

Altared Places:

**The Re-use of Urban Churches as Loft Living in the Post-Secular and
Post-Industrial City**

by

Nicholas Andrew Lynch

B.A.H., Environmental Studies and Geography, Queen's University, 2003

M.A., University of Toronto, 2005

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Abstract

In recent years, numerous mainline Christian denominations throughout Canada have sold their places of worship in the real estate market in response to changes in religious membership and participation. At the same time a growing demand for creative residential spaces by a group of the new middle class encourages the redevelopment of churches into upscale lofts, a practice connected to but divergent from the post-industrial loft living made popular in cities like New York.

In this thesis I explore how the reuse of churches as lofts represents a unique but conflict-laden terrain of private urban redevelopment. With an empirical focus on Toronto, I draw on the literatures of religious change, heritage policy, and gentrification theory to illustrate how ‘redundant’ worship spaces are appropriated and transformed into private domestic spaces of *commodified* religion and heritage. Rebuilt as ‘cool’ but exclusive places to live, I argue that church lofts are part of a secular *embourgeoisement* of the central city, a process that increasingly remakes the city as a place of capital reinvestment, middle class colonization and social upgrading.

My central method involves semi-structured interviews with individuals from both the supply and demand side of the church loft market. On the supply side, interviews are drawn from faith groups, heritage policy makers, and urban developers. This data provides insight into why and how religious groups divest in their properties; the impacts of heritage policy on the reuse of inner city landscapes; and the practices of developers in producing and selling new terrains of loft living. On the demand side, I interview church loft owners to give testimony to their real estate and lifestyle desires and explore how their decisions in the loft market help produce terrains of exclusivity and gentrification.

Drawing on comparisons to Montréal and London (UK), my findings show that church reuse in Toronto need not solely focus on private loft development alone. Rather, I conclude that varying systems of ownership supported by multiple stakeholders can create a public future for redundant worship spaces, a practice that could provide much needed community and public space in the inner city.

Preface

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Abbreviations

CofE - Church of England

CMA - Census Metropolitan Agglomeration

CCT - The Churches Conservation Trust (England)

DCMS - Department of Culture, Media and Sport (England)

EH - English Heritage

HPS - (Toronto) Heritage Preservation Services

LACAC - Local Architecture Conservation Advisory Committee (Ontario)

MCCCFQ - La Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine du Québec

OHA - The Ontario Heritage Act

OHT - The Ontario Heritage Trust

OMB - Ontario Municipal Board

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The author is responsible for any remaining errors. Any opinions, interpretations and conclusions are the author's and do not necessarily reflect the persons or institutions acknowledged above.

Chapter 1

Church Lofts: Market, Place and Landscape

Standing on the corner of Pape and Danforth Streets, in what is known as Toronto's Greektown, *Carl*¹ and I quietly gaze at the building looming before us. Nestled in among turn-of-the-century two-and three-story Victorian houses sits what was once a centre and symbol of the Presbyterian Church of Canada. Built in 1912 and expanded in 1920, the lofty gothic-revival style Riverdale Presbyterian Church accommodated over one thousand people and was the regional headquarters for the Presbyterian community. *Carl* tells me that, just days after moving in to what it is now, the *Glebe Lofts*, he met an old member of the church on the front steps. "He stood there weeping", *Carl* said. Concerned, *Carl* consoled the man and found out that he was one time, long ago, the organist at the church. "The building just brought back so many memories (for him), he told me, ... as he sat out there crying in the street", *Carl* recounted. Knowing all of this it is hard to look beyond the structure's distinct spiritual past and religious features to see a loft building; "Well isn't that the point?" *Carl* quips. The 20-foot ceilings, historic character, community feel and the fact that it "isn't a claustrophobic box in the sky" are all part of the allure, "part of the package", he tells me.

In many ways the *Glebe Lofts* is unique, a 'one-of-a-kind'. The specific history of the Presbyterian Church, the life of the Riverdale congregation, the original

¹The names of interview participants have been changed to ensure anonymity, see Appendix A.4.

design of the church building by architect J. Wilson Gray, and finally, its conversion in 2004 to 32 custom designed lofts by local architect Bob Mitchell, make it unlike any other housing product on offer in Toronto. The rarity of the property is of paramount importance. In *Carl's* top-floor suite, for instance, the original roof trusses certified with the 1912 Algoma Steel stamp hang like room dividers while offering residents and visitors alike what he calls “an authentic reminder” of the building’s unique past. This loft, both as an everyday living space and as a real estate product, is forever woven into the origins of the building, acting as an explicit narrative of distinction and quality not only for the benefit of its owner-occupiers but also for others who might visit or even, one day, make *Carl* a worthwhile offer of sale.

In other ways though, the *Glebe Lofts* is just another residential redevelopment found throughout numerous post-industrial and globalizing cities. In fact this re-use project fits a wider trend of loft construction that has become fashionable since the early 1970s. In her landmark book *Loft-Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*, Sharon Zukin (1982b) highlighted how new domestic spaces emerged from the abandoned shells of manufacturing and warehousing industries found throughout inner city New York. From what seemed like a Manhattan oddity, loft conversions quickly spread to other cities in North America, Europe and Australia, materializing in places like Chicago and Portland, London and Sydney, but also, Montreal and Toronto (Lloyd, 2006; Podmore, 1998; Shaw, 2006; Zukin, 2010).

Although subtle at first, it was not long until live-work artist studios, edgy cafés and bohemian music venues filled the empty spaces left by dwindling industries. In time, the artist vanguard and their ‘living lofts’ helped to remake the gritty blue-collar image of the inner city (Lloyd, 2006; Zukin, 1982b). Close on the artists’ heels were the returning middle class, a group whose growing affluence was matched only by their developing tastes for alternative urban lifestyles and aesthetics rooted, partly, in the counter-culture ambience of the artist loft-lifestyle. For Zukin, the rise of loft living took off in earnest shortly after the urban middle class had, as a group, effectively appropriated these living spaces as their own. In turn, these decisions helped to transform the culture and economy not only of the local neighbourhoods but also the housing markets on which they depended.

To be sure, church lofts are deeply embedded in the historical development of post-industrial lofts that are now commonplace in Western cities. Yet, this phenomenon also represents a context where changing religious culture and heritage, as opposed to the socio-economic restructuring of industry, intersect with the changing residential and investment demands of the urbanizing new middle class. Instead of appropriating, consuming and domesticating what is now a mainstream industrial aesthetic, certain consumers are seeking new styles and tastes which speak to entirely different histories. By living in an old church, urban housing consumers are making profound comments about the role of culture, heritage and space in the contemporary city. Church loft living confirms and legitimizes changes in the public practices of mainline religions including a revaluation as opposed to an ‘annihilation’ of religion in society, what some scholars call “post-secularism” (Beaumont and Baker, 2011); the growing pressures for the control and regulation of built urban heritage especially in the developing inner city; and an expansion and transformation of demand for inner urban space by a growing class of image conscious urbanites.

In this way, church lofts, like those found in Toronto, offer a critical view of new terrains of urban development within the ever-changing post-industrial *and* post-secular city. These new terrains of urban culture and development are the topic of the following thesis.

1.1 ‘Church Going’: A Landscape of Change

*“Yet stop I did: in fact I often do,
And always end much at a loss like this,
Wondering what to look for; wondering, too,
When churches will fall completely out of use
What we shall turn them into, if we shall keep
A few cathedrals chronically on show,
Their parchment, plate and pyx in locked cases,
And let the rest rent-free to rain and sheep. Shall we avoid them as
unlucky places?”*

- Larkin (1955), ‘Church Going’

The closure and re-use of urban churches is not a new phenomenon. Roaming Britain's countryside in the mid-1950s poet Philip Larkin (1955) penned what is arguably his most popular poem on this very subject. Larkin broods over the fate of churches in post-war England, questioning the future of Christianity and the prospects for empty church buildings - what he calls 'special shells'. In many ways his poem was a prescient warning. By the late 1960s attendance figures for the Church of England, the single largest religious institution in the land, were waning and the need for chapels and churches in the countryside and the cities was on the decline (Gill, 2003). Far from the conditions before the Second World War in which mainstream religious cultures increasingly demanded urban space for spiritual activities, shifts in the spiritual and non-spiritual demands of contemporary societies meant that religious spaces of old were no longer valued in the same ways. Today, as Larkin predicted, countless cathedrals do remain on 'show' as highlighted points on the tourist map, while rural chapels and urban worship-spaces are increasingly abandoned to be, as he puts it, 'let rent-free to rain and sheep' or simply avoided as 'unlucky places'. Yet, many other religious buildings in England, and also in Canada and the United States, have found entirely new uses. Singer-songwriter Arlo Guthrie's 1967 release of *Alice's Restaurant*, a tune that tells the true story of Alice Brock's purchase and renovation of a Massachusetts church to a restaurant, certainly ranks among the more popular tales of church conversion. Guthrie, it seems, was on to something. In the absence of spiritual demand, many worship spaces have been revalued for secular uses, appropriated within a landscape of consumption that values culture and heritage as a form of distinction and capital. So it was that since midway through the twentieth century more and more churches have been re-polished for entirely new uses, some of which draw the ire of local communities and former congregations. Bars and restaurants, retail spaces, climbing and yoga gyms, circus arenas, theatres, artists studios, lofts and apartments, casinos, truck repair shops and even strip-joints, are but some of the re-uses found for abandoned or sold worship spaces (Morisset et al., 2006b).

Many of the new users of the church spaces are drawn to the large floor plans

(especially in what was the nave) and large open window areas. The recent purchase and adaptation of Le Saint-Esprit Church in Québec City by L'École de Cirque de Québec (the Quebec School of Circus, associated with Cirque du Soleil) is but one firm example of secular re-use. In fact, up until the mid-to-late 1970s, a large number of church properties abandoned or sold by religious institutions were taken up for public uses (e.g. community centres, day-care facilities, senior's centres) (Foster, 1983; Matarasso, 1995). In many ways these were compatible transitions, a socially justifiable case of keeping the highly symbolic and heritage-rich buildings in public hands. Since the early 1980s, however, new pressures have mounted for redeveloping churches, especially those in large urban areas, for private uses. Swept up by new energies for inner urban revitalization and the loft-living craze, empty churches were increasingly viewed for their unique aesthetic and functional uses. Although not yet fully accepted by the public at large, a contingent of affluent secular urbanites and specialty developers, many of whom had developed their craft in post-industrial loft conversions, began to notice the potential for churches in the loft market. Over the years, growing acceptance and increasing demands by savvy urbanites have pushed a number of urban churches of various denominations and styles into the realm of loft-living.

With such a diversity of properties, there is no single type of church loft. Rather, the specific, and often unique, architecture of each church produces a staggering array of different exterior designs and loft styles, even within the same building. Exterior architectural styles are often contingent on the religious background of the building. In Anglo Canada and much of England, for example, the most common conversions are of Protestant churches, the dominant religious order, which display eclectic architectural designs (e.g. Revival, neo-Gothic, Romanesque), whereas in Québec the more common Catholic church conversions are typically of the Gothic kind. Regardless of the specific religious history individual units within the properties can range in size from smaller boutique suites (300 to 400 sq. ft.) to much larger apartments akin to the 'artist's quarters' found in early industrial lofts (two to three thousand sq. ft.) (Zukin, 1982b). Their interior design can also vary considerably, ranging from what one Toronto real estate agent describes as 'soft-lofts' to 'hard-lofts'. Soft-lofts often refer to renovation styles that hide the rough details of the structure, creating more standardized (and

less expensive) interiors. In contrast, the hard-loft style exposes and/or highlights most of the unique structural elements of the building (e.g. pillars, brick façades, original windows and lighting, and roofing framework). For the most part, contemporary church lofts are a marriage, or middle ground, of the two design styles - neither completely standardized nor fully raw. Such projects often incorporate modern kitchens and bathrooms, for example, with 'hard' open-concept living- and bedrooms designed to accent the architecture and heritage of the building. Yet instead of the exposed piping or oversized bird-cage style freight elevators common to industrial lofts, these interiors showcase such elements as jewel-toned stained glass windows, or exposed limestone towers and steeples complete with pseudo-battlements. In short, church lofts are most often refined domestic spaces that are designed not only to reflect a very traditional décor but also to experiment with the avant-garde style reminiscent of that found in the living-lofts common to old manufacturing areas.

Although church lofts are traditionally regarded as a sub-genre of the loft phenomenon, the historic nature of the buildings and their specific architectural details further separate them from other loft conversions. In particular, while post-industrial live-work lofts were relatively easily converted to suit the basic requirements of artists, extensive structural rehabilitation was not a priority (Zukin, 1982b). For many urban churches, however, age and neglect have created buildings that require substantial reconstruction. Perhaps more than this, urban churches are also commonly protected under heritage conservation policies that can significantly limit the types of redevelopment options for owners and developers.² For instance, fixing aged roofs and foundations, or constructing large interior walls to compartmentalize loft units designed to fit stringent heritage reconstruction policies are no small tasks (Lynch, 2011). From the outset, therefore, a majority of churches converted to residential uses have not attracted artists and rental tenants but instead investors and private real estate developers who have the necessary financial capital and construction skills to safely and successfully convert the buildings. An important result of this trajectory is that church lofts are commonly positioned as premium real estate in the housing market and thus are routinely built for and mar-

²In Canada, depending on the age and public significance of the properties, the majority of heritage conservation policies are the responsibility of the Provinces and the individual municipalities.

keted to more affluent groups of the new middle class. Moreover, the prioritization of redundant churches for upscale lofts precludes other re-use options while at the same time altering the socio-cultural nature of the building. In the residential conversion process the church shifts from a public resource and community centre (in both the religious and civic sense) to a private space and an item of cultural consumption. Importantly, these shifts in use require not only significant alterations to the physical properties of the building, but just as significantly, involve a transformation of its symbolic elements as well. Such changes, however, are not always well received.

1.2 Landscapes in Conflict

The transformation of religious spaces reflects deep transitions of social relations and cultural values of specific times and places. In the contemporary Western world, many religious institutions are necessarily responding to fluctuating, often waning, spiritual demands by offloading expensive properties in urban real estate markets. Far from a simple venture, however, the new life of an urban church comes with conflicts over differing values and interests of various social groups that compete for their use. Over time, these groups include religious institutions and faith communities, heritage and conservation groups, real estate agents and developers, architects, new-middle class owner-tenants, and policy makers in all levels of government.

In a spatial sense then, church conversions can represent landscapes of conflict where struggles between stakeholders pivot around conditions of *acceptability* and *accessibility* (Zukin, 1982b). Three particular debates are of concern here.

First, conflicts of acceptability arise with debates over the ‘appropriate’ re-use of religious properties (Morisset et al., 2006b). Questions circulate, for instance, around how these properties of interest are to be rehabilitated and re-used, and also, who is to be considered the most appropriate users. In this instance, struggles between faith groups, urban conservationists, and policy makers are most apparent when religious groups sell properties for uses that might conflict with or cause damage to the building’s physical or symbolic infrastructure.

Second, and related to the above, recycling religious structures for uses like

private housing raises questions about the role of conservation in creating and sustaining urban heritage for direct public benefit (Foster, 1983; Martin, 2008; Noppen et al., 1997). Should conservation policies simply enable the protection of the built form no matter what the new use, or should efforts be made to protect the building's civic value and accessibility through innovative approaches like mixing uses (including housing, retail and retaining worship spaces for new or remaining congregations), or even the creation of non-market affordable housing? These questions necessarily raise the issue of 'social capital' that is embodied in redundant churches. Thus retaining local community functions, either for secular or religious purposes, can recreate resources of value for local people and local neighbourhoods (Matarasso, 1995).

Third, concerns remain regarding the impact of private re-uses, such as lofts, on the local neighbourhood. For the most part these debates have considered post-industrial change and loft conversions as new sites or terrains of gentrification (Podmore, 1998; Shaw, 2006; Zukin, 1982a). As previously mentioned, Zukin's (1982b) work has been instrumental in uncovering how the residential conversion of manufacturing spaces in New York have set the stage for what she called "the definitive end of traditional industrial activity" and the formation of middle-class urbanism. Little work, however, has expanded on the different types of conversions that reflect other societal transitions. In this case, post-institutional properties – buildings that were once public infrastructure like churches and schools – offer a relatively new perspective on both the renegotiation of neighbourhood spaces by middle and upper class users; on the revaluation of contemporary religious culture and heritage as elements of new forms of urban consumption; and on novel domestic landscapes that are used to build cultural capital, distinction, and identity.

Throughout this thesis I will explore, in differing levels of detail, these various challenges and conflicts inherent in the re-use of urban churches. This in-depth analysis merges academic literature and research from writers in religion, geography, history and sociology – disciplines that have paid much attention to issues like urban and religious change – with primary research including interviews, site observations and discourse analysis concerning the redevelopment of urban churches, in Canada and elsewhere.

