's downtown revitalization and its history of decline become even more noticeable in the colder months. Come four months later on any fall weekday evening and the streets are nearly deserted. There is a man huddled in a doorway asleep in a blue sleeping bag, a couple going through some garbage bags on the curb, and two men in black hooded jackets sitting outside a rectangular white building whose signs reads in purple and green cursive writing, "City Centre Condominiums." There are only a handful of establishments open and an even smaller number with customers. Here it is evident downtown Kitchener is not upgrading along a clear or even linear trajectory, and evidence of the improvements in the downtown are met with signs that downtown Kitchener is still struggling to negotiate its past as a declining manufacturing centre.

4.3 The Demographics of Downtown Kitchener and Inner City Neighbourhoods

Downtown Kitchener (see figure 1 and 2), is located primarily within census tract 17, and is bordered by seven other census tracts (CT 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18 and 21), that form Kitchener's inner city neighbourhoods.

Table 2 shows the population change in Kitchener as compared to the census tracts in the central city. Between 1991 and 2011, the population growth in the Kitchener Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) grew steadily. In contrast, the population of most of the neighbourhoods surrounding the downtown declined. This drop may speak to the overarching trend of decreasing household sizes in addition to the few new higher density residential developments in these census tracts. However, census tract 17, which at 2146 residents is one of the smallest existing inner city census tracts, actually experienced population growth between 2001 and 2006, as well as between 2006 and 2011. This

growth, in turn, may be partially explained by increased high-density development in the downtown during this period.

Table 3. Population change in the central city compared to the CMA.   Source: Statistics Canada 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 & 2011a

Population Change (%)	1986-1991	1991-1996	1996-2001	2001-2006	2006-2011
Kitchener	12%	6%	7%	7%	7%
17	-4%	0%	0%	24%	15%
10	0%	10%	5%	8%	3%
11	4%	-1%	2%	-2%	-8%
12	4%	-2%	3%	0%	4%
13	-2%	-2%	1%	-5%	1%
16	-2%	1%	2%	-2%	-1%
18	11%	3%	3%	-1%	-5%
21	0%	-3%	0%	-6%	0%

Table 4. Percentage of adults between 20-34 in the central city compared to the CMA. Source: Statistics Canada 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 & 2011a

% of 20-34	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
Kitchener	27%	20%	23%	22%	23%
17	39%	32%	34%	35%	42%
10	30%	26%	25%	24%	26%
11	30%	28%	27%	25%	27%
12	28%	27%	24%	22%	23%
13	24%	24%	21%	20%	20%
16	31%	25%	24%	21%	24%
18	35%	33%	27%	26%	26%
21	33%	32%	26%	26%	29%

Table 3 shows the percentage of 20 to 34 years olds in each of the census tracts and Table 4 shows the percentage of those over 65. While the distribution of other age cohorts remained relatively stable during this period, the percentage distributions of 20 to 34 years olds and the percentage of those over 65 changed more significantly. Between 1991 and 2001, there was a steady decline of 20 to 34 years in all of the inner city census tracts.

Table 5. Percentage of adults 65 and older in the central city compared to the CMA. Source: Statistics Canada 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 & 2011a

% of 65+	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
Kitchener	10%	11%	11%	12%	12%
17	17%	18%	16%	11%	11%
10	15%	15%	15%	17%	16%
11	17%	17%	14%	15%	15%
12	22%	21%	17%	16%	16%
13	17%	16%	16%	15%	14%
16	23%	23%	21%	20%	18%
18	10%	8%	7%	7%	7%
21	13%	14%	12%	11%	11%

However, between 2001 and 2011, the percentage of members of this age cohort in the inner city census tracts grew. Notably, the percentage of 20 to 34 year olds in census tract 17 rose from 34 percent in 2001 to 42 percent in 2011. In contrast, the percentage of 20 to 34 years olds remained relatively constant in the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). Furthermore, the percentage of residents over 65 steadily declined in census tract 17. Whereas members of this age cohort comprised 17 percent of census tract 17 in 1991, they comprised only 11 percent of this census tract by 2011.

Table 6. Average rent in the central city compared to the CMA. Source: Statistics Canada 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 & 2011b

Average Rent ($)	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
Kitchener	$887.40	$835.65	$853.62	$850.04	$854.00
17	$787.35	$684.45	$685.11	$786.59	$783.00
10	$833.75	$720.90	$817.95	$881.76	$868.00
11	$771.40	$766.80	$750.30	$752.67	$717.00
12	$916.40	$765.45	$760.14	$685.94	$695.00
13	$896.10	$785.70	$726.93	$645.46	$780.00
16	$928.00	$835.65	$826.56	$820.50	$863.00
18	$891.75	$758.70	$813.03	$776.74	$844.00
21	$826.50	$746.55	$778.59	$764.71	$898.00

Table 5 shows the average rent in Kitchener between 1991 and 2011. Taking into account inflation,[3] the average rents in both the Kitchener CMA and in Kitchener's inner city census tracts in 2011 were very similar to the average rental rates in 1991. In 2011, the average rent in the Kitchener CMA was notably higher than the average rent of several inner city neighbourhoods. Table 6 shows the average dwelling value in Kitchener where, in 2011, the average dwelling value for the Kitchener CMA was $299,641 and thus higher than the average dwelling value of all of Kitchener's inner city census tracts. Furthermore, based on the median individual income (Table 7), residents of Kitchener's inner city census tracts were, with the exception of census tracts 13 and 16, less well off when compared to the Kitchener CMA.

Table 7. Average dwelling value in the central city compared to the CMA. Source: Statistics Canada 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 & 2011b

Average Dwelling Value ($)	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
Kitchener	$239,737.20	$179,433.63	$193,994.37	$263,528.10	$299,641.00
17	$235,018.90	$143,542.23	$165,192.69	$257,533.10	$226,419.00
10	$208,575.25	$152,032.92	$172,725.21	$226,571.40	$259,796.00
11	$190,206.65	$152,938.20	$145,729.17	$201,252.70	$229,757.00
12	$199,865.10	$159,019.32	$161,213.64	$211,887.50	$233,363.00
13	$250,019.15	$182,507.40	$185,436.03	$239,284.10	$277,382.00
16	$235,103.00	$165,169.32	$176,100.33	$232,441.00	$266,439.00
18	$191,020.10	$147,345.39	$159,989.79	$197,830.60	$263,001.00
21	$184,964.90	$146,496.69	$157,408.02	$218,973.70	$253,061.00

However, an analysis of the demographics of Kitchener's central city neighbourhoods between 1991 and 2011 also indicated that certain areas were becoming more affluent as average rent, average dwelling value, and income levels rose. While in 2006, the average rent of only one of the eight inner city census tracts exceeded the Kitchener average; by 2011, this had increased to three. Similarly, median individual income levels increased in all but one of the eight inner city census tracts between 2006 and 2011. In 2011, the median individual income in two of the central city census tracts had actually exceeded the Kitchener average. While these changes do not necessarily

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[3] Inflation rates were calculated using the Bank of Canada inflation calculator to 2011 levels (2016).

indicate that central city Kitchener is rapidly gentrifying and they must be taken with a grain of salt given the data collection methods used for the National Household Survey, they also indicate a general upswing in the area's prosperity.

Table 8. Median individual income in the central city compared to the CMA. Source: Statistics Canada 1996, 2001, 2006 & 2011b

Median Individual Income ($)	1996	2001	2006	2011
Kitchener	$29,011.50	$31,853.31	$31,491.90	$31,559.00
17	$16,383.60	$22,304.82	$22,361.90	$27,738.00
10	$23,770.80	$29,285.07	$28,251.30	$31,146.00
11	$21,621.60	$21,333.12	$24,333.10	$27,177.00
12	$24,040.80	$29,884.08	$28,580.20	$28,936.00
13	$32,911.65	$30,658.98	$32,237.70	$35,474.00
16	$29,363.85	$30,759.84	$31,170.70	$32,439.00
18	$23,195.70	$25,244.52	$22,520.30	$22,400.00
21	$24,394.50	$26,239.59	$28,341.50	$28,614.00

As these demographics show, downtown Kitchener and the surrounding inner city neighbourhoods have traditionally been less affluent than the overall Kitchener CMA. This is reflected in both average rental rates as well as median individual incomes. However, given the rapid and ongoing development of the downtown since 2011, the demographics of the core and subsequently, the affluence of its residents, may be beginning to shift.

4.4 Summary of Kitchener's Past Revitalization Efforts

Since the suburbanization of the 1960s, Kitchener's downtown, like many others in North America, has suffered from decline. Filion and Bunting (1993) examined Kitchener's revitalization efforts from the 1960s through to the end of the 1980s. During this thirty-year span, several plans were put in place to revitalize Kitchener's downtown core. In the 1960s, suburbanization and the growth of retail in the city outskirts prompted business owners in the city's downtown in addition to the Chamber of Commerce and the Kitchener Planning Board to attempt to enhance the appeal of the downtown area. One

of the plans proposed during this era consisted of low-rise retail buildings that were to be surrounded by high-rise apartments and office buildings in the core. However, a freeze to federal government urban renewal spending meant the plan lacked the funding to reach completion (Filion & Bunting, 1993). Other attempts to increase retail activity in the downtown, such as the pedestrianization of King Street during the summer months between 1966 and 1968, were considered failures due to declining sales and the subsequent lack of support from downtown businesses (Filion & Bunting, 1993).

In the 1970s and 1980s, Kitchener's revitalization plans included fostering large-scale developments downtown, such as shopping malls, as well as improving the overall appearance and atmosphere of the core. During these decades, several large developments were built in the downtown including two anchor shopping centres (the King Centre and Market Square malls) located on either end of Kitchener's downtown as well as several apartment buildings and condos (Filion & Bunting, 1993; Sikora, 1988). As part of these urban renewal schemes, several notable buildings in the downtown were demolished including the former City Hall, post office, and market building.

The 1981, "City of Kitchener Downtown Study," posited suggestions to improve the pedestrian-friendliness of the downtown. These proposals included creating a transit mall and implementing more special-events programming downtown (Kitchener Downtown Steering Committee, 1981). A 1987 façade improvement loan program offered financial assistance to property owners who wanted to improve the appearance of their downtown buildings (Kitchener Department of Planning and Development, 1987). Throughout this period of downtown decline and failed revitalization attempts, Kitchener lacked the consistent support of the private sector as business in the downtown struggled (Millward & Bunting, 1999). At this time, it became apparent that the revitalization attempts of the decades past had done little to improve the viability of the downtown, which remained in a state of decline (Filion & Bunting, 1993).

4.5 Current Revitalization Plans

The start of the millennium signalled a new focus for the city's revitalization plans. Similarly to other struggling North American cities, Kitchener's downtown revitalization agenda shifted to reshaping the city's image and improving what was perceived to be an undesirable downtown culture. This is evident as early as the *1999-2001 Kitchener Downtown Strategic Action Plan*, which emphasized the role of Kitchener's downtown as the centre of the region (City of Kitchener, 1999). One of the overarching messages of this document was to bring people to the city centre by creating a unique environment through festivals and cultural events. By cultivating a distinctive atmosphere in the urban core, the city hoped to provide more incentive for office workers to spend more time (and money) in the downtown and for suburban dwellers to visit the area (City of Kitchener, 1999, p. 9). Later, the 2006 *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, which identifies density and intensification targets for city centres throughout this area, provided further incentive for the City of Kitchener to increase residential development in its core (Ministry of Infrastructure, 2006).

After Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* gained popularity in planning departments throughout North America, both Kitchener's *2007-2010 Economic Development Strategy,* and the *Downtown Kitchener Action Plan 2012-2016* notably included more focus on attracting young, middle class professionals to the core who promised to be important for the city's economic success. The *2007-2010 Economic Development Strategy,* for example, aimed to improve Kitchener's economy through "creating, attracting, retaining and developing talent," and "building a dynamic downtown" (City of Kitchener, 2006, p. 2). In this document, there is also a section entitled, "The Talent Shortage," which states:

> "[b]usinesses are locating in cities with a resident pool of creatively talented workers; and in cities offering the type of community, amenities and lifestyles sought by their employees. Understanding how to better attract, retain and develop creative knowledge workers will keep Kitchener competitive with cities around the world" (City of Kitchener, 2006, p. 9).

Here the assumption is that through attracting talented professionals, Kitchener will become more competitive in the 21st century economy. Other documents such as the 2014 downtown annual report, *The Start of Awesome,* and the April 2016 magazine,

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Downtown Kitchener, which highlight both the technology sector and culture as key components for the city's successful revitalization. The beginning of *The Start of Awesome* simply reads "START UPS + ART = AWESOME [sic]" (City of Kitchener, 2014, p. 3). This document features a diverse assortment of visuals: a full page of photographed sandwiches, a map showing the locations of tech starts ups and cultural venues, as well as photographs from various street festivals (City of Kitchener, 2014). In this example, the indicators used to gage the city's downtown success are measured less by the development of the built environment and more by the cultivation of culture within the core such as the number of people who, for example, either attended an arts based festival downtown or who participated in one of the free yoga classes offered in Victoria Park.

The second issue of the magazine, *Downtown Kitchener,* published by the Downtown Kitchener's Business Improvement Association (BIA) and partially funded by the City of Kitchener, also highlights the businesses, tech start-ups, and even non-profits burgeoning in the city centre. This glossy magazine contains images of the places as well as the people that are portrayed as transforming the downtown. As the inside cover of the magazine proclaims: "positive change doesn't just happen, it happens because people make it happen. They don't wait for the downtown to change around them. Instead, they OWN IT [sic]" (Downtown Kitchener, 2016). More than just advertising downtown Kitchener businesses, the magazine works towards publicizing the downtown Kitchener brand as "a place of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit" (Downtown Kitchener, 2015). Through these various documents, the City of Kitchener is demonstrating that it is actively working towards building a unique place branding for the downtown.

In this revitalization process, loft conversions and condos feature in the city's policies as the potential new residences of young professionals and as backdrops to the 'vibrant' city. In the *Downtown Kitchener Action Plan 2012-2016,* "new urban neighbourhoods" are one of four primary areas of interest listed in Kitchener's downtown development plan. The document stresses the importance of increasing the population of

the downtown core and lists the range of people who may be drawn to a downtown lifestyle: "post-secondary graduates deciding where to put their roots down; young professionals moving to the region; empty nesters deciding whether to downsize their home or not; and, seniors looking to live in a place that is close to necessary shops and services" (City of Kitchener, 2012, p. 4).

In this action plan, loft-conversions are discussed as part of Kitchener's unique built environment in the city's innovation district:

> Once know [sic] as 'Busy Berlin', large former industrial buildings are being converted into stylish office space and loft residential units. Carefully weaving new modern buildings among the classical industrial architecture will ensure a distinct sense of place (City of Kitchener, 2012, p. 5).

Here lofts too become emblematic of the 'awesome' city—they are housing for the city's professionals and are symbolic of an urban and perhaps even cosmopolitan lifestyle.

More broadly speaking, according to Richard Florida and his research team, the City of Kitchener has all of the necessary qualities to continue to attract and retain a talented workforce. In the report, *Competing on Creativity: Placing Ontario's Cities in a North American Context* (2002)*,* Kitchener ranked above the Canadian average according to its levels of talent (the percentage of the population with a Bachelor's degree or higher), diversity, and the tech-pole index (measured by the cities with the highest concentration of professionals in the technology sector) (Gertler, Florida, Gates & Vinodrai, 2002). Only according to the bohemian index (the number of bohemians[4] per 1000 population), did Kitchener's ranking fall slightly below the Canadian average (Gertler et al., 2002). Furthermore, in a 2012 article, Richard Florida ranked Canada's most Creative Cities and placed Kitchener in tenth place (Florida, 2012a).

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[4] In this report, whether or not an individual may be considered a bohemian is determined by their occupation. For example, dancers, writers, photographers, and interior designers all fall into this category (Gertler et al., 2002, p. 29).

Amidst the focus on image and consumption prevalent in much of the city's more recent downtown publications, there is also some acknowledgement of the negative impacts of real-estate development and a nod to the importance of the community in downtown Kitchener. The second volume of the magazine *Downtown Kitchener,* for example, even included an article that discussed the effects of gentrification in the city centre. It also featured an article that described the mandate of the Working Centre, a long standing Kitchener non-profit (Downtown Kitchener, 2016). Similarly, the city's most recent economic development strategy, *Make It Kitchener,* adopted by council in November 2015, has acknowledged the importance of community. A page of the document entitled, "Made by our community," states:

> "You shared your values: diversity; collaboration; affordability; sustainability. You told us that it's not just about growth—that it's about building a complete community" (City of Kitchener, 2015, p. 22).

These nods to both community and gentrification signal, albeit in small ways, that the City of Kitchener is aware that its downtown revitalization and economic development strategies should embrace the needs of the entire community, rather than only those of select demographics.

4.6 Downtown Development and Change

Over the last 15 years, there has been a resurgence of development in downtown Kitchener, including the development of high density residential, university satellite campuses, and offices. For example, in Kitchener's downtown core and its surrounding neighbourhoods, there are now approximately 510 loft units spread over four buildings. The Kaufman Lofts (2005) have 155 units, the Eaton Lofts, formerly an Eaton's department store is comprised of 32 units (2005); the Mansion Lofts, formerly the Snyder Furniture Factory, has 58 units (2005), and the Arrow Lofts, formerly the Arrow Shirt Factory, is made up of 150 units (2010) (Pender, 2010). Furthermore, as of 2011, 1,626 new residential units were planned or were under construction in the downtown (City of Kitchener, 2012, p. 4). At the time of writing, both the City Centre Condominiums with 179 units, and the One Victoria Condominiums with 195 units have been constructed and

municipal council has approved the construction of the One Hundred Condos with 276 units.

During this period, the founding of three satellite campuses combined with the establishment of high-tech companies have become visual signifiers of the city's promising future. In 2006, Wilfred Laurier's School of Social Work was established in the former St. Jerome High School; in 2007, McMaster University established a satellite medical campus in Kitchener; and in 2008, the University of Waterloo's School of Pharmacy was established on the site of a former rubber plant in a new $34 million dollar building (English, 2011). In 2008, the redevelopment of the Lang Tannery began. Today, this building houses several tech companies such as Communitech and Desire2Learn. Furthermore, the construction and completion of the Light Rail Transit system, a 19 kilometre stretch of rail connecting Kitchener's Fairview Mall with the Conestoga Mall in Waterloo, is expected to lead to further development in the downtown (ION, 2012). Much of this development is actively supported by the City of Kitchener, which offers financial incentives to developers, such as waiving development charges and rebating building permit fees. The city is also considering offering additional incentives to support Kitchener's entrepreneurial economy; for example, grants to buildings owners to renovate second and third floor space in the downtown on the stipulation it be leased to a growing start-up (City of Kitchener, 2013b). However, as King Street continues to upgrade and as the technology sector in the downtown expands, there have been tangible negative effects for the area's existing residents. The 2016 article, "Startup boom revitalizing urban Kitchener, but not all in favour," described how the expansion of the tech sector in the downtown has led to the displacement of existing downtown residents (Cornell, 2016).

4.7 Summary

Within the last fifteen years, Kitchener's downtown landscape has transformed. Whereas previous planning attempts to increase the residential density of downtown neighbourhoods often fell flat, new policies that similarly support intensification are complemented by the growing popularity of urban living (Grant & Gregory, 2015). Amidst the rapid expansion of the technology sector, statistics from the 2011 NHS may

not accurately reflect Kitchener's downtown demographics five years on. Here the rapidity of development in and the around the core may paint a different portrait of central city Kitchener's demographics following the compilation of the 2016 census.

5. Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the interviews conducted with residents of downtown Kitchener between September and December 2015. The chapter is organized according to the broad questions addressed in my interviews: 1) Why did participants move downtown? 2) How did participants discuss the experiences of living downtown? 3) What were participants' opinions of Kitchener's downtown revitalization? In this chapter, each subheading is further divided according to the categories that arose during the data analysis stage of my research. In response to questions relating to why participants moved to their downtown location, the categories that emerged included: central location; public transport and walkability; housing stock available; housing affordability; opposition to the suburbs; as well as miscellaneous responses that did not fit into the above themes. The categories that arose in response to queries relating to residents' experiences living in the downtown included: urbanity, downtown amenities, community, housing location and identity, marginalized people, and affordability. Lastly, questions related to Kitchener's city centre revitalization generated the following categories: the viability of downtown businesses, festivals, and the downtown goal.

5.2 Why did participants move downtown?
Central location, pubic transport, and walkability

All participants discussed the importance of location when explaining why they were interested in living downtown. Lori simply said she liked where she lived because it was "close to everything." Kelly similarly discussed her central location: "I live and work and most of my friends all live, within an eight block radius. I don't need a car. I don't feel like I need a car at all unless I want to go out of town. But within town it doesn't feel like I need one." At the time of data collection, six of the participants worked in or very close to downtown Kitchener and five of these participants discussed wanting to live within walking or biking distance to where they worked as a factor that drove their housing location choice. Heather stated, "I absolutely adored the fact that I could walk to work everyday." Similarly, Dan also noted, "I could have lived in Waterloo, that would

have been fine to commute to Kitchener, but I wanted to live really close to where I worked, like biking to work." He then later went on to add, "I will typically go 4 or 5 days straight without using my car, and then the weekend will come, but it's a pretty underutilized resource at this point."

Even the participants who did not work in downtown Kitchener discussed enjoying walking to shops and in particular to the Kitchener Market, a weekly year-round farmers' market located on King Street. Josh said, "I can walk to the bus stop to go to somewhere further, walk to Shoppers, to the post office, to a corner store, to a drugstore… It's that walkability I still have even though I'm not walking to work. I still don't need to own a car which I think is probably the single best thing." Many of the people I spoke with similarly discussed how they enjoyed not having to rely on a car as their primary means of transportation. Heather said, "Yes, I do have one [a car] for work, that makes me sad. But I love the idea that I can just walk two or three blocks and I have suddenly all sorts of options up my sleeve."

Several participants reflected on *why* walkability was important to them. Josh ventured, "Now I'm not working in downtown anymore, but it was my walking distance to work which was huge. I think that's how everyone should live. It's so great. You save a lot of time, you get that exercise in the morning and after work, and really good decompressing time." Dan, a tech sector worker, reflected on the importance of living in a walkable location, "Part of it is the freedom when you're detached and don't depend on an object, to me that's really nice. Like when I leave my car behind, I'm not dependent on it, I'm just dependent on me. If you have a car, you have to think about finding a parking spot, it's more stressful to be on the road …" For other participants, cost was an important factor when considering whether to live in a central location. Liam noted, "And we just can't afford a car. That's a whole other thing. That wasn't an option." Similarly Ashley, who owns a car, discussed how living centrally meant she can rely less on her vehicle and is subsequently able to save money on gas.