1.3 Theoretical Contexts of the Contemporary City

Church redundancies and adaptive re-use are clearly complex matters. The arguments described above demonstrate that the trajectories of change are highly influenced by transitions in religious cultures and urban development, and of changing attitudes toward heritage and built material culture. These three debates form the theoretical basis of this thesis and are explored individually in specific chapters. However, before they are appropriately explored we must necessarily describe several broader literatures that underpin these changes, namely: post-industrialization and consumer culture. Together this literature speaks to social, cultural and economic conditions which have dramatic consequences for urban communities and represent the broader, even global, contexts with which many religious organizations have had to contend in order to adapt and survive. In fact, unlike most studies of religious change and adaptive re-use that focus on a few specific literatures (e.g. the secularization thesis or the study of gentrification) this thesis seeks to combine the overarching theories to negotiate the complex processes by which community churches have been re-valued as new uses for new users. Of course, this interpretation is not exhaustive. The approach presented here, while attempting to be comprehensive, focuses heavily on the *social* and *cultural* elements of change, forging unique and novel pathways through a phenomenon that involves a wide range of intersecting interests and politics.

1.3.1 The Post-Industrial City

Scholarship in urban studies in the latter part of the twentieth century largely focused on the upheaval of the industrial complex which, before that time, was a defining element of urban society. By the late 1960s significant change in the socio-economic landscape of most advanced capitalist nations was underway. The collapse of industrial production, a decline in manufacturing jobs and a repositioning of state intervention signalled an historic phase of restructuring not only for local and national economies, but also for the social and cultural character of numerous urban regions.

For many writers and critics, especially those associated with Marxian political economy, these dramatic shifts were best explained by the disintegrating Fordist

regime that had characterized much of the post-World War II period (Amin, 1994; Harvey, 1989). Fordism was perfected in the manufacturing processes of the automobile industry in the early twentieth century and had quickly enabled mass production and economies of scale through significant technical innovations like the standardization of manufacturing practices centred on streamlined conveyor-belt assembly. But, perhaps just as important, Fordism was further empowered by complex social and institutional mechanisms designed to *sustain and promote* economic and employment growth. In this case, the Keynesian welfare state and new union movements had emerged in most advanced capitalist nations as a means to couple increasing production with consumer demand, and, offer a level of social stability (e.g. higher wages, longer job tenure, decreased labour disputes, social reproduction) through integrated social and welfare services. Up to the 1970s, the successes of the Fordist era had nourished a seemingly unabated expansion of consumer products and new housing paid for by rapidly rising incomes of diverse, increasingly suburbanized, communities.

Although the exact endpoint of this regime is in dispute, there is general agreement that Fordism had overextended its reach sometime prior to the recession and oil crises in the mid-1970s (Amin, 1994; Harvey, 1989).³ By this time profits from production had considerably stagnated or declined while new global competitors entered the fray with marked reductions in manufacturing and, especially, labour costs. In a short time, many Western nations had necessarily adjusted their economies to meet these changes, focusing less on resource intensive industries (i.e. primary and secondary industrial sectors) and more on consumer and producer services. By the mid 1970s, ‘deindustrialization’, the systematic dismantling and relocation of industrial production, and the roll-back of the welfare state were often forwarded as the best solutions to this phase of restructuring. Many commentators at the time began to quarrel over the defining contours of the new economic era and sociologists like Daniel Bell (1973), but also popular writers like Peter Drucker (1969) and Alvin Toffler (1970), argued for they what they referred to as the ‘post industrial age’ while others preferred ‘post-Fordism’ (Amin, 1994), ‘flexible specialization’ or ‘flexible accumulation’ (Harvey, 1989; Piore and Sabel,

³The most disruptive case of ‘oil shock’ on the Fordist regime was the OPEC price increases and eventual oil embargo of 1973.

1984).

In large part, Bell's (1973) forecast of post-industrialization in *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* rang true for most 'advanced' nations. In this seminal work, Bell foresaw a transition to a society increasingly defined by diverse service and information intense economies, accompanied by an expansion of 'theoretical knowledge' as both a source of cultural value and a source of occupational growth (Kumar, 2005). In other words, specialized knowledge, technical as well as cultural, pertaining to the labour activities of the white-collar groups, represented an increasingly key resource for emerging service based industries.

Importantly, the growth and prioritization of services over traditional industry would not have been nearly as dramatic had it not been for the expansion of new technologies and the technical expertise required to develop and carry them out. According to Bell (1980, 530) computers and telecommunications were part and parcel of this new economy:

My basic premise has been that knowledge and information are becoming the strategic resource and transforming agent of the post-industrial society ... just as the combination of energy, resources and machine technology were the transforming agencies of industrial society.

Digital information technologies incorporated in novel production methods, together with advanced communications and transportation, have meant new forms of flexible organization the world over. As a result, extensive automation and global outsourcing, for example, have become key drivers of contemporary economic growth. But included in this transition have also been shifts in patterns of consumption that now involve more creative and innovative products and services. Reflecting Bell's earlier assessments, Allen Scott (2007, 1466) argues that this form of *cultural capitalism* depends "more and more on intellectual and affective human assets", assets that are tied to specialized and knowledge intensive occupations increasingly found in urban regions. In the contemporary economy, therefore, traditional manufacturing and industrial production, while having not completely disappeared, have been largely displaced for "technology intensive manufacturing; services; fashion-oriented, neo-artisanal production; and cultural products industries" (Scott, 2007; Vinodrai, 2010, 89).

Although Bell's prognosis of post-industrial society primarily described the American context, it materialized, although somewhat later, throughout key Canadian cities and regions. By the late 1970s Canadian industrial production and blue-collar employment were being quickly displaced by a remarkably differentiated service sector characterized by a highly educated and urbanized workforce. From 1976 to 2006, for example, the proportion of Canadians employed in goods-producing industries (e.g. agriculture, forestry, fishing, construction, manufacturing) declined over 11 per cent, while the service-producing sectors (e.g. retail, business, health care, education and public administration) represented over 90 per cent of employment gains (Vinodrai, 2010, 91). Furthermore, as the labour force grew at a rate of only 2 per cent annually over this 32 year period, the advanced service sectors consistently out-performed the national average: management (4.4 per cent), professional (4.1 per cent), medicine and health (3.2 per cent), business and finance (2.3 per cent) and sales and services (2.4 per cent) (Vinodrai, 2010, 94). Within the three largest metropolitan regions (Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver), we see a particular intensification of these national trends. Loss of manufacturing in Toronto (-6.2%) and Montreal (-14.6%) between 2001-6, for instance, has been relatively significant (Hutton, 2010, 112). Meanwhile, in that time the expansion of advanced service sectors has been extensive: in Toronto, for instance, some of the most significant increases were in 'Real Estate', representing a 16% gain; in Montreal 'Health Care and Social Assistance' employment increased by 18.6%; and in Vancouver increases in 'Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services' (17.2%) have been significant (Hutton, 2010, 112-114).

The sustained growth of this highly tertiarized and knowledge based economy has had several consequences. First, central cities have become increasingly important. Contrary to popular commentaries, which argue that place, geography, and 'the local' have been rendered insignificant in contemporary society (c.f. Friedman 2007), cities have become *more* rather than *less* essential to the workings of a globalized economy (Bourne et al., 2011). Recent work by economic geographers, for instance, has rightly argued that contemporary economic activities remain spatially concentrated in cities and urban regions partly resulting from the fact that agglomeration, or 'clustering', facilitates "learning, knowledge flows, co-operation, and competition", which are integral to the needs of flexible service-oriented firms

(Britton, 2007; Wolfe and Gertler, 2004; Vinodrai, 2010, 89). In short, cities and their regions act not only as *support for* but also *incubators of* innovation, learning and knowledge.

Second, hand in hand with the ascendancy of cities in this cultural and knowledge economy is the continued rise of the new middle class. A complex and wide-ranging group, the new middle class was originally associated with the expansion of senior white collar jobs consistent with Bell's post-industrialization thesis. Considered as the 'social correlate' of the new economy, this group has been of particular interest especially since their disposable incomes and consumption-based lifestyles provide stimulus for employment in retail, cultural and entertainment sectors (Barnes et al., 2011, 302). More recently, however, a subgroup of the new middle class, referred to as the 'cultural new class' (Ley, 1996) or the expanded grouping of the 'creative class' (Florida, 2002), has received increasing attention. This distinct group of cultural and social professionals, those providing specialized skills, creativity and 'know-how', are not only key players in the emerging cultural economies (especially the arts, media, education and social services) but they are also agents in the formation of new urban and inner city spaces. As David Ley (1996, 15) puts it "their imagineering of an alternative urbanism to suburbanization has helped shape new inner city environments where they are to some degree both producer and consumer". The redevelopment of the inner city from drab mono-functional spaces to convivial 'live-work-play' places (i.e. reclaimed waterfronts, iconic architecture, themed consumptionscapes) is perhaps the most explicit attempt to capture the attention and dollars of this group. In central areas throughout many 'global' cities like Vancouver, Toronto and London, the shift from creating a favourable climate for *business* towards one favourable to attracting *people* has also meant remaking residential landscapes that supply a highly aestheticized 'live-work-play' philosophy of the 'creatives'. In Yaletown (Vancouver), CityPlace (Toronto), and Clerkenwell (London), for instance, large-scale but mixed-use condominium-towers on reclaimed industrial land offer unique post-industrial elements, proximity to waterfronts and batteries of novel local shops to create distinct 'cool' places to live.

But these 'new' residential places are not the only residential properties on offer. As the de-industrialization of the inner city left many old wharves, warehouses

and factories abandoned, and as waves of artists colonized and domesticated these spaces, groups of the new middle class claimed and adapted these sites for themselves, creating in New York what Sharon Zukin (1982b) called 'Loft Living'. As we shall see, in the last several decades loft living has not only been expanded or better, exported, from New York, the oft-proclaimed epicentre of North-American post-industrialization, but it has also been diversified in the types of buildings re-colonized by savvy urbanites. *Post-institutional* buildings, public properties that once served local communities, like schools and churches, now represent real estate 'hot spots' adapted in a similar way to the re-used post-industrial landscapes of cities across advanced capitalist nations. The centralized locations and renovation possibilities of urban churches, in particular, represent residential options in inner cities and older suburbs where abandoned industries did not exist or where new large-scale condominium towers are simply not viable. But, as will be discussed, the local cultural and economic contexts in which these places are sold, renovated and re-used differ somewhat from the now classic model of loft-living. Instead of changing hands between lower income but culturally rich artists and the professional middle and upper income urbanites, re-used church properties are almost entirely renovated and repackaged by niche developers for a ready-made affluent and older clientele of the new middle class.

It follows then that the remaking of the inner city and the demand for new urban environments by mobile and affluent professionals has resulted in an intensification of gentrification and upgrading of the central city. In Toronto, as in London, England, the residential preferences and investment decisions of the higher-income households has meant a dramatic loss of affordable housing and the displacement of lower-income, previously blue-collar, populations to the impoverished margins of the inner city or the outer suburbs. Much research in past years has uncovered the pathways of gentrification in these cities detailing for the most part a common cycle of middle-class upscaling and renovation of older 'authentic' housing stock in central neighbourhoods (Glass, 1964; Caulfield, 1994). More recent work has updated this picture, showing that new terrains and contexts of gentrification, or new 'geographies of gentrification', are deeply impacting the residential landscapes of these cities (Davidson and Lees, 2005; Hulchanski, 2010; Ley and Lynch, 2012; Slater, 2003). New condominium towers, post-industrial live-work lofts, and

post-institutional niche lofts, all brownfield and greyfield redevelopments, are now part and parcel of the renaissance and *embourgeoisement* of the central city (Ley, 1996).

1.3.2 Consumer Culture

Consumption is a pivotal point of connection between the post-industrial city and the rise of post-modern urbanism. It is hardly possible to understand contemporary (Western) urbanism without acknowledging the role of consumption and the power of the consumer, of understanding the processes by which production and consumption are linked to the concepts of growth and development, to urbanization, and the formation of new lifestyles and (sub)cultures. We no longer reserve the notion of consumption merely for acts of ‘purchasing’, ‘obtaining’ and of ‘using’ goods and services (Clarke, 2003). Complex social and cultural formations like identity, aesthetics and citizenship as well as urban development are partly articulated through the nexus of the culture of consumption. Although detailed discussions of these and other issues pertaining to consumption can be found elsewhere (see Bauman, 2007; Clarke et al., 2003; Featherstone, 2007), it is important here to briefly sketch several key perspectives of contemporary consumer culture in order to show how, in later chapters, it represents a potent influence on the formation of both postmodern and postindustrial attitudes toward religion and the city.

To begin, it is worth stating that consumption is central to the social and cultural life of technologically advanced societies. Commodities – *what* we consume – and the practices of consumption – *how* we consume – are at once complex and powerful. The pervasiveness of consumption cannot be ignored. Consumption, it has been said, has “replaced work as people’s central life interest”, to such a point that scholars now argue at length about a ‘work and spend’ existence, an enveloping ‘consumer attitude’, a ‘lifestyle project’, an ‘intensification of promotional culture’, and rising debt loads (Shove, 2002, 230). The archetypes of corporate consumption, McDonald’s, Disney and Apple, for example, produce a seemingly endless array of commodities and, importantly, *experiences*, that are increasingly engineered to foster ‘desire’, offer choice, and highlight the ‘self’ through limitless configurations and ‘personalizations’. Culture too has long been the focus of

commodity production. Simply put, contemporary cultures (the arts, theatre, music, cinema, architecture, religion, heritage, nationalism, etc.) are now pervasive commodities which are bought, sold and traded in countless urban marketplaces, in popular media, and throughout the ether of virtual markets like global stock-exchanges, shopping websites and online auctions.

With such a diversity of commodities, perhaps now more than ever, identities are forged through processes of selective consumption, an arguably post-modern act which “affects the ways in which people build up, and maintain, a sense of who they are, of who they wish to be” (Bocock, 1993). As a result, it is now commonplace to refer to the West as a ‘consumer society’, characterized by an ever-advancing consumer culture where lifestyles and communities are increasingly structured around the practices of consuming.

In *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, Mike Featherstone (2007) offers a further conceptualization of this concept focusing on three key perspectives. The first concerns consumer culture as an inevitable and intended result of the expansion of capitalist production. In this ‘productivist’ view, commodities, ranging from goods for purchase to the spaces in which the goods are sold, are packaged and branded as desirable *things* for the purposes of capital accumulation. Consumption is considered therefore an *outcome* of the economic system of production in which it takes place “for the simple and obvious reason that, unless products could be sold in return for money, there would be no profits” (Bocock, 1993, 33). A focus on this perspective, couched in the work of writers like Karl Marx, the Frankfurt social theorists, and postmodern Marxist writer Fredric Jameson, for example, places the work of producers at the fore and highlights the creative, if not, deceptive, tactics of marketeers and ‘imagineers’. For Baudrillard (1998, 78) the ‘truth of consumption’ lies in the fact that it is “not a function of enjoyment, but a *function of production* and hence, like all material production, not an individual function, but an *immediately and totally collective one*”. Like Baudrillard, many of those who view commodity culture in this way tend to see it negatively, linking consumption to the process of ‘alienation’ previously described by Marx. Here, the social and material connections between consumer and commodity are said to be blurred (‘fetishized’ in Marxian terms) through new economic valuations of exchange which dislocate ‘authenticity’ and obscure “true need” through the pro-

duction of artificial desires – what some geographers and sociologists have more recently referred to as the processes of *imagineering* and *Disneyfication* (Bryman, 2004; Lyon, 2000; Miller, 2005; Paul, 2004; Sorkin, 1992).

A second perspective focuses on *how* people consume. In particular, research and writing by theorists like Thorstein Veblen (1965), Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and Zygmunt Bauman (2005, 2007) explore what we might consider as the ‘politics of consumption’. Beyond seeing consumers as simple dupes, this perspective explores consumers’ agency, uncovering, for example, what they can “accomplish through consumption”, “how they engage the objects they consume”, and how they can form individual and/or group identities through the products they own and display (Miller, 2005, 146). These accounts consider, therefore, the role of consumer culture in the process of social differentiation, and establishing social status. For Bourdieu (1984) this means that consumption represents a key system and activity for forging and maintaining one’s class identity. An endless array of products are used to create social bonds, badges of distinction and markers of taste or prestige; products whose symbolic values “establish boundaries between some people and build bridges with others” (Featherstone, 2007, 11). Moreover, in this process consumers often take active roles in the creation of their own categories. In this case, consumers are routinely forging and sustaining distinctive subgroups, or ‘subcultures of consumption’, based upon shared commitments to particular products, brands, or consumption activities (Schouten et al., 2005). As we shall see throughout this thesis, the consumption of church lofts represents a distinct subcultural activity, a practice that does not consume ‘mass culture’ but rather one that specific loft owners co-create with loft developers and marketers. These are particular moments of ‘consumption with style’ that maintain unique symbolic expressions and a distinct ethos designed to draw a line between these urban dwellers and *others* (Ley, 1996).

The third and last perspective on consumption concerns *why* people consume, especially related to how consumers derive pleasure or celebrate “dreams and desires within consumer cultural imagery” (Lyon, 2000). Key here is the concept of *lifestyle*, a “nebulous” term used to describe, in a literal sense, ‘the stylization of life’ (Clarke, 2003, 130). Although lifestyle has come to represent many different things, it is perhaps most evident as a powerful and pervasive discourse or theme in

the sale and use of commodities. Whether it be marketing messages in print or TV advertising, or brand identities (from Nike to Disney) commodities are routinely promoted as fitting into a particular niche need for consumers, offering consumers opportunities to build identity while in specific life-stages. Over decades of refinement, consumers' dreams and desires have been shaped by brand images and slogans and marketing texts which cater to one's needs of individual expression, of personal choice, of 'personalisations'. The point made here is that more and more "consumerism itself has become a life" and in this life commodities are central elements used by consumers to enact, perform and exercise dreams and desires in divergent and sometimes unintended ways (Clarke, 2003, 130).

These three perspectives have informed, in varied ways, recent academic work. In geography, as in other disciplines in the social sciences, the concepts of consumption and consumer culture have been central issues for several decades. Following the cultural turn since the 1980s, Jon Goss (2004, 370) explains that an explosion of consumption-based research in geography has moved quickly from an earlier focus on studying retail locations and the form of the retail built environment to include, more recently, complex analyses that trace consumers in entirely new contexts of consumption; contexts which reveal an intricate "entanglement of commerce and culture", of "creativity, aesthetic practices, and the making of meaning". Thus while geographers continue research with more traditional foci, others are exploring the role and impacts of fashion (Dwyer, 2003; Leslie, 2002), food (Domosh, 2003; Valentine, 2002), e-commerce (Currah, 2003; Slater, 2000), home-décor (Leslie and Reimer, 2003), and architecture (Sklair, 2005), just to name a few.

An important contribution of such research, and one that will be explored at length in this thesis, concerns the role of key commodities in the assemblage and expression of post-industrial/post-modern lifestyles and identities. How people in everyday life make sense of specific consumer symbols, how they construct their identities and how they build their new urban realities are central questions. Further, the contention to be developed here is that at the same time as perspectives on religion have been partly reconfigured by an emerging consumerism which increasingly positions religious products as 'lifestyle accessories', new consumer demands for innovative and unique housing in cities like Toronto represent an

important influence on the cultural and aesthetic revaluation of urban churches. As we shall see in the following chapters, the role of consumption and the character of contemporary consumer culture (including the process of marketing and branding culture as a commodity), especially as they are involved in a process to ‘make meaning’ and social status, play a significant role in the re-use of these once sacred places. In short, it is argued that contemporary consumption has altered practices of religious expression especially concerning a re-negotiation of what constitutes sacred and secular commodities, and created pressures for urban redevelopment including the re-valuation of urban culture and heritage as elements of a post-*industrial* lifestyle and aesthetic (Chapters 3 and 4).

1.4 Methodologies

The study of church redundancies and conversions in general, and the specific exploration of the phenomena at the intersections of the post-industrial and post-secular city, is a largely ignored topic. Most research in the social sciences does not connect issues of contemporary gentrification and urban heritage to religious change, and as such the range of methodological approaches to the topic are generally underdeveloped. Along with an extensive literature review, in this thesis I take advantage of a number of sources in order to evaluate the inherent multidimensionality of the issue and extend the boundaries of existing research.

The first methodological approach used in this thesis is the evaluation of quantitative data focusing both on the distribution and strength of religion, and their relationships to gentrification in the inner city. The main sources for this information are the Canadian Censuses. For this data, the most recent census consulted is the 2001 data set as the topic of religion is only compiled every 10 years. This data is also evaluated with earlier census data (primarily 1981) to provide a glimpse of the transitions taking place in the urban context. Other statistical sources include the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, the General Social Survey (GSS), the European Social Survey (ESS) and in-house statistics arranged by individual religious organizations. These data are used to complement the census figures and provide further ‘stage-setting’ information (e.g. church growth, attendance, etc) for later discussion relating to the scope and scale of religious change in the con-

temporary city.

A second methodological approach involves in-depth interviews. This particular methodology is central to the following thesis as it aims to uncover the range of possible interpretations, knowledges and discourses that pertain to both the production and consumption of church conversions. Since little is known about this particular phenomenon, a total of 51 interviews with key informants were conducted to provide the interpretive depth that informs the theory described in Chapters 2-4. The interviews conducted were semi-structured, open-ended and lasted on average 1-2 hours. In total, 41 were completed in Toronto and 10 in London. The interviews were conducted from 2009-2012 (see appendices A.1, A.2, A.3, A.4).

A total of 36 interviewees were on the 'supply' side: 11 individuals were from religious organizations (4 property/financial managers, 1 conference director; 2 architectural advisors, 4 team members of the Church of England Closed Churches Division); 14 interviews were with individuals from public service and non-profit organizations (6 directors of charitable trusts and 8 planning/municipal staff); 11 individuals were from architectural and urban development firms, and real estate and marketing agencies (3 urban developers; 6 architects; 2 real estate agents). The remaining 15 interviewees were from the 'demand' side as all of these individuals were resident-owners of private loft units in a church conversion in the city of Toronto.

The third methodology, textual analysis, is primarily intended as a useful supplement to interview data. Whereas the interviews described above aim to uncover both the decisions of experts in the field and loft owners' various perceptions and experiences of church conversions, textual analysis captures the circulating ideologies and brand identities that are purposefully communicated to legitimize and entice these new forms of cultural consumption – from sacred to secular. The sources for the textual analyses are comprised from two distinct areas: i) marketing and advertising media produced by or for developers and real estate agents; ii) policy materials produced by the planning and heritage departments.

The promotional media associated with the first data set include websites, brochures, presentation centres, industry magazines, and local and national newspapers. The majority of the textual analysis focuses on the various media produced and disseminated by developers and real estate agents that highlight spe-

cific case study sites. However, where possible media from other projects are included to complement the analysis and provide comparisons or differences in marketing strategies and promotional narratives. I have selected the above media options based on availability, ease of access, and the quality of data. Websites and brochures, for example, offer an abundance of intersecting materials and experiences that are relatively easy to capture, including such elements as videos, narratives, images, and simulations. Moreover, industry magazines, like *New Homes Guide* (Canada), *Toronto CondoGuide* (Canada), *Home Magazine* (UK), *Toronto Life Magazine* (Canada), *Time Out London* (UK) and the homes sections of the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* are readily available and provide promotional editorials that are deployed to reinforce brand identities and define niche markets for housing projects.

The policy materials associated with the second discursive sources include planning documents and reports, heritage preservation board meetings and minutes; and church commission policy documentation. These materials may not explicitly pertain to the specific case studies highlighted, but are analyzed to uncover the role of policy practices in the development of church conversions. These materials, like promotional materials, are generally public and can be easily accessed.

Additionally, it is important to note that I do not approach this research as a religious individual, nor is there any implicit or explicit theology in my analysis throughout this thesis. Although I do examine in various ways the historically contingent phenomena of religion and secularization, I do not offer here a theological position on Christianity in general or the various Christian denominations and organizations in particular. Rather this work is positioned as a cultural tool or lens by which to examine the current phenomena of church redundancies and re-use; a peek into a larger cultural framework that helps explain a crucial facet of the (re)use and (re)valorization of urban landscapes.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into three parts. Part 1 “Contexts of Change”, offers the theoretical and historical background essential to explaining the church loft phenomenon. Connected to the meta-theories of post-industrialization and consumer

culture described above I explore three pivotal factors, divided into three chapters, which overlap and interact to produce the conditions necessary for the church loft market. In Chapter 2, I explore the transformations of religion in contemporary Canadian society. Using various statistics, I begin with a brief discussion concerning the growth of ‘churching’ in Canada until the mid-twentieth century. Looking beyond this supposed ‘golden age’, I turn to explore the debates concerning recent changes apparent in religious affiliation and participation both in national and urban contexts. In sum, this wide-ranging empirical account will illustrate that Canadian society and its largest cities are engaged in an uneven and incomplete process of secularization, a process whereby religion is in a state of constant flux as many mainline institutions recede while new religious movements gain ground. As we shall see, this changing state of religiosity, often referred to as post-secularism, has profound effects on the abilities of mainline religious institutions to sustain certain real estate properties especially in large urban markets and thus provides an important supply of redundant churches ripe for re-use.

Chapter 3 explores the role of heritage and urban conservation in the Canadian context. Heritage philosophy and conservation policy in Canada are reviewed here as they play a key role in the regulation of urban space. Additionally, I will focus on the notion of heritage as both economic and cultural *resources* in the production and sustainability of central city development in Canada.

Chapter 4, the last in this section, addresses the process of gentrification. In this case, I consider the changing geographies of gentrification in specific cities and discuss in more detail the role of the new middle class and their production of urban lifestyles as significant factors in the creation of new gentrified landscapes. Although I describe the changing nature of inner urban land markets in general, I place a particular focus on the role of culture and consumption in this process. Lifestyles, aesthetics and the revaluation of historic urban places are key cultural aspects of gentrification that connect to the church loft phenomenon as churches, like industrial properties, are appropriated into the consumer culture of the new middle class.

Taking together the contextual boundaries outlined in Part 1, Part 2 “Altaring Space and Place in Toronto”, examines in depth the adaptive re-use of urban churches as lofts in the city of Toronto. Beginning with Chapter 5, I examine

two important actors who are involved on the supply-side of church lofts – the church and the state. First and foremost, interview data and policy analyses from various religious organizations are explored to provide a glimpse of the difficult decisions made by church administrations and congregations regarding the changing demands of the religious communities and their worship space needs. In particular, I will examine how and why, in the face of current pressures described in Chapter 2, religious institutions have necessarily sought to rationalize key urban properties in the real estate market as a means to recuperate financial losses.

Moving from the church, I continue with an examination of the role of the state. Connecting to Chapter 3, interviews with municipal and provincial civil servants involved in heritage policy will provide specific detail concerning the urban conservation practices in the province of Ontario and in the City of Toronto. Importantly, these actors uphold a regulatory practice of urban conservation that actively enables the recycling of urban churches for new secular uses in the city.

Chapter 6 explores the material and symbolic processes involved in converting church lofts in the real estate market. In this case, interviews with urban developers and architects, and site observations from specific conversion projects are examined to uncover the creative practices involved in the rehabilitation of religious properties. Key insights from the data sources show how the re-use of post-religious space involves rather complex negotiations between developers, religious groups and the material heritage of church properties. Much of the success of church loft projects rests not only with the sensitive evaluation and adaptation of the built form for residential uses, but also a coordinated approach to the reuse of religious icons as key elements enabling post-secular place-making.

Connected to Chapter 6, in Chapter 7 I discuss the practices of promoting and selling the church lofts in the local real estate market. Interview data from developers and real estate agents, and textual analyses of promotional media like sales brochures, project websites, and print media focus on how churches are *imagined* as desirable upscale homes through specific branding discourses. Unlike the marketing tactics used for other housing forms, church lofts are often branded with specific references to religion and heritage. But, as we shall see, these are narrowed discourses intentionally used to commodify religious heritage and create a product identity that is distanced from any deep sense of religiosity.

In the final chapter in this section, Chapter 8, I flesh out the church loft lifestyle in Toronto. Recent conversions like the *Church Lofts* and the *Glebe Lofts*, to name two, are highlighted through ethnographic and participant-resident interviews. These analyses will give testimony of the specific real estate and lifestyle demands made by owner-occupants and explore how their decisions in church loft living help produce a new terrain of gentrification.

Lastly, in Part 3 “Conclusions”, I offer a final review and evaluation of the church lofts phenomenon in the post-secular and post-industrial city. Bringing together the various perspectives detailed in the previous chapters, I will discuss the future of built religious heritage in Toronto. In particular, I offer a brief glimpse of how other cities like Montréal and London (England) have negotiated the reuse of their own religious heritage. Very different path-dependencies based on specific religious histories, urban geographies and state-based interventions demonstrate diverging, and in some ways more appropriate, methods for handling built religious heritage. With these emerging models to which Toronto may aspire, it is clear that the church loft phenomenon is far from a ‘closed case’. Indeed, this concluding chapter thus offers a range of challenges and possibilities for sustaining and cultivating productive urban development, development which is sensitive to Toronto’s cultural and religious urban fabric.

Part I

Contexts of Change

*A shape less recognisable each week,
A purpose more obscure. I wonder who
Will be the last, the very last, to seek
This place for what it was*
- Larkin (1955), "Church Going"

Thanks to Larkin's incorrigible inquisitiveness, a prerequisite of poetic talent no doubt, what might have been a banal visit to an empty church was in fact a much more profound experience. Larkin struggles with the meaning of this place, lost, in part, to an "awkward reverence". Yet, an important moment is captured here as the poet interrupts the present through an evaluation of the future. Indeed, a lasting impression concerns the element of 'change': the transformation of the church, not merely of its aesthetic nature, but more importantly, of its social and cultural meaning.

Like Larkin's 'Church Going', a fundamental aspect of this thesis deals with change. Of course, there is hardly anything new about exploring and interrogating change, indeed, for this is the heart of academic research. A crucial importance, therefore, is in deciding which forms of change to inspect and which ones to leave out - never an easy task. In each chapter of this section I explore what I consider as the most important contexts of change which have converged to help produce the phenomenon of church lofts, namely: religious change, the changing approaches to interpreting and managing heritage, and urban change.

These three broad-ranging topics will take us from such concepts as secularization and the post-secular society, gentrification and adaptive re-use, and urban conservation policy and the process of heritagization. Although these are certainly not the only explanatory factors setting the stage for church lofts, taken together they offer a valuable perspective to understand the phenomenon at hand.

Chapter 2

Religion and the Post-Modern City

The contemporary western city is, by and large, a secular project. To say that the practices of planning institutions, the making of social, cultural or economic policies, or the local articulations of neighbourhood identities generally proceed without direct involvement from religious authorities would hardly be met with significant opposition. For some time now religion as a force in the formation of urban space has been considerably reduced; communities that once relied heavily on the words and ideas of their bishops, priests and their religious institutions have for decades turned to other sources for all types of guidance and order. Religion, it seems, has been increasingly transformed from a central voice to just another opinion in the crowd.

For the contemporary discipline of geography, religion, compared to other issues, has been relatively understudied – if the places in which we live, work and socialize no longer hold any significant connection to the cultural histories, traditions and authorities of religion then why should they matter? This is not to say that geographers are uninterested in such issues. Since David Sopher (1967, vii) mapped religion as a “frontier territory” in the 1960s and with the resurgence in ‘all things religious’ in the aftermath of 9/11, religion has been increasingly taken up by geographers as a worthy field of study. Recent work has bridged some of the gap and has included new critical approaches to religion and geopolitics (Agnew,

2001; Knippenberg, 2006); the construction of identity through religion and everyday practices (Holloway and Valins, 2002); the foundations of religious historical geographies (Brace et al., 2006); and the formation of new Islamic landscapes (Davies and Dwyer, 2008). And, although this recent work has done much to elevate interest of religious geographies in general, contemporary urban geographers have remained relatively quiet about the impacts of changing religious values on the morphology of the city (c.f. Kong, 1990, 1992, 2001).

Crucial to these lacunae is the historical lineage of theories concerning both religious and urban development - two supposed antithetical phenomena. In the classic works by Max Weber (1922) and Marx and Engels (1906) for example, religion was increasingly viewed as a temporary 'condition', a sociological and psychological phenomenon that pervaded pre-urban societies as a means to alleviate the pressures and fears of a pre-modern life or as a socio-political tactic deployed by the powerful elite to retain ideological control over the urbanizing masses. These early diagnoses provided the theoretical subtext for subsequent evaluations of religion in the period of rapid industrialization and urbanization characteristic of modern societies. This was, evidently, a central catalyst of socio-religious change; for the shifting nature of work, family, consumption and the city brought with them profound economic, political and spiritual transitions (Durkheim, 1922; Weber, 1922). The 'intimate encounter' between religion and modernity, as sociologist Roger O'Toole (2000, 35) calls it, underlies a cultural collision that has been re-working notions of identity, heritage and society for some time. For many, this collision has meant the 'death-knell' of religion in western societies with the rise of a now naturalized meta-narrative in contemporary western societies. Consider: the imperatives of modern science questioned theological truth; the differentiation of work and family de-stabilized traditional religious practices; new patterns of consumption led to unconventional spiritual arrangements and the replacement of a spiritual focus by a commodity fetish. Scholars in the social sciences repeatedly conflated modernity with secularization to describe what they saw as the steady decline of religious commitment, the evacuation of the churches and the loss of religious referents in cultural and political life (Berger, 1979; Wilson, 1982; Bruce, 2002a).