Proximity to public transportation also factored into six participants' responses. Liam remarked, "I think we choose to live downtown because we also choose a car-free lifestyle." He then went on to discuss his home's proximity to Charles Street Terminal, Kitchener's hub for many of the Grand River Transit buses that travel throughout the Waterloo Region as well as bus lines with routes to other cities. Another participant, Emanuel, noted enjoying what he referred to as "a high degree of availability of public transit within a reasonable walking distance." Nicole also said, "Transportation is really great, especially if you don't have a car… from that point [Charles Street Terminal], I can get anywhere in the city. There are a million lines that go to UW. My husband can catch a greyhound from there. There's even the coach buses that go from there, so if I want to go to Hamilton or whatever, it's right there."

Type of Housing Stock Available

The type of housing stock available in downtown Kitchener, whether in the form of housing co-ops, lofts, or historic detached homes, factored into several participants' decisions to live near the downtown. One of the participants, Erin, who lived in a downtown co-op with her partner told me that, in her words, "the co-op is a good fit for who we are, AKA it's a gay housing co-op, basically." Other participants who lived in rental apartment buildings or in condominiums noted how they enjoyed the anonymity of their apartment, the access to certain amenities within their building, as well as the chance to be directly in the heart of the downtown as opposed to adjacent residential communities, or, what Dan simply referred to as "that style of living." Here, Nicole reflected on why she liked living in a smaller space,

> "I'm a bit more of a minimalist. I mentioned my frugality in that I've never aspired to those traditional status symbols. I don't need a lot of stuff. I don't need a lot of space. I'm personally just as happy with a great rooftop patio with some BBQs as I would be with a yard. I like the style of condos and the loft feel, being in the thick of things."

The historic quality of many of the houses in the downtown core also factored into seven participants' housing choices. One participant, Emanuel, who was particularly drawn to the historic housing stock in the downtown remarked, "This is our third century home. We definitely prefer that type of environment." Another participant, Nicole,

described why she liked living in an older residence, "Being in a building that was a hundred years old, [it] had some really nice heritage features." Steve also recounted why he liked living in an older apartment, "… I do kind of like apartments with an old charm… Some people don't like that, the creaky sounds, but I like the charm of it." Another participant, Josh, reflected on his decision to rent a loft unit: "[it's] relatively new, like less than 10 years, but then it has all this history of over a hundred years, that cool mix…. Just it's pretty cool for Kitchener. It's kind of unique and special and within walking distance to work. So if I can afford it, why not?"

Housing Affordability

The affordability of downtown Kitchener, particularly in relation to both Uptown Waterloo and other neighbouring municipalities factored into five participants' housing location choices. Megan, a millennial who had recently bought a house, noted, "It was affordable compared to what houses would be in Waterloo, and property tax as well." Heather, another millennial who had also recently purchased a single detached house, similarly remarked, "The price point was very attractive." For some participants who were renting, the affordability of housing in downtown Kitchener attracted them to the area—one participant, who had moved from Guelph several years ago noted, "[Downtown Kitchener] was much cheaper for a nicer place that was still in a downtown…" Lori, who had purchased her house about twelve years earlier (significantly prior to other participants that I spoke with), described choosing her house almost solely on the basis of its low cost. She then later went on to describe the significant sweat equity that she had put into renovating her home: "So what I did was, we saw this one [house] and it was the only one that was even close to my price point. So I said I would buy it, and I did. It was a good idea. It needed a lot of work."

Opposition to the Suburbs

Participants' opposition to the suburbs emerged in response to several of the questions relating to why these individuals chose to live in downtown Kitchener. Sarah, a new mother, speculated on what it might be like to live in the suburbs, "I think I would feel more isolated, especially now. I think a lot of new homes in the suburbs would be

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really isolated. I go out walking all the time and I see the same people all the time… Yeah, we just like seeing people a lot, like on the street." Alex also noted that living centrally was particularly important to her, remarking, "I don't like the suburbs."

When I asked residents whether they were attracted to the downtown area because of the type of housing available, their responses generally invited a comparison between the suburbs and the downtown. Heather described how when she was deciding where to live in the Waterloo Region, she initially looked at homes in the suburbs: "When I drove around there on a lunch hour taking a looksee, it's all cement, it's all townhouses, there's no character." Emanuel echoed this sentiment when he said, "we were not interested in the new types of housing, we definitely prefer a certain aesthetic… We would not be interested in living in the suburb type area."

Miscellaneous Responses

In response to why they chose to live downtown, some of the participants' answers were unique and could not be grouped with other categories. These answers included the few responses relating to the urbanity of downtown, the amenities available, and the sense of community. Only one participant, Nicole, cited the diversity of Kitchener's downtown as a factor influencing her decision to move to the core. Another respondent was particularly attracted to the amenities downtown. When I asked Steve, for example, "were you attracted to the idea of living close to downtown Kitchener?" He responded saying, "Yeah, downtown and amenities such as the market, and there's more amenities all the time, especially with the new LRT coming… [and] there's also new businesses cropping up such as the Apollo Theatre… and the symphony is downtown, artists live downtown." More broadly, Steve also remarked that, "the vibe downtown is more familiar." In a similar vein, Ashley said her desire to live downtown was influenced by the desire to live near, in, and with community.

5.3 How do participants discuss the experiences of living downtown?

When participants reflected on their experiences living in downtown Kitchener, their responses were generally more nuanced and complex when compared to responses relating simply to initial housing location choice. However, some similar themes were repeated. For example, many participants again discussed the importance of living close to the downtown and the benefits of being in a walkable community. However, other categories were featured more frequently in response to questions relating to residents' experiences living in the downtown. These categories included urbanity, downtown amenities and community.

Urbanity

Once participants had already moved into the downtown core, the urbanity of the downtown factored much more highly into their responses when asked to reflect on their experiences living near the city centre. Here I use the term urbanity to refer to the perceived authenticity, diversity, and 'cool-ness' of the downtown. When Nicole, for example, discussed the atmosphere in the core, she said, "downtown is a little hipper [compared to uptown Waterloo]." She then later added, "Downtown is the hipster, counter-culture, heavily-tattooed place to be." Katherine, speaking of the diversity of the central city noted, "…we have all these cool places that all these new immigrants come to, and I really like to watch and see all the new people coming to Canada because that's something I love about Canada. I love how diverse we are. I really love to be in the centre of that." Dan also spoke about the diversity of the downtown. He said, "diversity wise, I feel very comfortable in Kitchener. I feel like there's a bit of everything in every spectrum. Even economically, I feel like there's a bit in every spectrum here, whereas in Toronto, not so much. Parts of Montreal felt like that as well." When Josh described his loft apartment as "pretty cool for Kitchener," I pressed him to expand on what he meant by that statement. He then went on to say, "But I guess there's still this idea that it's not a big city, there's not a lot of cool places or things going on. That's not necessarily true. [My loft building] is not an island, there's other stuff."

The authenticity of downtown Kitchener, particularly as opposed to Uptown Waterloo, also emerged as a subcategory during several of my interviews. Emanuel wanted to live in a place that he identified as authentic, "I don't want to live in the type of outer suburb of Kitchener or Waterloo. I find this idea of master planned-ness repulsive to me… there's a coolness and vibrancy of Kitchener that comes from authenticity, not from a master planner saying, 'Alright, now we need three elements of 'cool' on this block. Let's contract someone to bring in cool.'" Kelly spoke affectionately about Kitchener's griminess: "… people think downtown Kitchener is grungy but that's what I like about it…. Every other downtown feels nicer to me. It feels prettier and it feels clean in a way that caters to bringing people from the suburbs to the downtown."

However, for others, the urbanity of Kitchener was distinctly lacking, largely due to its smaller size. Josh, who had also lived in the downtown of other cities, said: "So you feel like there's more going on, more people, more of a buzz. Like here in downtown, I could walk to work and sometimes I wouldn't pass anybody on the sidewalk. I wasn't going on King Street, but that would never happen in Ottawa or in London. So it's a bit of a different feel… Even if I don't know the people, I like that feeling of being part of something bigger, maybe some of the anonymity that comes with being downtown. It's cool." Later on in our interview Josh admitted, "I think I'm more of a bigger city guy." However, in contrast to Josh who lamented the lack of density and busyness in Kitchener's downtown, this was exactly the quality that appealed to Dan. When I asked Dan about the disadvantages of living downtown, he reflected, "I don't feel that it's [downtown Kitchener] too congested. If I was living in downtown Toronto I might feel that it was too congested, too many people, too much to take in. But I don't feel that here."

Downtown Amenities

Several participants remarked that the events and amenities in the downtown were important components of their everyday lives. Erin noted that she enjoyed some of the activities hosted in the downtown, particularly those related to social justice—for example, literature readings and poetry slams. Ashley also discussed how she liked living

in downtown Kitchener since many of the events take place in or near the centre, close to where she lived. She said, "I feel like it's where the events are in Kitchener, so you get to know first hand what's going on." Katherine then went on to talk about "all the cool things that happen downtown." Liam said that he liked living downtown because he enjoyed the variety of shared services and resources available in the core, in particular, he mentioned "the great parks dotted in and around Kitchener's inner city neighbourhoods. …" as well as the Kitchener Public Library. Other participants including Alex, Kelly, and Lori similarly remarked that they liked living within walking distance of Victoria Park.

Emanuel thought that the downtown offered all of the amenities that he needed, "We've got the Apollo here, we've got all the things that I actually need to be happy and that are really close by." Heather echoed this sentiment when she said, "You're never wanting. You're never left thinking, 'Oh if only…', you have it." Megan espoused the restaurants and bars available in the downtown, in particular praising those with patios. Notably, the market was favourably mentioned in several interviews. In fact, one participant, Kelly, enthusiastically said the market was one of Kitchener's key advantages over other mid-size cities in the area. Interestingly, only a couple of participants, Steve and Emmanuel, discussed the formal culture present in the downtown. Steve, for example, noted "the symphony is downtown… artists live downtown…" Similarly, Emmanuel also remarked that his house's convenient location mean that he was only "a 5 or 6 minute walk from Centre in the Square if I want to see some theatre…"

The amenities offered downtown were also perceived as more affordable, especially when compared to Uptown Waterloo. Alex said, "Kitchener is a bit more accessible that way [compared to Waterloo] because it has more stores that are more reasonable rather than the really upscale, expensive stuff." Steve echoed this sentiment, "currently, it's cheaper [compared to Waterloo] to do stuff downtown." Similarly, Nicole also reflected, "Kitchener is keeping its low-cost vibe, and I think that's good for Kitchener because it differentiates it from uptown."