The expected decline in religious authority and the discourse of deflated reli-

gious culture has thus pushed religion out of the interest of much urban geographical research. In the post-modern city, religion is often envisioned as merely one among many forces vying for and inflicting change, and, even where religion still retains significant influence, the central emphases remain on such issues as ethnicity, race and class. Notwithstanding the logical and necessary focus of these current research topics, the assumptions that religion is not important or simply ancillary to the everyday lives of western urbanites and the workings of the post-modern city should certainly not be a default position. Rather, while the classic 'secularization theory' has helped explain to some degree the fate of many communities and their religious traditions, especially concerning the uncoupling of church and state and the depopulation of mainline denominations, many point out that this paradigm can no longer explain, for instance, why church attendance rates in cities continue to plunge while declarations of faith remain buoyant; why evangelical Christian denominations have ballooned during a significant shrinkage in traditional denominations; or, why fundamentalisms of all sorts are flourishing all across the world and concentrating in global urban centres. Instead of simply evaporating, religion in various circumstances has been deregulated, reshaped, relocated, re-traditionalized and restructured. The reality therefore is that religion and secularization in Canada, as elsewhere, is enduringly uneven and complex.

In the following chapter, I trace a specific path within the urban geography of religion. My aim is to explore how the current phenomenon of church re-use is partly anchored in the complex issues relating to religious change in the contemporary urban context. As a central argument, I explore how the re-valorization of church properties, described as a transition from a set of sacred places of worship to a set of financial assets for sale to the secular public, is linked to a re-positioning of religion within contemporary society: shifting from a pioneering institution in the production of Canadian identity, community, and urban space, to an enduring yet decentralized cultural resource. In this way, a multitude of church and worship spaces that were once filled with religious congregants in older urban neighbourhoods are, in general, revalued as unique heritage commodities in the real estate market.

In order to make these points I trace the contours of religious change characteristic of modern Canada. In particular, I focus on the Canadian religious landscape

and highlight two distinct periods in Canadian history that demonstrate significant patterns of religious transition: the so-called ‘golden age of faith’ and the apparent period of Canadian ‘disenchantment’. In the case of the former, a variety of statistics are used to explore an era of relative religious vitality, a significant period for organized religion in which the Christian church was a key building block in the social lives of Canadians and their growing communities and cities. In the case of the latter, I explore a period marked by a shift away from the same churches that once guided generations of Canadians. This period of supposed disenchantment is discussed with particular attention to a series of modern conditions that partly reflect the religious transitions that have characterized the modern religious landscape, namely: shifting institutional practice, religious and spiritual diversification, and the phenomenon known as ‘believing without belonging’. My argument, in brief, is that such modern forces have drastically altered the traditional and functional role of religion, representing an instance of the decline in the scope of religious authority and as a stage in the partial re-structuring of the traditional roles of religious organizations in contemporary society (Chaves, 1994; Ostwalt, 2003; Miller, 2005). Moreover, I contend that while such forces do not inherently destroy religion they have the effect of shifting religious authority and tradition away from religious institutions to other elements in society - opening gaps for new forms of religiosity and new types of secular appropriation of religious heritage and cultures. Importantly, these transitions mark a decline in the demand for traditional ecclesiastical resources like conventional places of worship.

2.1 The (Over) Churching of Canada: A Booming Religious Economy (1881-1960)

“People recall happier days. Former publisher John Irwin remembers Sundays in Toronto when he was growing up in the 1940s. At Bloor and Yonge, you could walk down the middle of the street with your eyes shut and not get run over,” he says. “Everyone was in church”, Reginald Bibby, Unknown Gods, (1993, 3)

It is perhaps a foregone conclusion that the Canada of the past was a deeply religious place. The story of its development is largely a story of the successes

and challenges that many religious groups and their leaders had faced in the years from colonization to Confederation and beyond. This is also predominantly a story of Christianity; of distinct patterns of Christian religious practice, the articulations of specific social dimensions of religious experience, the development of Christian institutions, and the role of Christianity in the formation of community life and urban (hi)stories. By the nineteenth century, a distinct Christian legacy was firmly rooted in the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions, and, by that time these two traditions had fully inscribed Christianity as a centre and symbol in the cultural landscape of the nation. In this way, Canada experienced a significant pattern of churching from the early part of that century to the middle of the twentieth, suggesting a period of significant religious vitality and a possible ‘golden age’ in Canadian religion (Grant, 1988; Westfall, 1989).

Defining a ‘golden age of faith’, however, is not without its problems. Criticism of the golden age discourse suggests that societies of the distant past are too often a caricature of a state in religious fervor, an image of a fully sacred society (Neuhaus, 1986). Medieval and Victorian societies, the archetypical examples, are regularly evoked in this mantle and are rhetorically contrasted against some current depressed state of religious activity. Statistics, too, are often misread or misrepresented and used as false claims of religious affiliation and practice, incorrectly portraying a strength in societal devotion. As result, sensitivity is required when defining the past; we need to get it right in order to suggest that, in this case, the religious landscape has undergone significant change.

One point of departure follows the extensive work done by Canadian sociologists and historians like John Webster Grant (1988), Peter Beyer (1997, 2008) and Reginald Bibby (1993, 2000, 2002), among others, whose evaluations of historic developments and national statistics have yielded significant insight into Canadian religious patterns. Peter Beyer (1997, 276), for instance, points out that by the end of the nineteenth century the Canadian population was highly religious, with the majority as regular participants. The data for religious affiliations in Canada from 1842 to 1901 demonstrate the relative strength of the denominations that comprised the nation’s religious landscape (Table 2.1).

In this diversifying Christian mosaic, it is worth noting the growth trends in the smaller denominations like the Methodists, Presbyterian and Baptist groups.

Table 2.1: Religious Affiliation in Canada, 1842-1901 (source: Beyer 1997, 276)

Denomination	Percentage of Total Population					
	1842/1844	1851	1861	1861	1881	1901
Roman Catholic	53.8	50.5	47.1	44.4	41.4	41.5
Anglicans	12.8	14.8	15.0	15.0	13.3	12.9
All Presbyterians	10.9	13.1	13.8	15.3	15.6	15.9
All Methodists	8.3	12.6	15.2	14.2	17.2	17.1
All Baptists	1.7	2.8	3.1	6.4	6.9	5.9
Total of Above	87.5	93.8	94.2	95.3	94.4	93.3
No Affiliation	8.5	2.6	1.3	1.4	2.1	0.9

Such growth in previously marginal Protestantism, in tandem with the more established Anglicanism and Catholicism, was due in large part to the influx of diverse groups of Western European immigrants, many flocking to the growing urban centres throughout Ontario and Quebec but also filtering to newly minted western townships (Westfall, 1989).

These figures demonstrate the dominance of the twin “shadow establishments” of Catholicism and Protestantism throughout the Canadian religious market (Lyon, 2000). Since affiliation hovered at about 90%, and there was an actual decline in ‘no affiliation’, suggesting a prominent switch toward a specific religious commitment, the dominance and vitality of both mainline groups throughout this period are clear.

Such a lively religious culture in this period was likely the result, in part, of a post-Confederation push made by both Protestant and Catholic communities of rural and urban Canada to uphold a landscape of churchgoing as a prominent project in building not simply local articulations of identity but also national ones. Indeed, it was primarily after Confederation that many Christian groups began to exploit the possibilities of cultivating religious communities tied to a sense of nationalism - often expressed either as a unified Canadian identity or one of a distinct French-Canadian nationality.

The expansion of Canadian Protestantism, for example, hit its stride in the decades before the twentieth century and with the formation of the Canadian nation-

state. And, although many Protestant leaders sat idle during the political machinations of 1867, for the Confederation was primarily if not entirely a venture led by politicians and rail promoters, their enthusiastic participation post-confederacy is certainly remarkable (Westfall, 1989; Airhart, 1990). The new Dominion of Canada, popularly evoked in the words of politician and Methodist Leonard Tilley, “he shall have dominion from sea to sea”, became a religious project and creating ‘His Dominion’ became a central task (Westfall, 1989, 4). As Phyllis Airhart (1990, 99) explains, the new nation became an “arena where denominational pluralism was tested”, and many Protestant leaders sought to expand their churches’ influence and message through the “search for national identity”. Pulpit and religious press, she continues, combined to galvanize public support for the nation and was central in articulating the Protestant mission (Airhart, 1990). Through the growth and promotion of numerous Protestant reform movements, voluntary societies and missionary activities, Canada in this era was, as sociologist S.D. Clark (1968, 171) proclaimed, one of the “few countries in the western world in which religion exerted as great an influence on the development of community”.

The Roman Catholic Church, spread across the country but rooted in Quebec, was perhaps less nationalistic in its expression, especially by way of an association with an established sense of federal identity. Catholicism, for the majority of Acadian- and Franco-Canadians, was thus a central symbol of a more local, provincial and ultramontane allegiance. This particular configuration of religious community was increasingly reinforced by the complex institutional networks controlled by the Catholic Church itself and was characterized, first, by the strong local parishes whose ecclesiastical community structure worked to acculturate thousands of rural migrants to Quebec’s booming urban centres (Perin, 1996). Roberto Perin (1996, 203) points out that the highly active parish not only helped these migrants by “cushion(ing) the shock of an alien environment” but also, importantly, they provided a substantial degree of “social and cultural cohesion” and a continued “link with the past”. Outside of the local parish, substantial institutional control was made possible by the role of the Church in public education (including higher education system like the *colleges classiques*); in health care facilities like hospitals, foundling homes, and health care institutes; and in a variety of social services like orphanages, and shelters for sex-workers and unwed mothers (Perin, 1996).

The Catholic Church, by all intents and purposes, was a social and cultural, as much as a religious, focal point for Quebec and its largely Francophone population. The cultural hegemony of Catholicism, reinforced through a deep institutional framework, promoted a strong affiliation both through an official means and the active participation of its thousands of congregants.

With the cultivation of both national and local identities imbued with established religious heritage, it is little wonder that organized religion around the turn of the century was, in the words of Brian Clarke (1996, 262), “growing faster than society itself”. And yet, while the statistics on the rising rates of affiliation and its probable causes are telling, Beyer (1997, 226) points out that they do not reveal much about the proportion of the population that was actually ‘churched’. A more useful source of data that gauges religious involvement are church membership rolls and the numbers of buildings built and owned by the various denominations.

In the case of the former, membership statistics collected during this period offer further evidence of an expanding religious culture. Although demonstrating only a partial picture, Table 2.2 shows the relative trends of growth in membership status across denominations.¹ In the period before WWII slow but steady growth was the norm. This was also, importantly, a period of significant merger for Canada’s main Protestant denominations. By 1925, most of the Presbyterians and Congregationalists and virtually all of the Methodists had amalgamated to form the United Church of Canada and as a result, the four largest religious groups in the nation became three: the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church and the United Church. The United and Anglican membership figures (both growing by over 400,000 members from 1901 to 1941) were consistently influenced by a continuous flow of European immigrants while the figures for Catholic membership (also demonstrating a 42% affiliation in Canada by 1901) demonstrated the relative entrenchment and national domination of this religious group.

Reflecting the changes in membership, Table 2.3 shows that across all major Christian denominations in Ontario and Quebec church and chapel construction was a booming industry. In just 50 years time, between 1851 and 1901, the Protes-

¹ Although useful, membership statistics need to be used with caution. Early figures were derived without any consensus on exactly what constituted ‘membership’ across the varying denominations, and membership surveys were conducted irregularly.

Table 2.2: Select Religious Membership in Canada, 1871-1966 (in thousands) (source: Beyer 1997, 278)

Year	Denomination						
	United	Anglican	Baptist	Pentecostal	Lutheran	Presbyterian	Roman Catholic
1871	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1586
1881	170	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1773
1901	289	368	n/a	n/a	n/a	214	2256
1921	401	690	n/a	n/a	n/a	351	3427
1931	671	794	132	n/a	n/a	181	4047
1941	717	836	134	n/a	n/a	174	4806
1951	834	1096	135	45	121	177	6069
1961	1037	1358	138	60	172	201	8343
1966	1602	1293	137	65	189	200	9160

tant groups increased their places of worship by 4000 buildings, and the Catholics, mainly in Quebec, added almost 900 in total. Seating capacity, according to Beyer (1997), was, as would be expected with such a number of churches, in ample supply. According to the 1901 Census of Canada, the nation's churches had space for 3,842,332 congregants in a time when the total population was 5,371,315. Assuming that churches held an average of two services a week, this combined to almost eight million spaces for the country's faithful, well above its total population (Beyer, 1997; Bibby, 2002). Crude attendance estimates for Toronto in 1882 and 1896, based upon surveys conducted by a local newspaper, showed occupancy rates of 78% and 57% respectively (Beyer, 1997, 227).²

By this time, the very nature of congregational worship had also changed and the aesthetic quality of the religious experience, which was for Protestant groups typically of little or less concern, became a priority. According to Clarke (1996, 273), "richly carpeted front platforms and pulpits, tall stained glass windows, walls paneled with well-oiled wood, vaulted ceilings decorated with tinted paper and elegant chandeliers", and exteriors made of elaborate stone were the new order of the day, creating both a "dignified and imposing setting for worship". Architectural changes also often included a 'spectacle'-style construction highlighting organs, choirs, and clear views to the pulpit.³

Such imposing churches cast a statement from within and without, representing, as Westfall (1989) eloquently put it, "sermons in stone". Acting as physical symbols of religious and social ideology, these new structures helped frame emerging urban landscapes. As control over the symbolic space of the city remained almost entirely in the hands of Christian groups their spires inevitably dominated the early Canadian skyline (Figure 2.1). For many groups these were conspicuous displays of wealth and substance, an expression of the "public status of the particular denomination as well as the social standing of the individual church members" (Clarke, 1996, 274).

²More systematic attendance figures from this period do not exist. The first known Canadian survey was conducted in 1945, and as such we must rely on other data sets in order to complete the picture of nineteenth century religiosity in Canada

³Anglican churches in particular reference this change in architectural style (see Grant, 1998). In many cases, wrapping galleries were introduced to envelope the nave and give a central, stage-like, presence to the pulpit.

Table 2.3: Number of Churches Per Denominational Group in Ontario and Quebec, 1851-1901 (source: Beyer 1997, 277)

Denomination	1851	1871	1901	% Church Increase	% Affiliate Increase
Roman Catholic	511	903	1398	173.6	99.0
Anglicans	344	687	1179	242.7	67.4
All Presbyterians	344	791	1268	268.6	125.3
All Methodists	592	2055	2441	313.7	209.6
All Baptists	140	411	490	250.0	150.1
All Groups	2137	5164	7569	254.7	105.1



Figure 2.1: Protestant Architecture in Toronto and Hamilton (from left to right: St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Hamilton, built circa 1857; St. George's on the Hill Anglican Church, Toronto, built circa 1844) (author's photos: Sept, 2009)

Of course, by the late nineteenth century many new worship spaces were also built on vacant farmlands on the peripheries of cities like Toronto and Montreal. Designed to serve expanding populations of industrial workers and their families filling new residential developments and the proto-suburbs, most of these early chapels were modest in their trappings (Lynch, 2011). However, like the landmark churches closer to the urban core, many of these outlying buildings were eventually renovated to suit both the functional and symbolic needs of the ballooning denominations.

For the Catholic communities of Anglo-Canada, historical development and expansion in Toronto, for example, was heavily dependent on the arrival of working-class Irish immigrants. Unlike the Protestants' ability to tap into the relatively af-

fluent networks of fellow congregants and benefactors, financial support for many early Catholic groups rested solely on congregational donations of the working poor. The early Catholic churches, therefore, were often necessarily unassuming, ‘unobtrusive’ and ‘plain’ structures (Clarke, 1996). By the mid-1800s, however, as Catholic parishes expanded generously in urban centres, new ornate Gothic and Romanesque architectural styles were the order of the day, emphasizing, above all, an ornate visual field to the religious experience. According to Clarke (1996, 276)

the more ‘churchly’ styles of new Catholic architecture furnished the appropriate setting for the elaborate ceremonies that were to emerge as hallmarks of the new Catholic piety. Churches were transformed into houses of God,... the Catholics commissioned not only stained-glass windows and massive paintings, but statues, [c]andelabra and ornamental gas-jet lighting..., altar pieces became more elaborate and imposing.

The Protestant and Catholic churches, in their own ways, were thus deeply symbolic not simply as religious markers but also as distinct objects of civic pride put on to display local community prosperity and impart both a social and symbolic capital to their users and communities (Figure 2.2). Moreover, these structures became anchor-points for the growth of communities, parishes and the many generations of urban Christians to follow. As result, the prosperity of Christian religious culture gained ground at the turn of the century and by the end of WWII, religion in Canada had developed considerable momentum. In fact, not long after 1945, as Canadian historian John Webster Grant (1988, 160) remarked, there was “a general boom in all things religious”. Several statistics during this period illustrate this upsurge. Membership numbers from 1951 to 1961 show growth in all denominations and the Anglicans and the United Church led the way with growth over 25% each; while even the Presbyterians, who had seen dramatic decline in the previous 30 years following partial merger into the United Church in the 1920s, enjoyed modest growth (Table 2.4). Weekly service attendance was also strong, so that by the time the first Gallup Poll was conducted in 1945, over 60% of the population was said to have attended a church service on nearly a weekly basis (Bibby, 2002, 11). By 1957, the majority of Canadians still maintained this practice – with the



Figure 2.2: St. Michael's Cathedral, Toronto, built circa 1845 (photo: Robb Gilbert, April 2010)

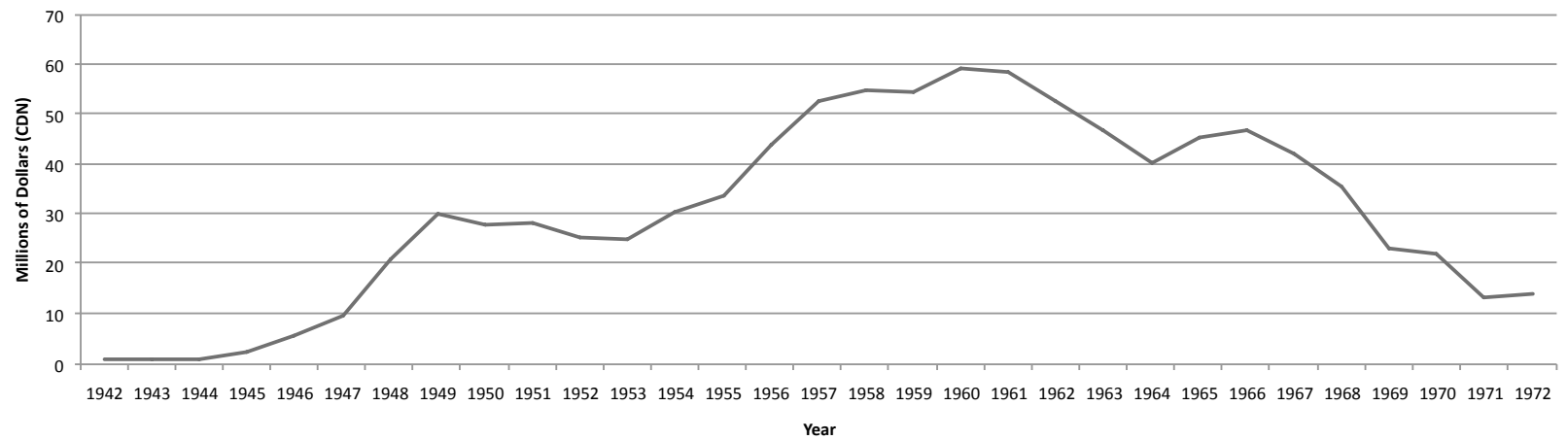
devout Roman Catholics attending more than 80% and the Protestants (including the more liberal mainline denominations) maintaining attendance rates over 30% (Table 2.5).

The surge of religious practice in post-war Canada was not entirely expected. Although a good number of pundits foresaw a bright future due to both an anticipated rise of economic proficiency and standards of living, and, the expected return of war-weary soldiers and their families, many others were anxious of a repeat depression and disenchantment that gripped the nation in the 1920s and 1930s following the First World War (Stackhouse, 1990). By 1945, however, the resulting religious landscape was much more vibrant than anticipated and the swelling numbers of affiliates and the new demands for church spaces pressured virtually every religious group to expand and construct new facilities. By the early 1950s, the Anglicans and Roman Catholics, for example, had increased their spending on worship spaces by almost threefold and continued to spend conspicuously on new construction up to the beginning of the 1960s (Figure 2.3). Numerous parish committees, diocesan stewards, and eager congregant volunteers began feverishly exploring feasible building sites, consulting architects, and contracting developers (Grant, 1998). Renovations of all kinds became a preoccupation for many post-depression churches that had been left to deteriorate from lack of funding, while for the otherwise functional churches, worship spaces could no longer accommodate the range of activities in demand. As a result, expanded sanctuaries and new, often ambitious, additions to existing facilities came in the form of large classrooms, dining halls, gymnasias, green space and community centres.

It is important to note that new churches and chapels were not only built in rising urban centres. In particular, the surprising expansion of the post-war suburb played a large part in the post-war religious boom. Indeed the modern suburb, released from the exclusive grip of the upper classes, became an economic and social reality for a growing segment of the affluent working and middle class groups. Romantically portrayed as a 'refuge' from the decaying city, the suburbs came to embody a sense of domesticity and community increasingly sought after by many middle class families; families seeking what was to become a conservative Canadian dream and a dream that often involved reveries of a religious kind. Church construction in the new suburbs or previously overlooked subdivisions was big

Table 2.4: Select Protestant Membership in Canada, 1951-1991 (Number of Members (in 1,000s), including children, and Members as % of Total Population (members exclusive of children in brackets)) (source: Beyer 1997, 282)

Denomination	1951	1961	1981	1991
United	1011 (834)	1273 (1037)	1018 (900)	888 (786)
% membership/population	7.2%	7.0%	4.2%	3.3%
Presbyterian	205 (177)	273 (201)	182 (164)	174 (157)
% membership/population	1.5%	1.3%	0.8%	0.6%
Anglican	1096	1358	915	848
% membership/population	7.8%	7.4%	3.8%	3.1%
Baptist	162 (135)	168 (138)	242 (212)	249 (220)
% membership/population	1.2%	0.9%	1.0%	0.9%
Lutheran	142 (121)	208 (172)	242 (219)	229 (208)
% membership/population	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%	0.8%
National Estimates (includes Roman Catholic)				
% membership/population	56%	57%	35%	27%



* Religious properties include all dioceses of the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, and some parishes of the United Church. The grossing variable for the United Church sample is its membership, as indicated in its annual reports. New construction by other denominations is placed in net additions. The coverage for the various denominations could be low, to the extent that new construction is not covered by building permits. For 1942 to 1946, the 1947 estimate was projected back according to an index based on church construction as reported in the construction censuses.

Source: for 1942 to 1960, Historical Statistics of Canada (Second Edition); for 1961 to 1976, CANSIM Matrix Nos. 001218, 001222.

Figure 2.3: The Construction Cost for New Religious Properties in Canada between 1942-1972

Table 2.5: Select Religious Membership in Canada, 1957-1990 (source: Bibby 2002)

Denomination	Percentage of Total Population		
	1957	1975	1990
National	53	31	24
Roman Catholic	83	45	33
Outside Quebec	75	48	37
Quebec	88	42	28
Protestant	38	27	22
Mainline	35	23	14
Conservative	51	41	49
Other Faiths	35	17	12

business; between 1945 and 1966, for example, the United Church alone had built 1500 churches and some 600 manses to cater to the swelling numbers of followers living outside the city (Stackhouse, 1990). Moreover, in many new suburban developments, centrally located churches gave the expanding community not simply close proximity to worship spaces but also importantly represented a material symbol connecting their renewed faith with the search for privacy, progress and modernity.

Such geographic and class-based dimensions of the religious boom, however, meant that a majority of churches met a distinct challenge in both the smaller rural townships and the declining inner city. As Grant (1988, 162) suggests, whereas the newly planted churches “consolidated [their] position among ... members of the middle class... [they] failed to halt the steady erosion of its appeal to organized labour and the dispossessed”. Certainly, this period of religious prosperity had its limits. An acceptance and participation in organized religion *en masse* was not the reality, and in numerous cases new church pews were filled by the emptying of others. Clearly, however, a renewed interest in the Christian faith and in churchgoing was a rising trend. For John Stackhouse (1990, 220) the seriousness with which the majority of Canadians took to their religious practice was primarily related to a post-war desire to “get back to normal” and going to church, he argues, was just “a normal part of the overall conservatism” of the nation in that era. Similarly, Grant

(1988, 162) refers to this as a clear sign of nostalgia, a wish to “rejoin mainstream Canadian life”. As he puts it, “they wanted to forget the interruptions of their careers...make up for lost years”, and return to the tradition and “heritage they have known”. Crucially, religion, as an institutionalized practice, and the church, as the symbolic and material ground for both religion and community (local and national), were part and parcel of this society-wide urge to restore a sense of ‘normalcy’. Sunday schools too, played a large part in this trend. Across mainline denominations increases in Sunday school attendance ballooned in response to the baby boom; the Presbyterian Church of Canada (1946, 1966), for example, estimated that its Sunday School enrollment went from approximately 72,337 in 1945 to 111,874 by 1960. Re-establishing links with religious traditions and re-claiming an active Canadian citizenship, it seems, certainly involved bringing children into the fold, not simply as weekly congregants but more importantly as students of religion and disciples of a Canadian Christian heritage. For their part, the parents of Sunday school pupils were flocking to newly established church groups of all kinds. Men’s and women’s groups, as Stackhouse (1990, 201) explains, expanded; and men’s church groups in particular came to rival the traditionally popular social clubs like the Lions and Kiwanis. Likewise, bible study groups and service projects also gained popular status offering other important educational and socializing outlets.

While groups like these represented legitimate means to reconnect with Christianity for its own purpose or as a means to alleviate a post-war nostalgia, according to Grant (1988, 162-163) the expanding number of active ‘souls’ across Canada was also driven by a substantial sense of anxiety, what he calls “one of the most pervasive characteristics of the time”. Together, rising fears over the Cold War, the possibilities of atomic threats and the need for many to meet the social expectations of the day certainly played a considerable part. For the church, however, Grant (1988, 163) argues that anxieties aired to priests and ministers were of the more personal kind: couples worried about their marriages after the war; men traumatized by the past depression feared for their jobs; and, many more sought advice from the church concerning ways to consolidate their “material security”, “achieve personal stability” or solidify their “position in the community”.

Other reasons for the boom in Canadian churchgoing in this era were not neces-

sarily related to the specific efforts of the Christian churches as religious or welfare service providers. One reason, in particular, concerns the largely communitarian role of local churches. That is, churches and chapels across the nation were often the main, if not the only, centres of community life. In fact, in the wake of the rapid metropolitanization that reconfigured Canadian society after the war, new demands for community places and social hubs were quickly taken up by many of the established inner-urban and rural churches. Whether or not individuals from the various parishes were indeed believers or simply seeking to express some sort of collective nostalgia, or looking for refuge from personal anxieties, the church presented a considerable community space often offering an array of opportunities for sports and leisure, social events, or sites for community debate above and beyond those already present in more secular places like city- or town-halls. The church in this instance was a formative social institution enticing and retaining some members and affiliates not based on its role as a spiritual resource *per se* but as a function of its ability to provide for the social and intellectual life of the community.

2.2 Age of Decline: Canada's 'Leaky Religious Roof'

By the 1960s, the supposed golden years of Canadian religiosity had seemingly ended. The post-war prosperity that marked Canada's religious landscape was not limitless. Although Canadian conservatism, the suburban explosion and the nostalgic traditionalism of the 1940s and 1950s was certainly a potent mixture in redefining Canadian ways of life, in the following decades the nation's social and cultural canopy was jolted in new and uncertain directions. Religion, like other established institutions, was not immune to myriad advancing and converging changes: an urban and industrial boom, an entrenchment of suburban values and lifestyles in Canadian culture, heightened consumerism, and dramatic shifts of the immigration mosaic. By the mid-1960s the churches that once laid claim to guiding the vast majority of Canadians' spiritual and social lives were in recession; according to Bibby (2002, 12) "the Canadian religious roof had developed a noticeable leak". Reviewing attendance and memberships statistics of the time, Bibby (2002, 12) argues that the "ominous hole in the religious roof" went, rather remarkably, unnoticed by the religious groups whose livelihoods depended on a steady population of

congregants. Depending on how one chooses to look at it, the origins of a systematic crawl away from the churches was already in view by the mid-to-late 1950s and confusion over numbers and proportions continually distorted the approaching reality. According to census figures in 1951 and 1961, in terms of absolute numbers, the mainline churches seemed to be healthy. Between these years the total number of affiliates that attended services on a weekly basis increased from 3.4 million to 3.8 million. However, looked at in terms of growth, the Canadian population increased from about 8 million to 10 million in the same time period and no religious group increased its proportional share of the population. More than this, after decades of expansion in the nation's Sunday schools, a crucial tool in the long-term viability of congregations, many churches began reporting dramatic drops in attendance. Likewise, larger numbers of clergy also began abandoning churches in search of better prospects, and financial resources (from congregational support and public fundraising) were increasingly difficult to raise.

By the mid-1970s the picture of change was coming sharply into focus. National Gallup polls summarized some of these conditions: whereas 61% of Canadians in 1956 reported attendance at a religious service in the previous week, only 41% did so in 1975; those claiming to attend religious services on a weekly basis dropped to 27% among Protestants and 45% among Roman Catholics; and, mainline Protestant (Anglican, United, Lutheran and Presbyterian) membership statistics demonstrated considerable declines "for perhaps the first time in Canadian history" (Bibby, 2002, 12).

For the many academics and journalists who were comfortably attuned to the secularization story already told in Britain and much of Western Europe, the limits of religion, and Christianity in particular, had finally materialized in Canada. For Rouleau (1977) and Grant (1988), among others, the late 1960s and early 1970s marked the end of the 'unofficial establishment of Christianity'. According to Grant (1988, 241) Canadian Christianity had become "little more than a memory (as) the life of the nation proceeds almost as if [the churches] did not exist". Even south of the border, the widely popular, if not notorious, 'Is God is Dead?' headlines that ran in the late 1960s signalled, at the very least, the beginning stages of public concern in the United States over the fate of faith in an emerging post-

modern era.⁴ Concerns in the popular media hinged upon renewing the relevance of God and religion in the face of a secularizing society; of making sense of how modern science, individualism and relativism have altered people's daily lives and relationships to religion and spirituality. Of course, religion in America, unlike Western Europe, has been marked by a resurgence of Christian faith mostly attributable to the influences of Latin American immigrants and a rise of right-wing religious politics. American Catholicism and conservative Protestantism have remained, for the large part, relatively healthy even as media sources rehash the 'God is Dead' debates.

In Canada, however, we sit somewhere between the Americans and the British; somewhere between a state of *de-churching*, *un-churching* and *re-churching*. I write 'somewhere' because the Canadian religious landscape is by no means a fully mapped terrain, and perhaps, neither can it be. While the secularization thesis certainly helps us understand how certain forms of religious organization have been displaced from a central position in Canadian society, it does not account for other forms of religious resilience, or new and growing demands for religious services by Canada's recent immigrants. Thus, while we have an abundance of secularist accounts in the national media declaring the imminent extinction of Canadian mainline religion (see Brean, 2006; Valpy, 2006, 2008; Valpy and Friesen, 2010), we also have an emerging, although somewhat minority, literature with claims of "solid stability" and "remnant resilience" (Bibby, 2002; Todd, 2009). Still others argue today that we are in a *post-Christian*, *post-secular*, or *post-churched* period - a new terrain of religious practice and involvement that is entirely different than the traditions and cultures that have been foundational to Canadian ways of life for generations (Bloom, 1992; Gilbert, 1980; Houtman and Aupers, 2007; Lyon, 2000). No matter what *era* we are actually in, one thing is for certain: contemporary religion, and Christianity in particular, is a constantly shifting ground where religious practices, values and traditions are moving in often uncertain directions just as the culture and composition of the nation consistently takes new shape.

In the following section therefore I explore several statistical and demographic trends which have emerged since the 1960s and present a remarkable shift in the

⁴In 2008, the *Los Angeles Times* named the *Times Magazine* 1966 "Is God Dead?" issue among the "10 magazine covers that shook the world".

nature of religion. This shift has not only helped to produce a ‘religious economy’ characterized by increasing pressures on mainline religious organizations to maintain a largely public presence in cities but has also created the contexts for a steady supply of redundant urban churches for new uses. In particular, I highlight first, trends in ‘affiliation’ and ‘attendance’ – key indicators of ‘public’ religion, belonging and participation in organized religious practice. By and large these indicators point toward wavering trends of affiliation and declining trends in attendance, suggesting both that many Canadians are ‘believing without belonging’ and are increasingly practicing religion in *private* as opposed to more traditional public spaces of worship. Second, I focus on one rapidly expanding category described as ‘no religious affiliation’ in the censuses. The implications of growth in this category result in dramatic shifts of demand and supply for traditional worship places, leading in some cases to declines in ministerial growth, congregational amalgamations, and church closures. Moving in a different direction, I highlight, third, religious pluralism and cultural diversity as key drivers of religious change in Canada and its major urban centres. In an era of multiculturalism, I argue, the emergence of new immigrant cultures and the fragmentation of orthodox Christianity have resulted in both a potent challenge to the hegemony of traditional Christian cultures and the opening of new spaces for religious practice and worship.

2.2.1 Declining Religiosity: Examining Changing Religious Affiliation and Attendance

As in the previous section statistics of affiliation and attendance collected in the Canadian censuses provide a valuable resource for evaluating the state of religiosity throughout Canada. Additionally, the General Social Survey (GSS) and the Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS) also provide a wealth of information on current trends in religious belief and practice. Together these data-sets present a complex reality of religious change with regards to Christianity in Canada.