While many participants reflected positively on the amenities available downtown, the lack of certain types of stores, and particularly a grocery store was also a prevalent subcategory in participants' responses. As Steve remarked, "You've got to be strategic about getting your stuff on Saturdays, and otherwise shop in Uptown on the way home." He later added that the lack of amenities was one of the drawbacks of living in a smaller city: "I think one of the things versus bigger cities is the lack of certain kinds of amenities that come with bigger downtowns, like they don't really have a 24 hour pharmacy, and they don't really have 24 hour amenities for residents." Megan also remarked, "…. A grocery or some more mainstays of daily living would be helpful. There are not a lot of functional businesses." Katherine similarly added, "I think that having different types of shops would make it more exciting… I think there's more convenience things that we could add downtown to make it a bit more liveable." However, Katherine also noted that although a new grocer, Legacy Greens, had opened, its higher prices made it inaccessible to many of the people who lived in or near to the downtown. In general, Lori felt she was being priced-out of the downtown and there were not enough stores within her budget range. She remarked, "there's nothing that anybody can go to downtown unless you're made out of money." Lori later added, "I mean Kitchener is becoming more high end, and as it becomes more high end, it becomes less interesting to me. I like to shop in interesting places that aren't extremely expensive. I'm not a boutique shopper…"

Community

With the exception of one respondent, community did not initially factor into residents' decisions to move to the downtown area. However, when I asked residents to reflect on what they liked about where they lived, community factored highly into many participants' answers. At the neighbourhood level, participants discussed the significance of their immediate community. Lori said, "It seems to be a very good neighbourhood, the people here are fantastic, all my neighbours are, and they look after each other. I don't know how you get that in another neighbourhood, but it's like that here, and I like that." Megan also discussed how she knows most of her neighbours, and how they often

exchange small favours; for example, watering plants when someone is away on vacation or bringing in the garbage.

Several of the downtown Kitchener dwellers that I interviewed told me that since moving downtown, they felt part of a greater community. A few respondents discussed liking regularly meeting people they knew when they were spending time in the core. As Katherine proudly noted, "I find that Kitchener is like that, people smile at each other when they walk down the street, it's like a little community to me." She then later went on to add, "I feel like it's a small town in a city." Steve echoed this sentiment when he said, "For some people living downtown, it's kind of hard not to have that small, downtown feel. So you'll be walking and it would be weird if you didn't bump into someone you know, which is cool. I like that feeling." Sarah also noted: "People are really, really friendly in downtown Kitchener." This sense of community in the downtown was described by one participant, Ashley, using this analogy: "you know when you go to your grandmother's house and she's been in the same house for 50 or 60 years and you feel very warm and comfortable. That's how I feel about Kitchener." For Emanuel, the sense of community that he felt in downtown Kitchener was unique when compared to other places where he had lived:

> "…what I have found that I really enjoy about living in Kitchener, because I can say that I have lived in a number of cities and spent time in a number of places around the world, this is probably the most comfortable downtown I have ever lived in. Something that is very appealing to me is that any day I step out anywhere, I will see people I know and people who know me. That, to me, is amazing. Even when I lived in Beaverton, I didn't really recognize or interact with most of those people. Vancouver, too many people to run into the same people regularly, same with Toronto, same with Singapore. I enjoy this. I enjoy this a lot. It's a nice size when you can see people you recognize."

Housing Location and Identity

The residents I spoke to generally expressed that living downtown was an important part of their identity. For some, this identity was related to living in downtown Kitchener itself. Ashely, for example, prided herself in her familiarity with the downtown area: "I think sometimes when you are living downtown you don't really know what's going on. I actually have a lot of information. I know a lot of people who are living here so I'm definitely proud of it." Nicole similarly added, "I've really enjoyed

living downtown, and since living downtown, I've probably adopted more of a sense of identity living there than any of the student ghetto areas in Waterloo. So you know, I never felt quite as connected to the region as when I was living in the downtown." Even when I asked her if she could move anywhere in the region with a limitless budget, Nicole replied, "I'd probably just get a larger unit downtown." Even in this hypothetical scenario, Nicole wanted to continue to live in an apartment building. When I asked a similar question to other participants, particularly those who lived in apartment buildings, many said that they would continue to live downtown. However, the majority said they would prefer to relocate to one of the single detached homes in the surrounding residential neighbourhoods.

However for several participants, living in a downtown area was more a part of their identity than living in downtown Kitchener specifically. In response to the question of whether or not she felt pride in the downtown, Megan responded, "A downtown dweller? Yes. A downtown Kitchener dweller… I don't think I've fully owned that yet… I don't think I would say I'm a downtown Kitchener girl. I don't even know what that would look like." Dan also expressed similar ambivalence about identifying as a downtown Kitchener inhabitant. He said, "I don't necessarily know if I feel a sense of pride in Kitchener, but that's only because the people I might say that to don't know where Kitchener is." For others, having a car-free lifestyle associated with higher-density downtown living was more a facet of their identity than living in Kitchener.

Nonetheless, Kitchener's unique identity, particularly as compared to Waterloo, was a focal point for many of my participants. Steve reflected on his feelings about uptown: "There's a very transient feeling in uptown. It really feels like they don't want to be there, the students are just there for a short time, they don't want to live in the region. And the vibe downtown is more familial. The people want to live there for a while in my age bracket and demographic." Dan also remarked, "Waterloo is like a student city, so now that I'm not a student anymore, I kind of wanted a bit of that division…" Katherine, when reflecting on why she had chosen to live in Downtown Kitchener rather than Uptown Waterloo noted, "I was trying to stay away from students."

Marginalized People

Most of the participants spoke about marginalized individuals in the downtown who they perceived to be homeless and potentially facing addictions or mental health issues even though I did not ask participants directly about this demographic. When I asked participants what they disliked about the downtown, what changes they wanted to see in the downtown in the future, and if they had any apprehensions about the future of the core, their answers often evoked the downtown's marginalized population. Several participants discussed witnessing erratic or threatening behaviour in the city centre—for example, prolonged yelling and shouting on the street at night or people running haphazardly into the middle of traffic. Several participants, all women, spoke about the perceived danger that they experienced living in or close to the downtown. Erin said, "it can be a scary rough neighbourhood sometimes… It can feel like an unsafe neighbourhood to be a single woman, to be a queer couple." Erin later added, "I found a used needle in our bike room [of the apartment], that was scary…" Kelly also said, "the culture at night… it makes me uncomfortable." Sarah echoed these sentiments when she said, "I've never felt genuinely threatened; I've just felt creeped out."

Three participants described how people who live outside the centre often perceive downtown Kitchener as a particularly dangerous place. Megan discussed Kitchener's negative reputation and its associations with prostitution, drugs, and homelessness. Josh also discussed how his experiences living in downtown Kitchener did not match its negative reputation: "There's some moments where people ask you for change or you see some sketchiness going on but it's never been the stereotype of seeing drugs or prostitutes or anything. I think Kitchener might have been like that in the early 90's and late 80's, but I think those days are gone." Liam humorously discussed the image of the downtown as a supposedly dangerous place in comparison to the suburbs: "People are driving down Fischer Hallman [a suburban area in Kitchener], there's literally no human beings… then you drive downtown, and all of a sudden there are people and 'one of them might be a murderer.'" However, Liam countered what he considered unjustified fear, "I think it's paranoia. We've never felt particularly unsafe."

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However, another participant felt that downtown Kitchener was overrun with homelessness and that the downtown core actually lived up to its reputation: "I'm sorry, but when I go to downtown Kitchener that is all I see, just bums, I'm sorry, homeless people, it's the same thing."

In contrast, several participants explicitly noted that they were not afraid of the people in the downtown who they perceived to be homeless or experiencing mental health issues. Heather said, "… in some instances, in the evenings, you may encounter people who are dealing with mental health issues and may say things to you. Does that concern me? No. Does that deter me from walking out my door? No." Similarly, Josh also noted, "… there are still some sketchy moments, but yeah, it doesn't taint my experience." Steve, too, spoke about the perceived intolerance, particularly from those who don't live in or near downtown Kitchener, towards the core's homeless population: "I think there's a prejudice towards seeing people who are walking around like zombies." Katherine reflected, "The homelessness doesn't bother me at all. My Dad has worked a lot with homeless kids and shelters around this area, and so have I." Katherine went on to discuss how Kitchener was more inclusive than Waterloo, "…how we don't shun people who are different from us, whereas in Waterloo, I find that that happens a lot. Because I don't look at homelessness as those people being less than us… and that's why I take pride in the area I live in. It's kind of why I like living here because it's very inclusive."

Some participants voiced their concern for the homeless and marginalized populations living in or near the downtown, as well as dismay for the perceived lack of services for these community members. As the downtown continues to redevelop, Lori noted the uncomfortable juxtaposition of affluence and poverty in downtown Kitchener, "I just don't think it plays well having high-end stores and high-end restaurants and having bums sitting out front. They're not dealing with what needs to be dealt with. Where are you going to put these people?" In response to a question asking participants if Uptown Waterloo and Downtown Kitchener could learn anything from each other, Kelly remarked: "I hope Kitchener learns nothing form Uptown Waterloo because they pushed all the poor people out and have this sanitized version of life." One other

participant, Erin, suggested that more social enterprises downtown might be beneficial. Erin voiced her support for the current downtown non-profit, the Working Centre, while also articulating the hope that more grass roots organizations would establish themselves in the downtown.

Downtown Housing Affordability

As indicated initially, the downtown's affordability was cited as a reason that drew some residents to the core. As Kelly stated, "I don't know if you could find the level of affordability that you can find here." However, for several participants, affordability, or lack thereof, was perceived as one of the drawbacks of their central location. As Ashley remarked, "housing can be a little bit pricey." Similarly, Liam reflected that he was paying a higher cost for square footage compared to what he might be paying in a more rural area, where he would be able to afford a three bedroom house for the same rent as his apartment located just outside of the downtown boundaries.

Although some respondents discussed struggling with the core's rental costs, several participants also brought up gentrification and the unaffordability of the downtown for a larger segment of the existing population. Emanuel wondered, "Where are the people that were under-housed or un-housed? I don't know where they are going… I don't know where the people who can't afford to live in the downtown go." Steve similarly echoed this sentiment when he said, "My impression is that a lot of people who used to live downtown got pushed out, kind of like an inner ring of suburbs, to exurbs which have crime issues." Kelly similarly remarked on the perceived gentrification in the downtown Kitchener area, "I fear that it [downtown Kitchener] will become Waterloo, that it will push poor people out. That it's already becoming a place less affordable for poor people to live." Steve attributed this gentrification to policy that, in his words, is "encouraging development that's going to price people out of the neighbourhood, and you know, even I anticipate my building being taken over and made into condos…"

Several participants also expressed the need for more affordable housing in the city core. As Steve went on to add: "I think the effects of gentrification need to be tempered by more public policy to support affordable housing, that's a big concern of mine." Ashley said, "… it's just going to get more expensive for younger people to live here. Affordable housing is going to be an issue." Lori also added, "All of these factories that they are turning into lofts and condos, why don't they take one and turn it into affordable homes for people until they can get on their feet, even if it's short term? I mean, I couldn't afford my house now…"

However, gentrification was not considered a negative process for all of my participants. Heather, while reflecting on the recent purchase of her home, remarked, "The price point was very attractive. I think gentrification is a huge component. I think we're getting there." Within the context of our interview, Heather was referring to gentrification as a positive process that would increase her house value. Josh thought that the gentrification narrative in downtown Kitchener had been overblown. "They talk about gentrification with these new condos going in and making it less affordable. I think Kitchener is a fairly affordable city. Even if you don't live in one of those buildings, there's still a bunch of other options downtown for housing."

5.4 What are residents' views of downtown Kitchener's revitalization?
The Viability of Downtown Businesses

Several participants discussed the difficulties facing small businesses in downtown Kitchener. As Liam succinctly put it, "it seems like any small business that comes downtown has a shelf life, so that sucks." Kelly, Heather, and Lori echoed this opinion. Katherine also reflected on the limited types of businesses available in the downtown: "I think that having different types of shops would make it more exciting. We have a lot of pubs and restaurants and things like that. I remember years and years ago, we had a lot more clothing stores and things like that. But I think we're really struggling with that." Empty storefronts were also a prominent concern for many of these residents. Several others noted the oftentimes inconvenient and limited hours of many of the businesses located in and around the downtown core. As Josh put it, "it's a lot of stuff

oriented towards the working day." He then went on to reflect how more patios in the downtown might encourage him to linger longer in the core. Emmanuel also expressed wanting longer hours at many of the coffee shops and other gathering places in Kitchener's city centre. Michelle similarly reflected, "I would like to see more restaurants that are open in the evenings." Nicole later went on to suggest that the presence of the technology sector may lead to more viable businesses in the downtown that would be open longer hours. "These workers [in the tech sector] are people who want to live downtown, who want to spend money downtown. They want to do their entertainment downtown, and companies are responding to that and choosing downtown locations, and I think that's going to be an important force for revitalization that other mid-sized cities don't have."

King Street

When I asked participants about whether or not they felt that King Street was currently an enjoyable place to spend time, the answers I received were mixed. Several participants reflected positively on the design and the layout of King Street. Megan, for example, noted, "They've done a good job of setting it up so events can happen. It can be transformed." Nicole said, "I think that they've done a really good job with that, just making it more pedestrian friendly, and putting in outlets in the planters so when people have craft fairs, you can actually plug something in. There are so many little touches that make downtown events and the King Street experience just that much better, in ways that you don't necessarily notice." Similarly, Emmanuel remarked, "I enjoy King Street very much, bigger sidewalks are always fantastic." Heather also reflected positively on "the really cute bicycle parking" along this street. Other participants such as Katherine, Josh and Steve vocalized their support for creating more patios in the downtown, and Dan enthusiastically remarked on the patio extensions that had already been established along King Street.

However, in the evenings in particular, several participants reflected that downtown Kitchener often felt lifeless. As Nicole thought about what it was like to be on King Street, she noted, "…But I can also see how it can be a little bleak. I mean

especially at night time because things shut down early and then … it can be a little bit more frightening for some people." Megan also noted, "at night time, it's dead and if it's not, the people that are out are scary sometimes."

Festivals

Those who had attended festivals in the downtown had had positive experiences—however, festivals were not on the forefront of most residents' minds when they reflected on their experiences living downtown. When asked specifically for their thoughts on Kitchener's festivals, residents' opinions ranged from ambivalence to enthusiasm. When I asked Liam about these festivals, he ventured, "We don't really look them up, they just happen, which is awesome… We don't have to plan to go there, we just show up." Kelly, on the other side of the spectrum, said that she made an intentional effort to go to most of the festivals hosted during the summer. Megan also spoke about all the festivals held on King Street and in Victoria Park, she said: "I try to go to as many as I can. There's usually really good programming…" Similarly, Katherine spoke enthusiastically about the festivals hosted on King Street and in Victoria Park: "They bring so many different people from so many different walks of life together."

When I asked for participants' opinions of King Street in downtown Kitchener, people again shared their thoughts on the festivals held in the downtown along this stretch of road. Megan expressed that when there was programming on King Street, it became a more enjoyable place to spend time. Nicole reminisced about one event that was held the previous summer where King Street was closed and where in her words, "they made one stretch of King Street just one giant patio." Emanuel even had ideas for events and activities that could take place on King Street. He suggested, for example, "put beach chairs in the middle of the street and have people enjoy it, hang out and do stuff… Oh, and more street art. Painting the street itself creates a sense of ownership for pedestrians that you can't get if you simply close the street off… that feels like a bit of a treat to be able to walk along the street and own that briefly." However, as Steve pointed out, "the gap of King between being in a festival environment and not is really big, and that's a bit weird, I guess." Steve later went on to add, "Yeah, there's this transient

quality to it [the festivals], in that they're not part of the permanent fabric of downtown. They are kind of coming and going like a road show type feeling. I think that's been changing over time. They re-did the King Street-scape so it feels more festival like."

Kitchener's Downtown Goal

In my interviews, I asked participants to reflect on Kitchener's downtown goal: "To establish downtown Kitchener as one of the best downtowns in North America that offers a complete sense of community while offering cool, unique, vibrant, and eclectic experiences" (2012, p. 6). Initially, most participants reacted to this goal with a snigger. Upon further reflection, the majority of people that I spoke to admitted that becoming "one of the best downtowns in North America" was not a realistic goal for Kitchener, not least because it is a mid-size city. Dan said, "I think best and scale often go hand in hand. So when I think of N.Y.C. and here, I can't compare them. They're completely different." Nicole asked another question in response to my question, "Will they [downtown Kitchener] ever be the best downtown in the world?" To which she replied, "… you can put some cafes and patios out but that doesn't make it Paris." Katherine also said, "… we don't have the population density like some other places, which is still increasing with Google and new businesses, we're bringing new people…" To this question, Liam responded, "Are we competing with Manhattan? I don't think we need to…. If a downtown gets so 'cool,' only certain people can afford it, [and] that takes it out of the market."

Downtown Kitchener in one word or in a sentence

I also asked participants to reflect on how they would describe downtown Kitchener in a word or in a sentence. Kelly immediately laughed and said, "Oh god, downtown Kitchener is different every day of the week." Many participants used some variation of the words "transitioning" or "evolving" to describe the city centre. One participant responded ambivalently and described downtown Kitchener as "small" and "average." While a couple of other responses were decidedly negative. One of these participants vehemently said, "It's a homeless dump, that's what it is," while another reflected that downtown Kitchener was "rough" and "marginalized." However, at the

other end of the spectrum, some participants reflected much more positively on the downtown. Dan remarked that Kitchener's central city was "pleasantly surprising," and Katherine said that downtown was "very culturally diverse, but at the same, almost ruggedly beautiful." Other responses were more nuanced. Upon reflection, Ashley remarked that downtown Kitchener is "[a] relatively big city with a small town feel." She then went on to add, "So, I feel like it's a struggle between keeping the sense of old Kitchener community, and also making it new and vibrant." Nicole noted that downtown Kitchener was at an interesting moment in its development, because, in her words, "Its got a great upward mobility, [and] it has maintained a coolness and an edge factor."

5.5 Summary

Throughout the 15 interviews that I conducted, participants expressed a range of opinions about their experiences of downtown Kitchener. Individuals' decisions to move to the downtown included reasons such as its central location, its affordability, and the type of housing stock available. Participants' experiences of the downtown were similarly varied and reflected residents' experiences of community, thoughts on Kitchener's marginalized populations, and the affordability, or at times, the lack thereof, in the downtown core. Finally, residents' views of Kitchener's downtown revitalization indicated that for the most part, participants were currently enjoying living in the downtown and were hopeful for its ongoing regeneration, although wary of some of the potential negative ramifications of the city's upgrading.

6. Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I respond to the research objectives initially outlined in my introduction. I begin by describing the upgrading of downtown Kitchener as compared to both past research on the downtown as well as on the gentrification literature. In the second and third sections, I explore why residents moved to the downtown and their views on the core. The final section of the chapter looks at how residents' views of the central city do or do not complement Kitchener's current downtown revitalization plans.

6.2 The Upgrading of Downtown Kitchener
"I think gentrification is a huge component. I think we're getting there."—Heather

The upgrading of downtown Kitchener is evinced through the changing demographics of its central city neighbourhoods, the transformation of the downtown streetscape, and the city's growing technology sector. In many ways, Kitchener's gentrification imitates that of other cities—here we can see its upgrading manifested through the central city's changing demographics, its redeveloping streetscape, as well as through the city's support for this revitalization. However, here it is important to note that when Bunting (1987) studied the upgrading of homes in Kitchener's inner city, she stated that Kitchener was not undergoing gentrification for a number of reasons including the city's medium size, its primarily working class labour force, and the geographic dispersal of its employment centres (p. 212). Yet in the almost three decades since, Kitchener has started to move away from its working class roots towards cultivating its identity as a high tech and entrepreneurial hub (City of Kitchener, 2012 & 2015).

One aspect of this gentrification process is often signified through the changing demographics of particular neighbourhoods (Bereitschaft, 2014). Although central city Kitchener has maintained a steady residential population since the 1980s, an analysis of the demographics of these inner city neighbourhoods between 1991 and 2011 also reveals that select neighbourhoods are becoming more prosperous as average rent, dwelling value, and income levels have risen. For instance, median individual income levels increased in all but one of the eight inner city census tracts between 2006 and 2011. The

demographics of my study also reflect this growing affluence, and many of my participants were well-educated professionals.

The popularity of the downtown amongst young people is evident in the fact that there is a significantly higher percentage of 20 to 34 years olds who live in the downtown area (census tract 17) compared to the Kitchener CMA. Sixteen years earlier, Filion, Bunting, Frenette, Curry, & Mattice (2000) conducted a survey to assess the number of people who were interested in living in or near the downtown. They found that respondents who were between 25 and 34 expressed considerably *less* interest in living in the core compared to other demographics. This demographic shift in the downtown population may speak, on the one hand, to the growing popularity of central city living amongst millennials, as well as to the loft conversions and condominium development that has occurred since the 2000 survey was conducted. Furthermore, as more development occurs in the downtown such as the nearing completion of the LRT, the establishment of Google's new office space, and the opening of several upmarket shops and restaurants, the demographics of the downtown will likely continue to change, and the numbers of well-educated professionals in its core will also likely continue to grow.

Here the city's upgrading, like that of many others in North America and western Europe, is also evinced through the intended target of its revitalization efforts. The city is actively working towards creating a downtown environment that promises "cool, unique, vibrant, and eclectic experiences" that will, in turn, attract people, ideally young professionals, to its core (City of Kitchener, 2012, p. 6). Kitchener's 2013 Downtown Annual Report, *The Start of Awesome,* characterized exactly what these residents might look like.

> When we set out on the search for our ideal Downtownee [sic], we were thrilled to meet Stacey. She lives in an amazing downtown apartment, works at the tech startup, MappedIn, a few blocks away in the newly revitalized 305 King building and does her grocery shopping at the Kitchener Market." –p. 12

Beyond simply rebranding itself, the City of Kitchener, like many others, is also actively facilitating private development in its core in order to maintain its growth. In this

process, Kitchener is undergoing what Smith (2002) has referred to as state-sponsored gentrification. Here the state, in this case, municipal government, is working in conjunction with private developers to revalorize central city land. For example, the City of Kitchener offers several incentives to encourage downtown growth including rebates for building permit fees and a waiver of development charges for newly constructed buildings. According to the City of Kitchener, the purpose of these incentives is to "[encourage] local businesses and the development community to redevelop land and buildings in the downtown" (City of Kitchener, 2013b). In this way, the city is supporting high-density residential development as well as encouraging more people to move to the core. To further this goal, one of the main areas of focus of the Downtown Kitchener Action Plan, for example, is entitled 'New Urban Neighbourhoods.' This section highlights plans for neighbourhoods "that redefine urban living" and features a photograph of a showroom for the new city centre condominiums (City of Kitchener, 2012, p. 12).