Beginning with affiliation, the trend since the 1960s has been one of slow but fluctuating decline. In particular, the total share of religious affiliates in the major Christian groups is down from previous census years, showing a loss of almost 30% over a one hundred year period (Table 2.6). The majority of this change has occurred in the mainline Protestant denominations, declining precipitously from

the 1961 census to the latest 2001 census report. Looking more closely at the last census decade (1991 to 2001), this group took a relatively deep blow in total number of affiliates, reporting a more than 8% drop in affiliation (Table 2.7). A detailed look at the transitions in Protestant membership between 1991 and 2001 (Table 2.8) shows a clear decline in what can be considered the groups associated with Canada's established Protestant culture: the Presbyterians (-35.6%), Uniteds (-8.2%), Anglicans (-7.0%) and Lutheran (-4.7%). Conversely, growth in the Baptist Church (+10%) and Evangelical Church (+48%), among other key groups, represent 'hotspots' in religious conservatism. Meanwhile, the Roman Catholics, the largest single denomination in Canada, has, unlike the Protestants, generally held its ground - reporting an affiliation rate of almost 44% and a positive growth rate of over 4% in the period reported.

When religious affiliation is expressed as a percentage of the population, we get a general picture of declining growth. Specifically we see a loss of about 8.3% 'market share' in ten years, or about 0.8% decline in religious affiliation per year. Importantly, while this loss may not seem considerable in the short-term, it is certainly of concern over the long term for some of the nation's largest religious organizations. Discussed in more detail below, it is important to note briefly that growth in the category of 'no religion' has been a remarkable trend over the past hundred years. By 2001 over 16% of Canadians claimed they had 'no religious' affiliation - a statistic that has been consistently growing in each census period and which has demonstrated a 44% rate of growth from 1991-2001. Like affiliation, attendance figures among many of the Canadian churches are also characterized by considerable fluctuations but marked by a general trend of decline. As stated above, attendance has been a well-monitored metric of religiosity throughout the years and routinely documented in the censuses and the General Social Surveys, and by various polling agencies like Ipsos Reid and Gallup. Most notably, recent statistics from the 2005 GSS suggest that regular attendance at religious services has declined in the past 20 years (Figure 2.4). In particular, only 21% of Canadians aged 15 and older reported attendance at a religious service at least once a week in 2005, down from over 30% in 1985. More than this, the proportion of Canadians reporting that they never attended religious services in the previous year increased in the 20 year period, from 21.5% to 32.8%. Similarly, shifting the 'frequency

Table 2.6: Changing Christian Religious Affiliation in Canada, 1901-2001

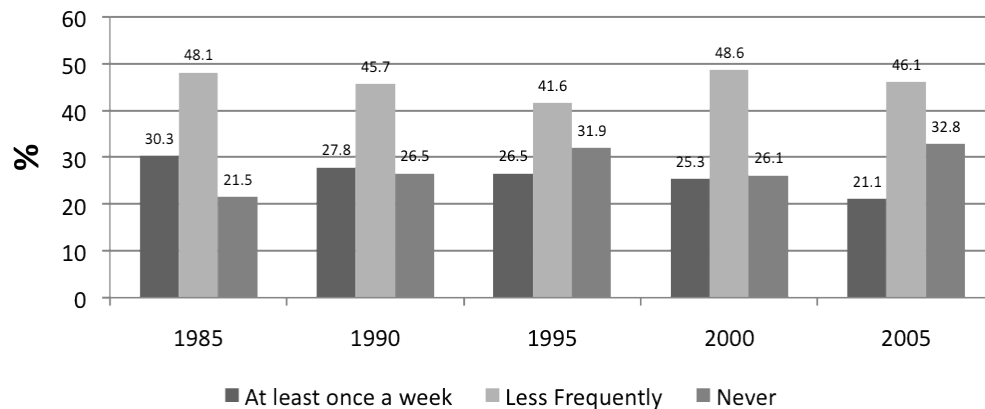
Denomination	Percentage of Total Population							
	1901	1921	1941	1951	1961	1981	1991	2001
Roman Catholic	41.5	38.6	43.4	44.7	46.7	47.3	45.7	43.5
Anglicans	12.9	16.0	15.2	14.7	13.2	10.1	8.1	6.8
Presbyterians	15.9	16.0	7.2	5.6	4.5	3.4	2.4	1.4
Methodists/United	17.1	13.2	19.2	20.5	20.1	15.6	11.5	9.7
Baptists	5.9	4.8	4.2	3.7	3.3	2.9	2.5	2.5
Lutheran	1.7	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.6	2.9	2.4	2.0
Pentecostal	n/a	0.1	0.5	0.7	0.8	1.4	1.6	1.2
Total of Above	95.0	92.0	93.1	93.1	92.2	83.6	74.2	67.2
No Affiliation	0.9	0.5	0.3	n/a	n/a	7.4	12.5	16.5

Table 2.7: Changing Religious Affiliation in Canada, 1991-2001

	Percentage of Total Population				
	1991	% of Population	2001	% of Population	% of Growth 1991-2001
Total Canadian Population	26,994,040	-	29,639,035	-	+9.8
Catholic	12,335,255	45.7	12,921,285	43.5	+4.8
Protestant	9,427,675	35	8,654,845	29.2	-8.2
Eastern Orthodox	387,390	1.4	495,245	1.7	+27.8
Christian n.i.e	353,040	1.3	780,450	2.6	+121.1

Table 2.8: Total Numbers and Growth of Select Protestant Groups in Canada between 1991-2001 (source: Canada Census, 2001)

Groups	Membership 1991	Membership 2001	% Growth 1991-2001
Presbyterian	636,295	409,830	-35.6
Salvation Army	112,345	87,790	-21.9
Pentecostal	436,435	369,475	-15.3
Christian Reformed Church	84,685	76,665	-9.5
United Church	3,093,120	2,839,125	-8.2
Jehovah's Witness	168,370	154,750	-8.1
Mennonite	207,970	191,470	-7.9
Anglican	2,188,110	2,035,500	-7.0
Lutheran	636,210	606,595	-4.7
Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints	93,890	101,805	8.4
Baptist	663,360	729,475	10
Christian and Missionary Alliance	59,235	66,285	11.9
Adventist	52,360	62,880	20
Non-Denominational	32,005	40,545	26.7
Evangelical Missionary Church (Methodist)	44,935	66,705	48.5



*The category 'less frequently' includes: at least once a month, a few times a year and at least once a year

Figure 2.4: Frequency of Religious Attendance in Canada, 1985-2005
(source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005; Lindsay 2008)

of attendance' metric to a monthly scale still demonstrates declining attendance, although less significantly: in the 1989 to 1993 period, 36% of Canadian adults reported 'at least' monthly attendance, while only 32% did so between 1999 to 2001 (Table 2.9). Furthermore, in those same periods, the vast majority of the large Census Metropolitan Agglomerations (CMAs) throughout Canada reported declines in monthly attendance rates, with Montreal leading the way. Conversely, two of the three largest CMAs, Toronto and Vancouver, reported slight increases in attendance rates. Although discussed further below, it is worth mentioning here that the growth of attendance rates in these cities is inherently connected to their positions as immigrant destinations, otherwise called *gateway cities* (Ley and Murphy, 2000). For Vancouver and Toronto, large numbers of recent immigrants from parts of Asia and Africa, for instance, have raised religious attendance rates as public religious practices are higher among individuals born outside of Canada (Clark, 2003) (Table 2.9).

Together, these two key patterns of religiosity, affiliation and attendance, point to a shifting trend in religious practices. In short, a *slowly* declining religious affiliation, especially in mainline Protestantism, is paired with a more rapidly declining rate of attendance for a large number of groups. At quick glance therefore it would

Table 2.9: Monthly Religious Attendance Rates among Select Canadian CMAs, from 1989-2001 (source: Statistics Canada, Ethnic Diversity Study, 2002; Clark and Schellenberg 2006)

CMA	Religious Attendance (at least once per month)		
	Average 1989-1993	Average 1999-2001	Difference
Canada	36	32	-5
Quebec	37	21	-15
Montreal	29	21	-8
Ottawa-Hull	35	28	-7
Halifax	37	31	-6
Saskatoon	41	37	-4
Regina	35	33	-2
Edmonton	31	30	-1
Winnipeg	34	34	0
Victoria	20	20	1
Calgary	28	29	1
Toronto	37	38	2
Vancouver	24	28	4

seem a rather clear picture of Canadian religious decline *writ large*. However, while these trends certainly point toward a waning significance in orthodox Christianity across Canada, they do not tell the whole story. Many Canadians are still engaging in religion and Christianity, albeit, in new forms and in new ways. The following comment from a respondent in Toronto sums up the sentiment: “Sure, I believe in God and, yeah, I’m a Christian. But, the idea of going to an actual church just isn’t for me” (Interview, *Carl*, 2009). *Believing* and *belonging*, in the traditional sense, are thus not mutually exclusive as a growing number of Canadian Christians have expressed that formal and traditional worship spaces are no longer mandatory aspects for their continued faith. This case of believing *without* belonging, however, is not a new concept. In the early 1990s, sociologist Grace Davie (1994, 4) traced a similar trend in British Christianity through an examination of two separate variables of religiosity that appeared to be shifting in opposing directions: the first dealing with “feelings, experiences...the more numinous aspects of religious belief”; the second dealing with “measures of religious orthodoxy, ritual participation and institutional attachment”. As a short-hand, *believing without belonging* refers to an observable imbalance between these two metrics - with belief in religion growing, or at the very least remaining relatively stable, while levels of public or institutional religious practice show signs of decline. The average Briton, as the research shows, persists in believing in a God, but as Davie (1994, 2) puts it, “see(s) no need to participate with even minimal regularity in their religious institutions”.

In many ways, the Canadian religious landscape is following Britain’s trend of ‘believing without belonging’ as affiliation and attendance rates continue to drop while levels of belief remain relatively buoyant. In particular, statistics from the Project Canada Surveys and the EDS demonstrate several key findings. First, according to Reginald Bibby (2002, 140) and data from his Project Canada Surveys (compiled up to the year 2000), ‘belief in God’ has remained consistent over time, with just over 80% of respondents claiming a positive belief that ‘God exists’.⁵ Al-

⁵The statistics for 2000 show the following responses for “Do you believe that God exists: 49% = “yes, I definitely do; 32% = “yes, I think so; 13% = “no, I don’t think so; 6% = “no, I definitely do not. The cumulative responses for previous years are the following: 1984 “yes” = 84%, “no” = 16%; 1990 = “yes”:82%, “no” = 18%; 1995 “yes” = 80%, “no” = 20%)

though what ‘God’ means to different individuals is highly variable, the persistence of belief in a God is important here. So too is the fact that while this result was pervasive among those who attend services at least once a year, one in two people who ‘never attend services’ also said they believe in a God (Bibby, 2002, 142). In the same surveys, Bibby (2002) points to the potency and persistence of religious ‘experiences’ as an additional indicator of sustained belief. Results from earlier surveys in 1975 up until 2000 demonstrate that consistently almost half (47% in 2000) of Canadians claim to have had an *experience with God*. Additionally, across the survey years there has been very little variation in the inclination of people to express certainty about having had or not had such an experience (Bibby, 2002, 146). More than this, viewed in the context of declining church attendance the fact that individual experience of God has remained relatively stable suggests that, as Bibby (2002, 151) puts it, “experience is hardly the exclusive claim of people who are actively involved in churches”.

A second finding comes from data collected in the 2002 EDS which demonstrate a relative vitality in what sociologists of religion have labeled ‘personal modes’ of religious practice (Davidson, 1975; Mueller, 1980; Cornwall et al., 1986). That is, although a number of Canadians are choosing not to affiliate with any religion or attend religious services with any regularity, many are engaging in religious practices like prayer, meditation, worship and the reading of sacred texts outside of the church and on their *own*. In particular, the EDS shows that although 32% of adult Canadians attend religious services at least monthly, 53% of respondents engaged in religious activities by themselves. Surprisingly, 37% of respondents who claimed to ‘infrequently or never attend religious services’ also reported that they regularly engage in personal religious practices, while for individuals who had ‘not attended any religious services over the previous year’, 27% reported that they engaged in weekly religious practices on their own.

Third, and lastly, more data from the 2002 EDS show that, overall, 44% of Canadians place a high degree of importance on religion in their life (Clark, 2003). Additionally, almost half (45%) of Canadian adults who do not regularly attend services but who engage in religious activities on their own at least once a month place a high degree of importance on their religion. Remarkably, this particular statistic points out that attendance figure alone do not entirely capture Canadians

attachment toward religious belief. Here again, the emergence of private religious practices, in whatever form, likely aid many individuals in retaining levels of commitment to (non-organized) religion.

In summary, religion in Canada is not as it used to be. While current trends in affiliation have disproportionately impacted mainline religious organizations, large numbers of Canada's faithful are also making new decisions about their participation in public religious activities. It seems that 'believing' and 'belonging' in Canada are moving in different directions. But as *Globe and Mail* columnists Valpy and Friesen (2010) recent stated: "it's not that we are a nation of heathens"; indeed, the transitions in religious culture in this country have led to some interesting paradoxes as belief, experience and worship have all remained significant for many Canadians. Importantly then, this particular context certainly lessens the plausibility of a widespread secularization of Canadian society and instead points to a potential reconfiguration of religious 'practices' and a sense of 'belonging' that are outside of the traditional confines of the local church. Of course, while the complete end of the 'bricks and mortar' church is an unlikely future, the significant declines in both attendance rates and public belonging certainly place undue pressures on institutions that continue to struggle. These demographic shifts, therefore, raise profound questions about the future fate of institutions, denominations, and local congregations, and, their abilities to retain church properties in the fold.

2.2.2 Secular Nation, Secular City?

Although the Canadian religious landscape can be partly characterized by stability and resilience, especially concerning Christian 'belief', we still see a significant and continuing growth in the category of the 'religious nones'. As detailed above the relative popularity of religion before the early 1960s was staggering; Canadians routinely reported such strong affiliation that less than 1 per cent of the population selected the 'no religion' category on nation-wide surveys like the GSS. Almost 40 years later this relationship was in dramatic reversal. The most recent GSS data demonstrate that a marching contingent of Canadians, about 23%, no longer identify with religious groups at all.⁶ Importantly, the largest group of the *reli-*

⁶Affiliation statistics are reported as 16% 'no religious affiliation' on the 2001 census, (Figure 2.6)

gious nones has consistently been the younger cohort, 15-29 years old; in 2002, 34% of this group claimed that religion was highly important to them, and seven years later, the recent GSS shows that number sliding to 22% (Valpy and Friesen, 2010). With statistics like these many commentators have compared growth in this category to that of Western Europe and have suggested that Canada is, by and large, a secularizing society. Leading up to Christmas 2010, for instance, *Globe and Mail* columnists Valpy and Friesen (2010) surveyed contemporary Canadian religion seeking answers to what has become not only a perennial question in popular media, but also a litmus test of religiosity in general: ‘is Christmas a *religious* or a *social* event for Canadians’. The answer is complicated. Yet the byline in the leading article of the series – “Canada Marching from Religion to Secularization” – gives us a rather clear indication of their editors’ interpretation of the story (Valpy and Friesen, 2010). While certainly a debatable conclusion, especially in light of the multiple religious transformations described above, secularization is indeed an important *part* of the religious story unfolding throughout the nation. In such a case, we might look to secularization as an uneven and incomplete process articulated by specific geographies and particular local histories.

It must be mentioned that the concept of secularization is a rather complex paradigm. For many decades, scholars have been disputing both its central causes and its general validity, some emphasizing the rise of secular world-views and pluralization (Berger, 1979; Brown, 2009); deregulation, subjectivism, and pragmatism (Hervieu-Léger, 1990); self-primacy, ‘this-worldliness’ and an ‘alliance with science’ (Champion, 1993)⁷. Although a fully detailed explanation of the secularization paradigm is available elsewhere (see Bruce, 2002a; Smith, 2008; Taylor, 2007) it is worth briefly mentioning several of its key elements, some of which fit both comfortably and uncomfortably in the Canadian context.

First, the paradigm posits that with the modernization of interconnected spheres (economic, political and social), religion will decline in importance for the various operations of institutions dealing with essential functions like the state and the economy. Crucial here is the process of institutional differentiation and special-

⁷One must clarify that while debates concerning *contemporary* secularization (i.e. in a post-industrial context) have been animated since the early 1960s, secularism and secularization have been central points of debate in religion and sociology since the mid-nineteenth century, if not earlier.

ization that erupted with the expanding capitalist economy and the era of industrialization. The separation of church and state is a key factor and Canada, for instance, devolved the state church in 1857 rendering a de-centralized approach to national religion. More recently, we can also point to the dramatic transformations of the Roman Catholic church in Quebec during the 1960s. The decline in the social standing of the Catholic Church went hand in hand with the disestablishment of religious control over the political and economic management of the province. Health care and education, two other important social and cultural systems of authority, were also eventually removed from the Church's charge and placed with the secular state. In this case, like other institutional resources, religion in Quebec, as in other provinces, was increasingly specialized, and according to Bibby (2002, 9), "relegated to matters of meaning, morality and mortality, as well as to performing rites of passage". The compartmentalization of the Church into 'other-worldly' and ceremonial roles reinforced the notion of religious organizations as just one cultural resource among many.