However, downtown Kitchener is not upgrading along a pre-set trajectory. Instead, the city is gentrifying in ways that are unique to its particular context. Lees (2006) discussed how the cascade model assumes that gentrification processes of global cities diffuse to smaller urban areas. News reports that highlight Kitchener's mounting housing costs in the face of Toronto's increasingly frenzied real estate market (Butler, 2016; Flanagan, 2016) neatly demonstrate a diffusion of capital down the ranks of the urban hierarchy. Other facets of Kitchener's upgrading, for example, its loft conversions, may also show that Kitchener's revitalization is replicating that of much larger urban centres (see Podmore 1998 for a discussion of the diffusion of the loft lifestyle). However, Lees (2006) argued that the cascade model does not account for the place-specific ways that gentrification unfolds. Kitchener's revitalization, for example, has been largely dependent on the city's broader economic context. Dutton (2005) described how gentrification in Leeds, UK was heavily influenced by the city's growth as a regional financial service centre following its decline as a major industrial hub. Similarly, downtown Kitchener has experienced significant success and growth in its technology sector, thanks, in part, to financial support from the city, the concentration of several

university campuses in the region, as well as Kitchener's proximity to Toronto. Here the now defunct local economic development organization, Canada's Technology Triangle, optimistically outlined the economic and geographic parallels between the Waterloo Region and Toronto, on the one hand, with Silicone Valley and San Francisco on the other.

Kitchener's gentrification trajectory is also distinctive in that the downtown lacks a significant artists' presence. Unlike many other upgrading cores where artists have played a substantial role in inciting gentrification (Lloyd, 2010; Zukin, 2008), Kitchener has not historically had a particularly visible artists' presence in its centre. When Lloyd (2010) described the gentrification underway in Wicker Park, Chicago, he observed how quirky, independent coffee shops in this once artist saturated community were gradually replaced by chains. Downtown Kitchener, however, is not experiencing artist driven gentrification—there are no hipster coffee shops or artist-run galleries that are slowly being replaced by fancier restaurants and boutiques. Instead, it is the direct remnants of Kitchener's working class culture and the vestiges of the downtown's decline—its dive bars, convenience stories, tattoo parlours, and pawnshops—that are gradually closing and being replaced by more expensive bars and restaurants.[5]

However, despite the growth of the technology sector anchored in Kitchener's innovation district, and the city's revitalization policies, its core is also transitioning. Even amidst the successes of the last 15 years, my participants never described downtown Kitchener as a prosperous centre. There are still evident signs of deterioration here such as the empty shop fronts and the half full bars and restaurants, even on summer evenings. In larger cities such as Toronto, gentrification may lead to noticeable changes over a matter of months. In Kitchener, however, this process appears to be much more drawn out. Although new restaurants and bars have opened, and other shops, such as "San Francisco Panini," "King West Fine Men's Grooming," as well as a grocery store are all slated to open in the downtown over the next few months, this image of a

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[5] However, it is important to note that a greater artists' presence is slowly being introduced into the core by the non-profit organization, CAFKA (Contemporary Art Forum Kitchener and Area), as well as by the recent opening of Open Sesame, a local store that sells art items on King Street, next to City Hall.

declining downtown nevertheless remains firmly implanted in people's minds, especially for those who live outside the core.

6.3 Moving to the City Centre

"[I moved for] the convenience and for transportation, mainly. Well, actually, there are a lot of reasons..."—Katherine

In many ways, participants' responses reflected both aspects of the gentrification literature as well as previous studies that had been conducted in downtown Kitchener. When I asked residents why they had chosen to move to downtown Kitchener, their answers reflected a combination of practical reasons and lifestyle preferences including proximity to public transport, walkability, opposition to the suburbs, and the type of housing stock that was available in the core. Almost thirty years earlier, Bunting (1987) collected very similar responses when she surveyed 65 residents of two central city Kitchener census tracts (census tract 16 and census tract 11) who had moved into downtown Kitchener over the last five years. In terms of the categories that emerged, Bunting's responses were comparable to my interview findings. However, she also found a clear demographic divide in the responses received. Bunting found that new Canadian families who were typically working class, Portuguese and concentrated in census tract 11 were generally drawn to the downtown for practical reasons—for example, proximity to both work and public transport as well as the affordability of housing in the central city. The residents of census tract 16, on the other hand, who were significantly more likely to be well educated and to hold professional or managerial roles, chose to live in the downtown because of the historic housing stock and their opposition to the suburbs. Where my findings differed was in the fact that my participants simultaneously named both lifestyle *and* practical reasons that had factored into their housing location choice. For example, one participant who discussed choosing to live downtown due to his home's proximity to a transport hub, spoke in the next sentence about the importance of distinguishing himself from suburban dwellers.

The residents that I spoke with were, in some ways, demographically aligned with the residents of census tract 16 that Bunting surveyed in the 1980s. Similarly, the

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majority of the people that I spoke to had undergraduate or postgraduate degrees, nine worked in professional occupations, and all spoke English fluently. However, compared to thirty years ago when this demographic was more likely to hold stable, full-time, well-paid jobs; today, an unstable economic climate means that this group is more likely to experience economic precariousness as compared to previous generations. Partially as a result of these economic shifts, Moos (2015) described how young adults are increasingly concentrated in high density housing either in the central city or in neighbourhoods with good connections to public transit. The reasons for their housing location choice stem from a combination of lifestyle preferences and economic reasons, such as their preference for both active transit and proximity to public transport hubs, as well as the fact that millennials often cannot afford the costs associated with car ownership. Furthermore, it is often easier to accommodate this demographic in high density housing due to societal shifts, particularly due to delayed child rearing amongst young adults. For Liam, a millennial, his choice to live in an apartment building close to the downtown core was due to a combination of economic reasons, for example, the high cost of owning a car; lifestyle preference, for example, the desire to be within walking distance to many of the shared amenities available downtown; as well as personal values such as minimalism. The views of many of my participants simultaneously reflected their middle class tastes, economic precariousness, as well as their values.

All of the participants in my sample, without exception, discussed the importance of living in a central location, a choice that for many was strongly tied to their support for active transit, such as walking or cycling, as well as to their desire to live in proximity to good public transportation. Although these may be seen as somewhat universal desires, these preferences are often evoked when discussing gentrifiers' values. Ley (1986; 1996) has described how the shift towards a post-industrial society changed the demographic makeup of cities as white-collar workers began to move into the central city and closer to their places of employment. In downtown Kitchener, this would many technology and insurance companies as well as regional and municipal government offices that are located in or very near the core. For the majority of the people that I spoke with, being

walking distance to work or alternatively, having easy access to public transport, shaped their decisions to move to the central city.

Many of my participants were also regular users of public transport. Danyluk and Ley (2007), in contrast, found that although the gentrifying class in the large urban cores of Vancouver and Toronto politically supported both walkability and public transport, the public transit system in these cities was not widely used by gentrifiers. Many of the people that I spoke with, however, cited the importance of living close to Charles Street Terminal so that they could easily access local bus lines as well as the coaches that make regular trips outside of the region. Katherine, for example, praised the public transport downtown, "Transportation is really great, especially if you don't have a car." Unlike the gentrifying class that Danyluk and Ley describe, many of my participants had no interest in owning their own car. As Katherine, a student, remarked, "It's not that I can't afford to drive, it's just that I have no interest in driving as my commuting basis." Other participants, in contrast, also reflected on the prohibitively high costs of owning a vehicle. Here, this support for public transportation may speak, on the one hand, to the economic precariousness of some of my participants; however, it may also speak to changing values that are particularly characteristic amongst millennials, which place increasing importance on the benefits of active transit and on values such as environmentalism and sustainability.

The housing affordability in Kitchener's core also influenced many participants' housing location choices. In the classical gentrification literature, the appeal of inexpensive and often historic housing stock is stated as one of the factors drawing members of the middle classes into the inner city (Clay, 1979; Berry, 1985). Notably, several participants favourably compared the cost of housing in downtown Kitchener to Uptown Waterloo or other nearby municipalities such as Toronto or Guelph. Although some participants admitted that they would have preferred to live elsewhere in the region or, alternatively, in a larger municipality, the cost of buying or renting housing in downtown Kitchener was a significant draw. Similarly, whereas inexpensive housing stock is no longer a motivating factor for those interested in moving to Boston or San

Francisco; it *is* one of the factors drawing well-educated millennials to the cores of once declining cities such as Cleveland; Ohio or Baltimore, Maryland that were formerly perceived as too dangerous and rundown to appeal to this demographic (Hanes, 2015). Furthermore, compared to larger municipalities with higher real estate prices, Kitchener offers relatively affordable, historic, single family detached homes or loft conversions that would be higher priced in many larger cities. In the early research on gentrification, particularly in the 1980s, living in historic housing was described as a way for residents to affirm their middle class identity (Jager, 1986; Zukin, 1982). However, as housing becomes increasingly expensive in central areas of large urban cores such as Vancouver and Toronto, historic single dethatched houses or even lofts in trendy urban neighbourhoods are often out of the financial reach for many members of the middle classes. In contrast, in Kitchener, where real estate values are considerably lower than in larger cities, historic housing stock, whether to buy or rent, was within the means of many of my participants and was one of the factors that attracted roughly half of them to the core. This attraction to older housing stock, in turn, was often interconnected to residents' opposition to the suburbs. Here the historic housing stock in Kitchener's central city was frequently favourably compared to what was perceived as the homogenous built form of newer developments on the city's periphery.

In some ways, participants' reasons for moving to central city Kitchener were similar to the reasons that people choose to move to the cores of larger cities—for example, the desire to live in a central location and an opposition to the suburbs. However, other factors that drew people to downtown Kitchener, for example, its affordability, are less likely to be cited as reasons that people move to large Canadian metropolises. Furthermore, characteristics associated with culture and urbanity were notably absent from the reasons that the majority of my participants chose to move to Kitchener's centre.

6.4 Downtown Living

"… I guess there's still this idea that it's not a big city, [that] there's not a lot of cool places or things going on. That's not necessarily true. [My loft building] is not an island, there's other stuff." –Josh

People's experiences of living in downtown Kitchener reflected certain elements of perceived urbanity, commonly associated with people's experiences of living in larger cities. For example, several participants described Kitchener's core as authentic and diverse. Other participants also described the city centre by features more characteristic of the downtowns of declining cores; for example, the lack of amenities available in the centre. Finally, other descriptions of Kitchener's downtown, notably its strong sense of community, may be particularly characteristic of smaller places.

Although Kitchener is a mid-size city, some participants associated its downtown with adjectives that are often connected with larger urban centres such as "diverse," "counter-culture," "authentic" and "grungy," which speak to elements of the downtown's urbanity. These descriptors become a way of marking the downtown as distinct from the suburbs, which are still often negatively perceived as homogenous and conformist (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2008). Furthermore, descriptions of the downtown as grungy or authentic may also be seen as remnants of a time period when Kitchener was a blue-collar town and its central city neighbourhoods were home to many of the area's immigrants (Bunting, 1987). However, not all participants described Kitchener as being urban. One participant, for example, lamented that he missed the anonymity he had felt when he had lived in bigger cities. Others also noted that they missed the convenience of round the clock amenities, such as a 24-hour pharmacy that are more characteristic of larger locales.

Furthermore, Kitchener's cultural and leisure amenities, such as its symphony, the Registry Theatre, Centre in the Square, the downtown public library, and the skating rink in front of City Hall were rarely mentioned by participants. Although cultural amenities are often considered key touristic attractions of larger urban cores, they were not central to most participants' experiences of downtown Kitchener. One contributing factor may have been that Centre in the Square and the Registry Theatre are not located along King

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Street and are thus potentially perceived as outside of the downtown area. However, when I asked participants to describe or draw the edges of the downtown, the majority of the participants included the Centre in the Square and the Registry Theatre within the downtown's boundaries. That many participants did not acknowledge Kitchener's cultural amenities may reflect changing perceptions of art and culture, particularly amongst millennials. However, these views are not necessarily representative of all downtown visitors. For example, according to the 2013 Downtown Annual Report, 60% of survey respondents attended a performance at Centre In the Square, the Registry Theatre, or Conrad Centre (City of Kitchener 2014, p 7).

Considering that most of my participants were millennials, culture for this demographic is more likely to be viewed as authentic when it is integrated into the fabric of the city and is, at its most stereotypical, manifested through trendy street art, dive bars that feature up and coming bands, and live-work studios (Lloyd, 2010; Zukin, 2008). It is what Florida (2012b) would refer to as "organic and indigenous street-level culture" (p. 135), which coincidentally, the City of Kitchener also measures, in part, through the number of people who attend downtown arts based festivals (City of Kitchener, 2014). Here several of my participants discussed the value of street culture. For example, Emmanuel described the potential community building benefits of painting a labyrinth or hopscotch design on one of the streets downtown. Steve similarly discussed using street festivals as a means for artists to display their work. Traditional culture, by contrast, is generally associated with older demographics, where today institutions such as art galleries are struggling to continue to attract younger visitors (Mason & McCarthy, 2006).

Instead of discussing cultural or leisure amenities, when residents, particularly millennials, spoke about their experiences on King Street, they were more likely to talk about frequenting cafes, bars, and restaurants. These experiences of the downtown differ significantly from the findings of Sikora (1988) who found that Kitchener residents thirty years ago rarely frequented the downtown to enjoy these amenities. On the one hand, this shift may speak to Kitchener's transforming downtown streetscape where there are now

several dining options beyond kebab shops and cheap pizza joints. This may also reflect changing demographic patterns. As people delay child rearing, they are more likely to not only live in the downtown (Moos 2015) but also to have time as well as disposable income to spend on drinking and dining out. Finally, the growth of downtown industries combined with the development of upmarket condominiums also represents a growing downtown population with disposable income living near the core.

Although Kitchener does not have the same urbanity as larger cities, benefits of its smaller size, notably a sense of community, were reflected in participants' responses. This contrasts with the gentrification literature where community is rarely discussed as part of the experiences of incoming residents. Instead, discussions of the importance of neighbourhood cohesion are often relegated to neighbourhoods' existing low-income residents, where the need for community is often framed as part of a survival strategy (Dominguez & Watkins, 2003). The stereotype follows that people from higher income backgrounds are less likely to rely on their immediate geographical vicinity for social support as they are more likely to have broader social networks. For many of my participants, a sense of community factored highly into our discussions of their experiences living in the central city. Some participants noted it was one of the benefits of living in a smaller place—as Katherine commented, "I feel like it's a small town in a city." Emmanuel also echoed this comment when he said, "It's a nice size when you can see people you recognize." As Bell and Jayne (2006) also acknowledged, a strong sense of community is one of the strengths of smaller cities. As other participants reflected how Kitchener's size lent itself to this sense of familiarity amongst inhabitants, another participant, Dan, positively reflected how Kitchener's mid-size status also meant that its built environment was more knowable, and subsequently, more intelligible to him when compared to Toronto. Here Dan described a weekend where him and his girlfriend had rented an apartment in Toronto:

> "It was fun, I enjoyed it. But when I compared it to being here, downtown there was so big that I couldn't wrap my head around it. I wouldn't feel the way I do here where I turn this corner and I know what I'm getting into. I'm still going to be surprised by some new things that I might not have noticed, but I'm not going to look down and there will be a whole other city down this road. Things like that, that's what would *not* draw me to Toronto. Here, I can wrap my head around what is this city. Landmarks are really easy to visualize, you see them often enough that they do really feel common."

In this way, Kitchener's mid-size status was exactly what several residents found so appealing about living in Kitchener's centre.

6.5 Downtown Revitalization

"… you can put some cafes and patios out, but that doesn't make it Paris…" – Nicole

The rebranded image of Kitchener's downtown promises a city centre defined by such adjectives as "unique" "creative" and "energetic" (City Of Kitchener, 2012, p. 6). Beyond this list of descriptors, *the Downtown Kitchener Action Plan 2012-2016* focuses largely on bringing a sense of urbanity into Kitchener's city centre. One section of the plan entitled, "An Amazing King Street Experience," aims to "[t]urn King Street into a true regional destination and 'the place to be and be seen'" (2012, p. 10). According to the plan, this will involve "creat[ing] unique urban experiences" such as improving the patio culture and turning Civic Square in front of City Hall "into a true European-style square" as well as supporting a live music scene and drawing more unique stores and restaurants into the core (2012, p. 10).

This image of the city described in *the Downtown Kitchener Action Plan* reflects the ideal of the post-modern city made manifest through spectacle, the ephemeral, and play (Soja, 2001; Mitchell, 2001). In turn, it is also a reflection of a city that is actively embracing a Creative Class based revitalization strategy. For example, sections of this plan include a focus on "urban living," the continued development of the downtown's "Innovation District" as well as a focus on collaboration and innovation (2012). These aims compliment Florida's (2004) vision of the Creative Class archetypal urban hub – a dense city inhabited by Creative Class individuals where there is both a 'vibrant' and 'diverse' downtown culture, and a strong technology sector.

Despite the downtown plan's focus on creating a culture inspired by innovation and replete with patios and festivals, in my interviews these elements of the downtown did not emerge until I asked participants directly about their opinions of downtown revitalization strategies. When questioned, people's reflections on the city's revitalization

strategies were generally positive and participants expressed enthusiasm about the festivals held along King Street, the existing patios in the downtown, as well as the streetscape redesign.   However, when Steve reflected on the festivals in the downtown, he noted, "…there's this transient quality to it [the festivals], in that they're not part of the permanent fabric of downtown. They are kind of coming and going like a road show type feeling." In a similar way, Kitchener's downtown revitalization strategies were not an integral part of residents' daily lives.

Kitchener's downtown revitalization plan, like those of so many other cities, is focused on creating a successful downtown through imbuing the core with a distinctive sense of place that is characterized by the ever-elusive concept of 'vibrancy.' This plan envisions the core becoming filled with active businesses and surrounded by high-density residential buildings, and in this way, aims to emulate the downtowns of much larger cities. When I asked participants their opinions of Kitchener's downtown goal: "To become one of the best downtowns in North America…", the people that I spoke with acknowledged that downtown Kitchener was never going to become Paris or Manhattan, and that that was not necessarily a weakness. As Bell and Jayne (2006) described, small cities have benefits unique to their size that do not hinge on the need for continual growth or on emulating larger cities. Based on the views of participants and as other researchers have advocated (Lewis & Donald, 2009; Reese & Ye, 2011), small cities should focus on the qualities that make their cities liveable rather than on planning cities that cater to the Creative Classes through establishing a creative economy or rebranding their city as "cool" or "awesome." The residents that I spoke with were more interested in practical amenities, such as a functional downtown grocery store as well as in ensuring that the central city would remain an affordable place to live. When discussing the downtown, the participant, Kelly, succinctly declared her support of liveability over growth or spectacle. After I read out loud Kitchener's downtown goal and asked for her opinion she simply said, "I think that's a stupid goal," and then rhetorically asked, "why don't you make it liveable for the people that live here?"

As the City of Kitchener continues to rebrand its core, consumption enters into the image of what will make downtown Kitchener successful. The city's stores and restaurants are cleverly highlighted in the *Downtown Kitchener* magazine, which employs a marketing strategy aimed at emotionally connecting its readers to downtown business owners (Downtown Kitchener, 2015). Here, the consumption offerings of Kitchener's downtown are emphasized as we read the personal stories of Kitchener's restaurateurs and bar-owners. In the postmodern city, Christopherson (1994) stated that belonging is established through consumption. To be able to consume—to go to cafes and restaurants, to drink cocktails and craft beers on patios—is a sign that we are part of the city. Those who cannot participate in this culture of consumption are perceived as not belonging, and, at times, are even physically excluded from certain urban areas. Macleod (2002) described the implementation of regeneration policies in central Glasgow. Here Macleod employed Smith's concept of revanchism to describe the increasing policing of Glasgow's homeless population. As money was invested into creating a desirable and attractive shopping environment in Glasgow's centre, Macleod described how the increased policing of the homeless population became a way of "sanitizing" the core, and in this way, symbolized that the city centre was only for those who were able to take part in the city's consumption culture.

Although Kitchener's revitalization is taking place on a much smaller scale compared to Glasgow's regeneration, it is nevertheless still evident that the downtown is being moulded to become a safer and more comfortable place for the demographics that the downtown is trying to attract who will, in turn, help to spur its revitalization. In Chapter 4, I discussed a scene during Kitchener's Summer Lights Festival where the police arrested a man who presented as homeless and who was openly drinking from a bottle of wine at one of the concerts held downtown. Although this is a single anecdote, it speaks to the ways that belonging, exclusion and the tensions therein factor into Kitchener's revitalization as it strives to embody the ideals of the postmodern city.

Amidst the discussion of Kitchener's downtown revitalization practises, many residents' comments were also couched in a broader dialogue of social justice and

awareness of the more marginalized residents of the downtown area. These responses were unprompted but emerged consistently in the majority of my interviews. To a certain extent, participants' views of the downtown's marginalized population are reflected in Brown-Saracino's (2009) model of the three gentrifier archetypes: the pioneer, the social homesteader, and the social preservationist. Many of the residents I spoke to had views that aligned with the social preservationist gentrifier whom Brown-Saracino defined as wanting to both mitigate the negative effects of gentrification and to preserve the existing neighbourhood culture. However, whereas Brown-Saracino described the social preservationist as wanting to maintain the existing neighbourhood culture, the participants that I spoke to were more concerned about the lack of affordable housing and adequate services in the downtown. Participants did not bring up the loss of downtown Kitchener's working-class culture on King Street; instead, their concern was focused on the continued need to provide basic necessities for community members who lived in the central city. Here aesthetic improvements to the city centre, whether they are permanent or temporary in nature, for example, streetscape improvement programs or downtown festivals, are often criticized as making cities more welcoming for middle class residents and paving the way for gentrification (Rousseau, 2012; Zimmerman, 2008). Here several of the people that I spoke with voiced their fears about the potential drawbacks of revitalization, particularly in terms of the loss of affordable housing in the downtown. As one participant noted, the inequality in the downtown was being heightened by its revitalization, which she described as creating an uncomfortable tension between high-end stores that were opening, and the core's large, and in her view, underserved, marginalized population.

Based on the views of the people included in my participant sample, Kitchener's downtown revitalization plan does not necessarily reflect the views of residents. To Mitchell (2000), cities are increasingly defined through their built environment and "the maintenance of surfaces" (p. 8), instead of by the people who live there. Creative Class revitalization strategies are a perfect example of city building that works to improve the appearance of the built environment while neglecting the quality of life for a city's residents. This revitalization works towards improving selected pockets of cities for those

who are able to afford them, while continuing to ignore pressing social problems (Mitchell, 2000). While this may be the vision of Kitchener manifested through the City's revitalization plans, it was not necessarily the vision of the city vocalized by residents. Whereas the people I spoke with were generally in favour of downtown festivals, its remodelled streetscape, and its patios, their views of the downtown also extended to include the importance of community, support for affordable housing, and an appreciation for Kitchener's smaller size.