Second, the resulting institutional compartmentalization did not stop with religious organizations. The secularization paradigm suggests in this case that advanced societies are characterized by a decline in the extent to which people will participate in organized religion - demonstrated through a widened disengagement with religious practices and a decline in the display of religious beliefs (Bruce, 1992, 2002a). This theoretical supposition is certainly incomplete, especially when we see a growing case of 'believing without belonging' throughout Canada. Some critics, however, do suggest that increasing diversity (social, cultural, religious) legitimized through pluralist politics like 'multiculturalism' deflates a singular religious authority, leading many to make choices without significant recourse to any religious doctrine (described in more detail below). Although this is a contentious point of debate (see Young and DeWiel, 2009; Beaman and Beyer, 2008), many argue that individual rational choice, not religious teaching, is increasingly the basis for decision making. In the Project Canada Surveys, Reginald Bibby (2002, 9) states that 35% of respondents claimed 'internal criteria' (e.g. personal judgement and personal morality) for determining 'right from wrong'; while only 17% claimed religious factors for their decision making. Moreover, among teenagers, he reported that 49% looked to personal ideas and feelings, leaving about 16% to

seek religious instruction.

Third, alongside change at the societal and individual scales, the secularization paradigm suggests that religious organizations are implicated in a secularizing process of their own, otherwise understood as a form of ‘organizational secularization’. The moderation of mainline religious groups is argued to be an outcome of a religious culture that is increasingly influenced by the secular world around it. Through a variety of sources which include media, business and education, religious groups are expected to move in-line with more popular cultural forms in order to sustain a reasonable level of legitimacy. The recent St. Andrew’s-Wesley United Church ‘Oscar Sermon’ series may well fall into this category as this downtown Vancouver church, like many others, is seeking new and creative pop-culture mediums to connect with a growing population of secular-urbanites. As Conrad Ostwalt (2003, 2) suggests, this interdigitation “of religion with culture makes it difficult to know where religion stops and the secular world begins”. Further, by mimicking elements of secular culture through the deployment of homologous discourses, ideas and programs, many religious organizations face the challenge of “saying little to their cultures that those cultures are not already saying to themselves and as a result diluting the functional authority of established religion” (Bibby, 2002, 10).

A fourth, and last, element concerns a geography of secularization. In particular, it is often within the socio-spatial context of the city that secularization is assumed to flourish. The old adage ‘God made the country, but man (sic) made the city’, has long served not only as a spiritual but also an ideological separation between the *non-urban* faithful and the *urban* non-believers. In the infinitely complex modern city, the resulting mix of social and cultural diversity, technology and technological rationality, individualization and privatization, for instance, represents an unyielding secularizing force. Here again the process is remarkably uneven, for cities demonstrate a great variability at both the *inter*- and *intra*-urban levels.

Amongst the two largest cities in Canada – Toronto and Vancouver – declines in religious affiliations are especially marked. From 1981 to 2001, the diversification of the religious landscape in Toronto is unmistakable (Figure 2.5).

At the same time as Protestants, historically the single largest religious group in the city, shrank by almost half (44% to 24%), those reporting ‘no religious’ af-

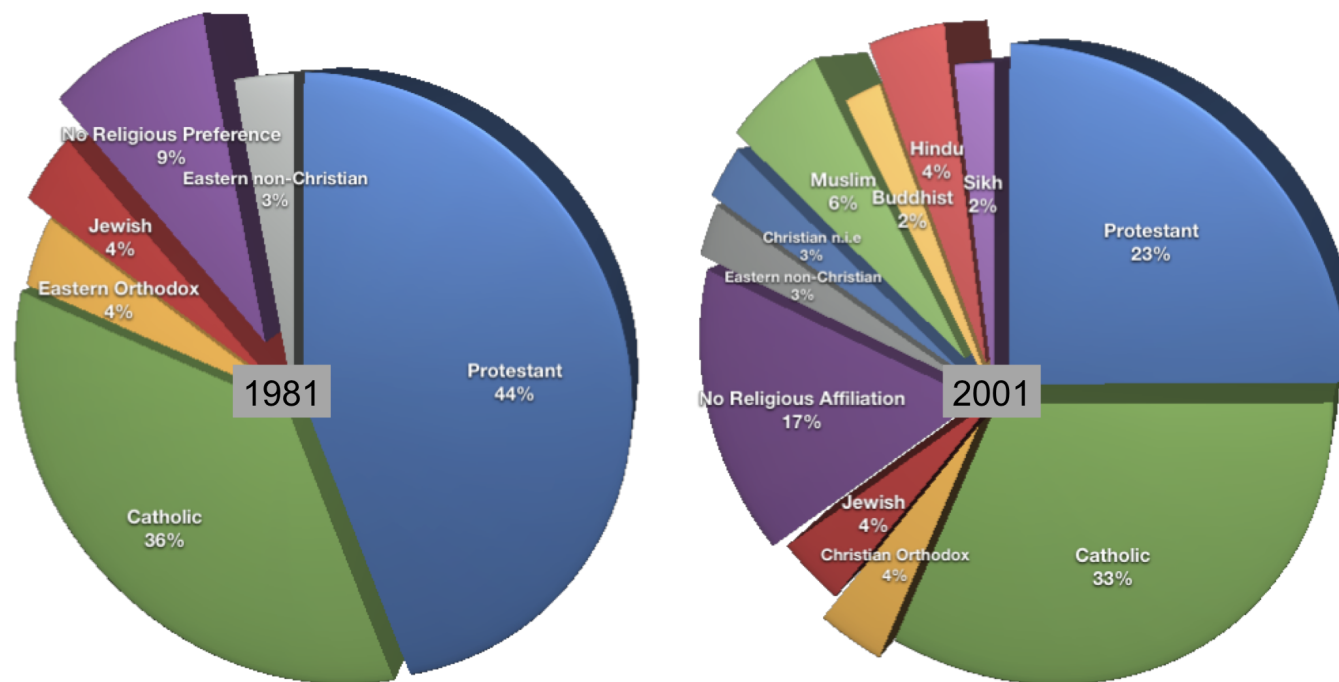


Figure 2.5: Select Religious Affiliation in the City of Toronto, 1981-2001 (source: Canada Census, 1981, 2001)

filiation grew by 8%. In Vancouver, a similar story is told but with much more zeal (Figure 2.6). While expanding varieties of non-Christian religions took a foothold in Vancouver by 2001, the religious ‘nones’ had expanded over two-fold from about 18% in 1981 to over 40% in 2001. For Jean Barman (2007, 389) these transitions in Vancouver point toward a *secular faith* whose emphasis on “lifestyle, or environment and the out-of-doors” helped to create an entirely ‘new dynamic’ to life in that city.

Alternatively, little variation in the Christian identity of Montrealers is evident in the same 20-year period (Figure 2.7). Although the Catholics lost a fraction of their adherents, most likely to the ‘religious nones’, growth and change in Montreal is mostly associated with new immigrant groups whose religious identification is increasingly aligned with those labeled as ‘Eastern or Non-Christian’ (i.e. Sikhism, Islam, Hinduism).

Although comparisons between cities certainly highlights variable religiosity marked by increasing proportions of secular populations, especially in Toronto and Vancouver, we can also examine changes *within* the individual CMA. At the intra-urban level, specific patterns of religiosity and church development have been documented and connected to the socio-cultural transformations and revitalization of urban areas. In cities like Vancouver and Toronto, new immigrant pathways, increasing social mobility and declining religious practice, for instance, helped produce patterns of what Ley and Martin (1993, 218) called ‘geographically stranded churches’. Over the last several decades many churches, often located in older inner-city neighbourhoods, have lost their initial congregations and increasingly shifted religious groups altogether as established immigrant populations decentralized from their initial concentrations. For those churches that survived the demographic upheavals, common tactics of survival have included the multi-faith sharing of worship spaces, or, redevelopment for multi-purpose use like retail and residential spaces in portions of the building. In other cases, a clear suburbanization of congregations has also been well documented as countless churches in the 1970s and 1980s fled inner city neighbourhoods in an attempt to capture the increasingly mobile middle-class. And finally, as discussed further in Chapter 4, secularization has been connected to specific patterns of urban development and change, namely, gentrification. Importantly, as inner-city neighbourhoods in ur-

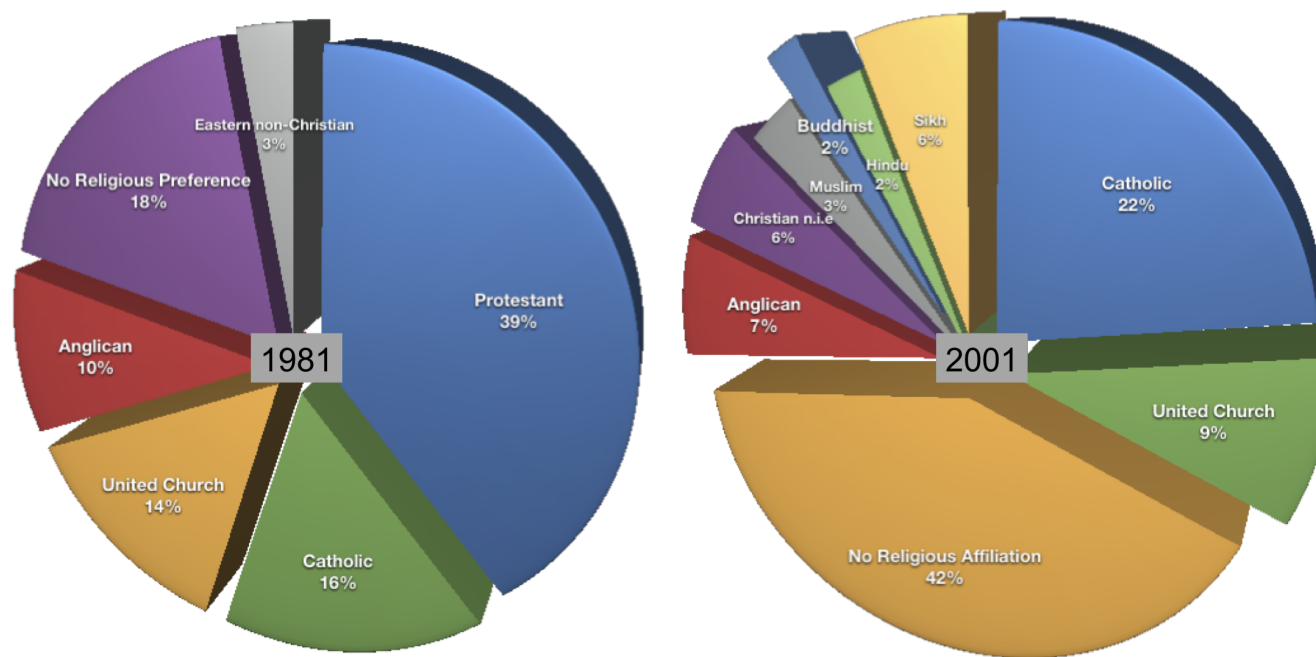


Figure 2.6: Select Religious Affiliation in the City of Vancouver, 1981-2001 (source: Canada Census, 1981, 2001)

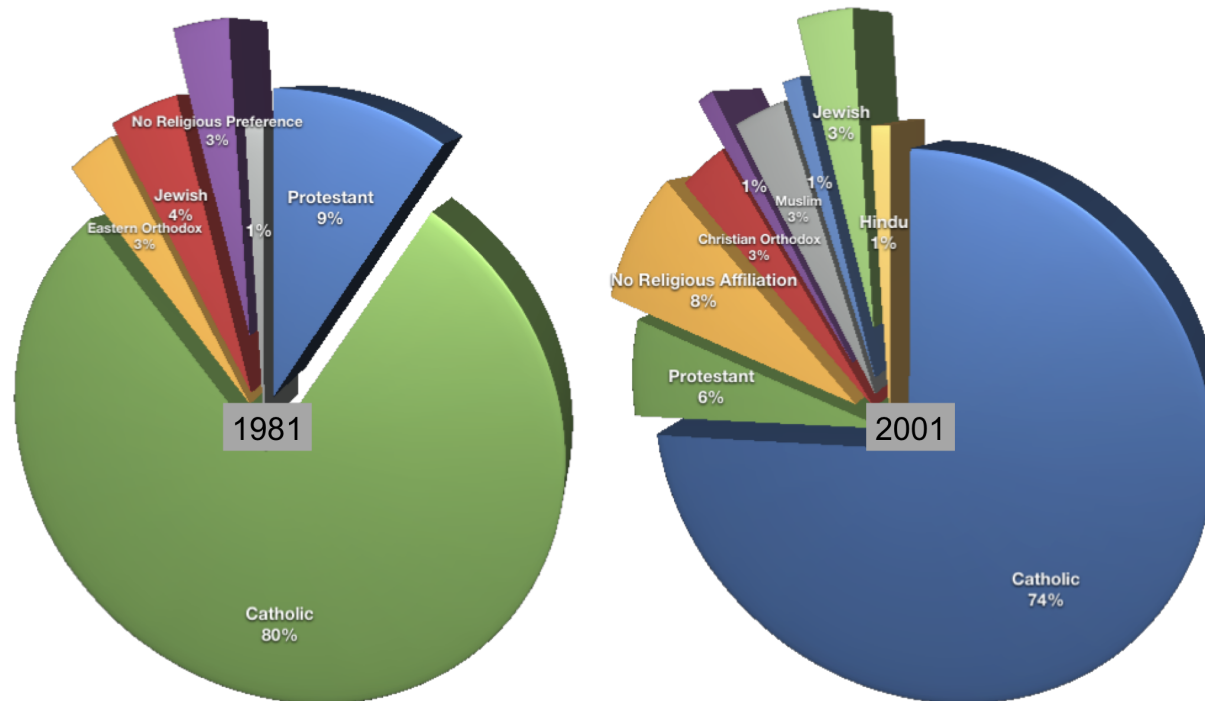


Figure 2.7: Select Religious Affiliation in the City of Montreal, 1981-2001 (source: Canada Census, 1981, 2001)

ban centres like Toronto have been increasingly gentrified, resulting patterns of secularization, or religious ‘un-belief’, have expanded in kind. Here patterns of secularization are evident in the spaces that are re-colonized by the new, or creative, middle class; a group increasingly disinterested in organized religion or any religion at all (Ley and Martin, 1993).

2.2.3 Diversity and the Fragmentation of Religion

As described in the previous section, diversity represents an increasingly important force of change for contemporary religious cultures. Recent debates in the sociology of religion continually circulate, for instance, around the role and impact that social and cultural diversity has played on the hegemony of institutional religions in given localities, or, on the possibilities of social pluralism (both as an ideological and legal project) as a means of legitimizing religious freedoms (Beaman and Beyer, 2008; Berger et al., 2008; Beaman, 2003; Bibby, 2000). At their core, such debates focus on the construction of the modern nation state as a pivotal condition for the proliferation of classes and class fragments - a state of heightened social and cultural diversity. As Bruce (2002a, 16) argues, “at the same time that nation states were attempting to construct a unified national culture out of thousands of small communities, they necessarily confronted competing interests, including a diversification of religious views”. In the creation of societies where egalitarianism and democracy moved to the fore it was social harmony, not religious orthodoxy, that became a necessary political position for many nations. The results of such circumstances have been as complex as they are numerous.

Although a detailed elaboration is beyond the scope of this thesis (see Bruce, 2002a; Beaman and Beyer, 2008; Young and DeWiel, 2009), it is certainly worth noting two results of increasing diversity that have made a profound impact on institutional religion. First, in many cases diversity has facilitated certain aspects of secularization, namely the separation of church and state. This has been the case especially in modern nations where centralized religious establishments were either abandoned (e.g. the United States and the construction of the Constitution) or were “neutered” (e.g. Britain and most of Canada), effectively reducing the “social power and scope of organized religion” (Bruce, 2002a, 17). Second, the plurality

of religious (and political) practice often disrupted the tight relationship between community and central religious ideologies. In such a case, instead of state-led suppression of religious hegemony, diversity meant that the connections between communities and a singular Church, both as a place and as an idea, were potentially broken. That is, in many modern societies the proliferation of diversity has influenced traditional religious practices such as celebrating or marking birth, marriage and death (Bruce, 2001; Gill, 2003). No longer necessarily contextualized or legitimized by the Church, such special events potentially lose their functional and symbolic powers as religious rites of passage and move, as the case may be, into a secularized culture. More than this perhaps, a diversified community challenges the dominant religious discourses that pervade the everyday lives of individuals and communities – so that as multicultural societies legitimize the voices of ‘others’ and an increasing variety of ideas take shape, a singular or universal religious worldview is called into question (Berger, 1980; Stump, 2008).

These two features of diversity are crucial in the current context of nations like Canada and the United Kingdom. Although the traditional religious cultures of these countries are deeply embedded in Christianity, pluralistic and multicultural politics have stripped away its exclusive authority to religious knowledge and practice. The result is an opening for alternative ideologies, new and *legitimate* religious theologies and multiple, even antagonistic, religious cultures. According to some this new terrain has created a ‘pick and choose’ religious marketplace (Berger, 1979; Bibby, 1993; Einstein, 2008; Lyon, 2000; Roof, 1999).⁸ Religion, now more than ever, is an option; and for many people who continue to worship, religion has also become a personal construction that reflects less the structured religiosity of their youth and more of an amorphous set of personal beliefs (Einstein, 2008).