Within the pages of Kitchener's downtown plans and publicity materials, Kitchener presents itself as exactly the "authentic city" that Zukin (2010) described—that is to say a city that blends facets of the old and the new. Here Kitchener becomes a city that both embraces the future by fostering start-ups and encouraging shiny new developments. It is also simultaneously a city that recognizes its working-class roots, if only through the adaptive reuse of former industrial buildings and the strategic naming of its latest economic development policy, "Make It Kitchener – Since 1854." However, as Ashley, one of my participants observed, there is a tension in Kitchener's revitalization between "keeping the sense of old Kitchener community" a reference to Kitchener's wide range of cultures and income levels represented in the core, and making the core "new and vibrant." Here Zukin (2010) argued that balancing the past and future together is not enough: "It is this social diversity, and not just the diversity of buildings and uses, that gives the city its soul" (p. 31).

6.6 Summary

Downtown Kitchener is upgrading as upmarket restaurants, stores, and condominiums continue to open in its downtown, and as the city's technology sector grows. Asking residents about why they moved to central city Kitchener and their views on the downtown indicated that people's experiences of the downtown somewhat aligned with the literature written about larger cities where walkability and urbanity were recurring interview themes. However, some of the elements associated with living in a smaller city, for example, a strong community and comparatively affordable housing, also largely factored into participants' responses. While the results of Bunting's survey

conducted in the late 1980s indicated a demographic divide in the reasons that people chose to move downtown, my participants generally cited a combination of lifestyle *and* functional reasons for their housing location choice. When people's current views of the city centre were juxtaposed with Kitchener's downtown plans, these plans, on the one hand, were focused on cultivating a particular culture and aesthetic in Kitchener's core, whereas people's views of the downtown were more nuanced. As the city continues to revitalize and upgrade, many participants felt strongly about creating and maintaining a community where all its members, rather than just a select demographic, would be able to comfortably live.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Once surrounded by factories, Kitchener was at one point emblematic of a blue-collar, working class, mid-size Canadian city. However, Kitchener's proximity to Toronto, its growth in the technology sector, and the presence of several university campuses means that it is now establishing itself as part of the knowledge economy. With support and financial incentives offered by the city, the downtown is starting to show evidence of its upgrading and growing affluence.

This is not to say, however, that downtown Kitchener has completely transformed. A walk down King Street reveals both evidence of a city struggling to recover from its decline as a manufacturing centre as well as changes that simultaneously promise that the core is on the brink of further revitalization. There are still empty storefronts, but more of them have "leased" signs plastered to their windows. There is still a dive bar, a now closed fast cash shop and a handful of worn looking convenience stores. However, now there are also fancy restaurants and bars, and downtown Kitchener's first grocery store in years promises to open before the end of 2016. When I talk here of Kitchener's upgrading, I do not imagine that downtown Kitchener will ever be comparable to the downtowns of Victoria, BC or Kingston, Ontario. It is difficult to ever see Kitchener's downtown as quaint or picturesque. At the moment, downtown Kitchener is in transition, and the city is navigating what its new identity will be. Browsing through the city's policy documents reveals that there is a push towards a city that will emulate larger urban cores, attract young professionals, and that will continue to embody "awesome" (City of Kitchener, 2013). However, at its end, what exactly this may look like is still unclear.

One might accurately apply the cascade model of gentrification to certain aspects of Kitchener's upgrading. This model, for example, demonstrates how as Toronto real-estate prices become increasingly unaffordable, gentrification processes begin to "trickle" down to lower levels in the urban hierarchy, in this case, cities like Kitchener. Kitchener's municipal government is also complicit in this process, where political

support and incentives offered by the city continue to revalorize land in the downtown. However, in many ways, Kitchener is also revitalizing along a unique trajectory amidst its context as a mid-size city and as a former manufacturing hub. It is a city that is struggling to come to terms with its status in a post-industrial economy where its revitalization brings to the fore two distinct manifestations of its identity. We can find evidence here both of the city's burgeoning technology sector on the one hand, and its marginalized population on the other. This stark contrast is no more evident than in the downtown core where you can see Google's new research and development headquarters as well as many of the region's social services' offices.

When I interviewed residents about living in the central city, their views reflected typical gentrifier tastes but also their own economic precariousness and, for many, their status as millennials. Residents' reasons for moving downtown generally evinced a combination of practical factors and lifestyle preferences including proximity to public transport, walkability, opposition to the suburbs, and the type of housing stock that was available in the core. Compared to a study that was conducted in Kitchener's downtown area almost thirty years ago, my findings indicated that residents were drawn to downtown Kitchener for *both* practical and lifestyle reasons. Several participants voiced the importance of living close to public transport, as well as the appeal of a downtown that offered more affordable housing compared to neighbouring municipalities. These participants also had typical gentrifier tastes, for example, they spoke enthusiastically about the benefits of active transit and the appeal of historic housing stock. However, many of these participants diverged from the typical gentrifier image in that they were renting their heritage homes or apartments rather than renovating houses that they owned. Several participants were also more likely to rely on public transport and active transit because they did not own vehicles.

Residents' experiences of living in the downtown simultaneously reflected both elements of Kitchener's urbanity as well as features more characteristic of mid-size cities and, in particular, of their long declining downtowns. Several participants enthusiastically described living in downtown Kitchener as evoking the feeling of living in a large city

through the core's embodiment of qualities such as authenticity and diversity. However, others lamented the lack of both anonymity and of certain urban amenities in the downtown. Participants generally did not discuss what are perceived as traditional forms of culture, such as art galleries or the opera. Instead, participants were more vocal about what might be termed street-level culture such as festivals and street art. Community factored particularly highly into residents' responses of what they liked about living near the downtown, a fact that may speak partially to Kitchener's smaller size.

In contrast to how residents described their experiences of living in the core, Kitchener's revitalization plans are focused on building a downtown that will appeal to a limited demographic, namely educated professionals. This is evident in the *Downtown Kitchener Action Plan*'s focus on cultivating culture and its attempts to rebrand the downtown. However, the emblematic tokens of these revitalization policies; for example, festivals and patios, were absent from most of my participants' responses until I prompted participants to opine on Kitchener's downtown revitalization. Although participants were generally in favour of Kitchener's upgrading, this support was not hinged on Kitchener's imitation of metropolises. Instead, residents lauded qualities characteristic of Kitchener's smaller size such as its comparatively affordable housing, its walkability, and its strong sense of community. As many of my participants discussed, becoming a "cool" city was far less important than ensuring that the city continued to work towards becoming a more liveable place. To many participants, this concept of liveability was connected to ensuring that downtown Kitchener was a city where everyone, not just select demographics, would be able to comfortably live. Here the image of the gentrifier as pioneer falls short, and we are forced to reconsider the archetype of the middle class resident who has recently moved into a formerly working-class downtown.

There is currently very little research that examines the relationship between downtown residents of mid-size cities and their core's revitalization. However, as larger Canadian cities experience rapid real estate growth, smaller cities, particularly those close to large urban areas, may begin to face growing gentrification pressures. As this happens,

we cannot simply apply observations from the literature that focus almost exclusively on the gentrification of large urban areas. In the same way, whereas revitalization policies are often applied like one size fits all solutions, it is also important to acknowledge that context plays a significant role in determining what revitalization strategies will fit for a particular location. Further research on the downtowns of mid-size cities may help to establish trends that are unique to these smaller cities when compared to their larger urban counterparts. Ideally, this research would include a larger sample population, as well as a more representative collection of downtown residents including both incoming residents as well as more marginalized community members.

7.1 Recommendations

We often view downtowns as being in a state of one of two extremes: they are either in decline *or* revitalized. Downtowns are either successful *or* they are not. There is no perceived middle ground.   For downtown Kitchener, it is at this moment of transition that the city can continue to shape the course of its revitalization. Based on my research, I have determined the following recommendations for the municipal planners of mid-size cities.

1) Know your current residents Before transplanting a revitalization policy like a one size fits all solution, it is imperative that planners speak to a city's residents. How the residents that I spoke with viewed the downtown was noticeably at odds with most of Kitchener's downtown revitalization policy documents.

2) Embrace your size From my research it was clear that many residents valued downtown Kitchener precisely for its smallness. The people I spoke to neither wanted Kitchener to become nor believed that it could be "one of the best downtowns in North America." It is important for mid-size cities to embrace their size, and to move away from the mentality that cities are only 'good' if they are large or at least aspiring to be.

3) Create downtowns that are for everyone   Many of my participants expressed the importance of providing necessary services for the community's more marginalized

members and in ensuring affordable housing. Creative Class revitalization strategies, by contrast, often create spaces of exclusion where you belong only inasmuch as you are able to consume. It is necessary here that Kitchener embrace the complexity of its downtown's identity.

7.2 Concluding Thoughts

As downtown Kitchener transitions, it is often easier for people to see the reminders of decline rather than success. However, it is also in this moment where it is particularly important that the city work towards building an equitable and inclusive downtown environment. Kitchener's goal neither can nor should be to become a downtown comparable to those of much larger urban cores. Kitchener's downtown does not have the same demographics, land values, economy, amenities or culture of global or sub-global cities. As Liam facetiously pointed out, downtown Kitchener should not aim to become "the absolutely coolest, most mind numbingly cool" downtown, which as he also noted, would be a downtown where only select people would be able to afford to live. Instead, Liam said he would be happy if downtown Kitchener settled for what he called, "second-tier cool." Revitalization needs to work *with* the community, rather than to work towards completely changing it.   Creating a downtown that caters to the affluent, millennial tech sector worker should not be at the heart of downtown revitalization policies. Instead, downtown Kitchener should continue to support the qualities that are characteristic of its smaller size such as the compactness of the downtown and the strong community at its core.

Here the *Downtown Kitchener Action Plan* clearly states that the city is heavily invested in its residents, proudly proclaiming, "… above all, people are our greatest asset. It's imperative that we continue to engage the community throughout the next 5 years, to ensure we stay firmly in the direction they want Downtown to head" (City of Kitchener, 2012, p. 3). However, it appears that the City has somewhat veered away from this promise. Although encouragingly, in some of Kitchener's downtown plans and publicity materials, we begin to see glimmers that there may be alternative paths for Kitchener's downtown revitalization trajectory. For example, there is an article about the Working

Centre in the Downtown Kitchener magazine; the *Downtown Kitchener Action Plan* discusses, albeit briefly, the need for affordable housing in the core; and the city's latest economic development plan highlights the need for community and affordability. Here we begin to see the faint beginnings of plans that might focus on equity more than spectacle, and on people more than images.

The content of Kitchener's downtown revitalization documents may make it seem as if this city is trying to wilfully ignore both its deep-seated (and relatively recent) history as a manufacturing hub and its mid-size status. However, these facets of the downtown are still a key part of the city's identity and continue to play a significant role in the city's gentrification trajectory. Interviews with residents made Kitchener's mid-size status apparent and also evinced the city's transition from a declining manufacturing centre to a post-industrial economy. For example, lack of a grocery store (although this will soon change), the relative affordability of certain neighbourhoods, and the concentration of a large, marginalized population speak to the downtown's struggles with revitalization. The strong sense of community in the downtown further reflects Kitchener's mid-size status as well as the residents who are committed to improving the core. Yet downtown policy for the most part neither reflects the city's reality nor the perceptions of the downtown shared amongst residents. Thus perhaps here I can suggest evoking a depiction of urban life that not only features young professionals enjoying craft beers on patios and eating out at trendy bistro lounges, but also an image that reflects both a core with a history of decline as well as the diverse community of a decidedly mid-size Canadian city.

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