In the Canadian context, we can look to the post-war era, which has represented a period of significant shift in the meaning, understanding and application of diversity. Over the last many decades, and especially since the first multicul-

⁸In the 1970s, Peter Berger (1979) popularized this argument by likening the diversity of religion in the United States to a ‘supermarket’; in the early 1990s, Reginald Bibby (1993) described the Canadian religious ‘commodity’ as one that can be “purchased a la carte”, while William James (1999) argues that Canadian religion is increasingly defined by ‘dimorphs and cobblers’; see also Chapter 4 §4.3.3.

tural policies in 1971, Canadian diversity has been transformed by a wide range of actions including the lifting of restrictions on immigrants previously regarded as ‘too foreign’ (e.g. Asian, African, Caribbean), and by the increasing recognition of difference and identity of the nations’ “internal others” (Taylor, 1992). Central to this transition is also a multiplication of what constitutes diversity in Canada, including of course a heightened recognition of a French/English duality, rights and status of Aboriginal peoples, and an expanding identification and recognition of new religious organizations (Beyer, 2008, 15). With respect to the rising identification of religion within Canada, we can look to the transitions in the post-war Canadian censuses, which increasingly demonstrated diversifying ethno-cultural and religious categories. As Peter Beyer (2008) points out, for instance, from 1911 to 2001 ethnic and religious categories reported in the census increased dramatically, from 30 to 232 and 32 to 124 respectively. Importantly, this diversity in identification is mostly attributable to changing immigration patterns since the early 1970s. Examples abound: whereas in the 1971 census, immigrants from various Caribbean nations were lumped into a single ‘West Indian’ category, by the 2001 census nineteen Caribbean categories were reported; Ukrainian Catholics first reported in 1971 as a single category expanded in 2001 to 14 variations of Catholicism; by 2001 expansion of the ‘non-Christian’ category was created and articulated for the first time a rich tapestry of Canadian ethno-religion which included those outside of the mainline or mainstream cultures (e.g. ‘Muslim’ with 4 sub-categories, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Shinto, Native Indian or Inuit, Pagan, Wicca) (Beyer, 2008, 15-16).

Accompanying the expanding range of what constitutes Canadian diversity as ‘variety’ is also, importantly, an expanding recognition of diversity as ‘difference’. That is, although many of the newly created categories for the censuses represented relatively few people – in 2001, Shinto was reported by only 545 people, Jains by 2,455, Taoism by about 3,500, and so on – their continual inclusion, in policy at least, has come to represent not only the increasing arrival of ‘others’ to Canada but also a relative increase of recognition in their religio-cultural differences (Beyer, 2008; Statistics-Canada, 2001). As Beyer (2008, 16) puts it, “this combination of changed Canadian reality and changed Canadian perception...characterizes the Canadian situation in the early 21st century”.

The transformation of 'reality' and 'perception' is therefore deeply tied to the relatively new transnational pathways developed between Canada and nations in places like Asia and Africa. But, also important, the religious cultures (affiliations, practices, theologies) of newly arrived immigrants represent not simply new categories of recognition in official policies or documents like the census, but are also productive in that they potentially create new, or, bolster established religious communities often located in or around major urban centres. The effects of these communities on the Canadian religious mosaic is, however, in debate. At present, Christianity is still the dominant religion with adherents making up more than 70% of the current population - down from 90% previously reported in the 1981 census (Statistics-Canada, 2001, 1981). For Reginald Bibby (2000), the new immigrant pathways to Canada over the last several decades have only created a 'mythical' sense of religious multiculturalism in that Protestantism and Catholicism have remained largely intact as the ruling religious 'companies' in what is considered a 'tight religious marketplace'. Remarkably, in a period where immigration from Europe has been dramatically reduced (a decreasing proportion at approximately 16% from 2001-2006; down from 20% in the previous decade), Christianity has certainly remained buoyant and popular among Canadians who are still interested in organized religion. Yet, while a true mosaic may indeed be overemphasized possibly through expectations of the effectiveness of multiculturalism, shifts in ethno-religious cultures to Canada in the last decade have been rather profound and are not insignificant. In particular, Christian and non-Christian religions continue to benefit from current immigration patterns from China, South-Asia (India, Pakistan), North Africa and the Middle East. As result, the numbers of Muslim and Buddhists have increased six-fold and Hindus and Sikhs fourfold from 1981 to 2001. Islam, for example, represents the second largest religious group; much smaller than Christianity but still a rapidly growing affiliation. By 2001, census figures showed that about 2% of Canada claimed to be Muslim, up from 1% in 1991. Moreover, conservative estimates put the Muslim community somewhere at 1 to 1.3 million adherents for the 2011 census, this making up 3-4% of religious affiliation in Canada (Beyer, 2008, 22). Combined with growth in the Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist communities these previously 'other' religions now claim almost 10% of the Canadian population.

Looking ahead, recent projections by Statistics-Canada (2010) suggest that by 2031 the number of people having a non-Christian religion will almost double from 8% (in 2006) to over 14%, and about one-half of this group is expected to be Muslim. The point, in short, is that the social and political implications of this “new Canada” are not to be taken for granted (Henry Yu, in Proudfoot 2010).

Expanding ethno-religious communities in major urban centres like Metro-Vancouver and the Greater Toronto Area are placing new demands not only for political representation but also for new cultural spaces that reflect dynamic ethnic, cultural and religious needs. In recent decades geographers and sociologists have been particularly attuned to the social and cultural transformations of urban societies and their capacities for forming distinctly cosmopolitan realities (see Beck, 2006; Binnie et al., 2006; Ley, 2004). *Cosmopolis*, an urban articulation of multi-cultural harmony, currently enjoys a rather widespread appeal among many liberal urbanists seeking to reframe city life through positive encounters with difference and the urban other, a direct attempt at according and legitimizing multi-cultures and multi-ethnicities in the diverse spaces of the city (Amin, 2002; Sandercock, 2003; Ruddick, 1996). To some degree perhaps, in cities like Vancouver and Toronto an everyday cosmopolitanism has been realized. Vancouver’s Chinese night markets, for instance, offer critical urban spaces or ‘points of contact’ among the city’s diverse populations as a contemporary multi-ethnic flaneurism mixes with the inter-ethnic exchange of goods and services (Pottie-Sherman, 2011). Similarly in Toronto, arguably the world’s most diverse city, a multi-ethnic public sociability is supposedly made possible through the production of global places (e.g. Dundas Square) – distinct urban locales that facilitate transnational and transcultural engagement (Dib and Donaldson, 2009). Although the successes, failures and possibilities of the emerging cosmopolitan city are still much in debate, a fundamental aspect of both national multicultural policy and local interventions seeking to produce cosmopolitan spaces is to carry forth a discourse of pluralism, tolerance, and relativism that certainly extends to the ideologies and practices of Canada’s diversifying religious groups.

With these profound transitions in non-Christian religions, from Islam to New Age, the emergence, or perhaps already the arrival, of a ‘new Canada’ puts into question the present and future authority of Christianity as the dominant religious



Figure 2.8: Canada's 'Highway to Heaven': This diverse religious landscape along No. 5 Rd in Richmond, B.C., a suburb of Vancouver, has been rapidly expanding in recent decades. left to right: A Sikh Gurdwara; A Buddhist Temple, and Christian Churches (photos: Justin Tse, 2010)

identity.⁹ Though there is certainly room for the various religious services offered today, the increasing demands bubbling up from subaltern religions pressures the capability of Christianity to retain a dominant presence in the cultures and politics of local communities. New social and political spaces, focused primarily in key cities and urban regions, opens opportunities for flourishing religions and spiritualities either where they had not been before or where levels of support have simply not been enough to sustain them. New church, temple or mosque plantings, for example, vie for key (sub)urban locations which cater to growing ethno-cultural communities tied increasingly to non-Christian faiths (Figure 2.8). And while this does not imply that devout Christians will and are switching camps to become Muslim or Buddhist, although this may be the case for a small minority, it puts the religious marketplace into a more complex and potentially competitive realm.

Along with the growth in new religious and spiritual possibilities, it is important to note the changing nature of Christianity itself. In terms of Protestant Chris-

⁹It is important to note, as Wendy Brown (2012) recently points out, that there are tremendous limits to the idea that secularism liberates religious and ethnic 'others' in Western society. Indeed, the "false robes of religious and cultural neutrality, tolerance, gender equality and freedom in which Western secularism drapes itself", as Brown (2012) puts it, potentially mask the enduring power of Christian ideology and culture in our society. Inequalities and power relations are thus part and parcel of the multicultural, cosmopolitan and secular (or 'postsecular') cities.

tianity in Canada, deep restructuring in recent decades has meant that alongside the diminution of the older and established mainline denominations, diversification and growth of the non-denominational categories has been profound. Specifically, variety in categories like “born again Christian” and “Evangelical” not only appeared in the 2001 census during a downturn in the mainline organizations, but these groups have also gained considerable ground in the past decade. The result according to Peter Beyer (2008, 24) is that the Canadian Protestant community is “favouring smaller, usually independent, and very often congregational forms of organization rather than hitherto denominational form”. Growth in these conservative groups has been attributed to their rejection of the trends in mainline religious organizations to liberalize and moderate (theologically and liturgically) in an era of national secularization. As key issues like same-sex marriage, the feminization of clergy, and the nature of traditional liturgy have propelled certain Christian organizations to restructure ecclesial policies in line with secular mores, many argue that the successes of conservative Charismatic and Evangelical groups is partly attributable to their preservation of key political and theological ideologies and thus an ability to sustain a unique identity amid a terrain of conformity. Additionally, these groups also increasingly offer new and ‘flexible’ means to proselytize and worship. In particular, many Canadian Evangelical groups have expanded their approach both to new media (e.g. internet blogging, ipod ‘apps’, television, film), to new types of worship space, and even in some cases, the removal of a formal building for communal worship altogether. In cases where groups gather in formal spaces, many of the traditional and increasingly expensive church buildings found in cities and suburbs are simply ignored in favour of more mundane and affordable properties. Former retail spaces and defunct theatres, for instance, are targeted by groups like Toronto’s ‘Meeting House’; while for other groups, new and modern mega-churches in expansive suburban locations are gaining some popularity.¹⁰

¹⁰While not on the scale of the mega-churches of the American religious-right, Canadian mega-churches (with over 2000 congregants) have sprouted up in suburban Toronto (e.g. The Prayer Palace in Vaughn; The People’s Church in North York), Calgary (e.g. Centre Street Church; First Alliance Church), Vancouver (e.g. Christian Life Assembly in Langley) and Winnipeg (e.g. Springs Church), among others.

2.3 Conclusions: Religion in the Post-Secular City

The multiple and varied transitions of social and religious diversity in Canada, as in other western nations, is a complex challenge for traditional religious cultures. The configuration of a multicultural mosaic in this nation certainly places continual pressures on the sustainability of any dominant world-view – religious or otherwise. Yet, the impact of diversity on Christianity is uneven. Rather than simply spelling its end, rising diversity has meant new religious fragmentations and new avenues for religious and spiritual practice. Thus individual Canadians may take to a secular life or embark on new religious opportunities while others engage in a practice of believing without belonging to the traditional institutions of their antecedents.

As a result of these transformations, many commentators have dubbed the current era as *post-Christian* (Bloom, 1992; Clapp, 1996; Cupitt, 1998; Murphy, 1996). In dramatic fashion, Don Cupitt (1998, 218) claims that in the Post-Christian era, “the age of Authority, of grand institutions, of legitimizing myths, of capital T-truth, is over”. More specifically Murphy (1996) explains that the fundamental change resides with the dismissal of the concept of *Christendom*. That is, the idea of a Canadian society “where Christianity and culture are essentially integrated is gone forever...[where] the defining reality of contemporary society is pluralism, which includes not only cultural, racial, and religious diversity, but also the recognition of tolerance of differing beliefs and customs as a basic societal value” (Murphy, 1996, 369). In this post-Christian Canada, religious organizations must confront a social framework that precludes a singular cultural authority and thus deal with new forms of religious observance that no longer have ties to traditional or Orthodox forms of organized religion. As result, many Christian churches, Protestant and Catholic, have been slow to respond to the rapidly transforming demands for new forms of religious services and, as I discuss in following chapters, have been increasingly forced to rationalize and reconfigure their assets to meet this ever-changing religious marketplace.

Other commentators, however, have argued for another term to describe our current religious-secular environment. In particular, the term ‘*post-secular*’ has gained traction in both academic circles as well as in popular media (Boeve, 2005;

McLennan, 2007; Molendijk et al., 2010). According to Gregor McLennan (2007, 859), postsecularism is not intended as a definitive end to thinking about secularism or secularization, but, as he puts it

the post [in the postsecular]... need not automatically signal *anti*-secularism, or what comes *after* or *instead of* secularism. For many, the key postsecular move is simply to question and probe the concept of the secular, and to re-interrogate the whole ‘faith versus reason’ problematic that has so consistently punctuated modern thought.

In a recent edited collection, Beaumont and Baker (2011) focus these theoretical ‘questions and probes’ on the city. For them, the postsecular age is especially profound and evident in the urban context; “public space” they contend “which continues to be shaped by ongoing dynamics of secularization and secularism (as a political and cultural ideology)... that also has to negotiate and make space for the re-emergence of public expressions of religion and spirituality” (Baker and Beaumont, 2011, 33). It is these transformations of religious culture in Canada, and especially in Canadian cities, that are leading to some very interesting results. Throughout this chapter I have described some of the outcomes involved in this transformation. In sum, I have argued that the contexts of religious change in Canada and its key urban areas have increased pressures on mainline religions. Although this has not meant their annihilation as some scholars have proposed, it has forged new challenges for traditional religious organizations like the United Church of Canada. Thus, while new immigrant churches, often located in suburban areas like Richmond B.C., are growing in response to international migration to Canada (Ley, 2008), many older Christian churches across Canada’s inner cities, like Toronto, are failing to keep stable congregations that are necessarily selling properties to meet financial challenges.

But the case of religious change in Canadian cities is only one side of this ongoing story. In the next chapter I explore the role of heritage and urban conservation in the Canadian context. Along with religion an investigation of heritage philosophies and conservation policies in cities like Toronto help to explain how specific regulations over urban space have made key heritage properties viable sites for residential reuse.

Chapter 3

Heritage Matters: Heritage and Adaptive Re-use in the Post-Secular City

“We believe it is necessary to avoid dogmatism in our approaches to conservation and development. We must imbue them with imagination and creativity. The “all or nothing” era is over. Otherwise, we cannot progress, and protection of religious heritage will be compromised. In other words, how could the City, or any other municipality with limited means, become more involved? It is vital that we all work together and combine our means and resources.” (Goulet and Viau, 2008, 15)

Far from being of singular importance to religious communities, local churches, chapels and worship spaces of ‘historical value’ are now commonly incorporated into a celebration of local and national heritage. Over the last decade a precipitous increase in the closure and sale of places of worship across Canada has led many provincial agencies, municipal managers, and heritage advocates to effectively ‘scramble’ to conserve significant structures in key rural sites and urban neighbourhoods. Stories of demolition or of substantial renovations which have erased the architectural significance and the historic character of many buildings are but routine in an emerging context where religious groups are becoming eco-

nomically overwhelmed and enticed by the financial options provided by private real estate developers. Examples from Charlottetown, P.E.I. to Vancouver, B.C., highlight how mainline urban churches are being lost to wide-scale rationalization programs, sometimes under the radar of disinterested, understaffed, or politically lax heritage systems. Describing the state of the United Church in Vancouver, Rev. David Ewert, minister and researcher at the Capilano United Church, has recently argued that “the tremendous assets of the [United Church of Canada] property and investments have become an unmanageable burden that overwhelm the capabilities of many congregations and force their closure...we are asset rich and people poor, and our wealth just might be the death of us” (cited in Wiebe, 2008, 28). Up against these challenges, many churches are prioritizing their needs and choosing financial packages that may lead to a building’s ultimate destruction – a fact that while “a church may recognize it has an important legacy of church buildings, the “church of the poor” is ultimately about people not about maintaining temporal assets” (Wiebe, 2008, 28-29).

The wholesale demolition of Toronto’s Newgate Korean Presbyterian Church (originally the Indian Road Baptist Church) in 2003 for upscale townhouses in Roncesvalles, for instance, was certainly an important moneymaker for its dwindling former congregation (Gillmor, 2005). At the same time however, its redevelopment by Somerset Homes sparked community protest by local residents, many of whom never even visited the church when it was a worship space. According to journalist Don Gillmor (2005, 51) the protest

took on a ‘60s tone, with a crowd of residents singing the old Buffalo Springfield song “For What it’s Worth” (“There is something happening here,/What it is ain’t exactly clear...”)...there were slogans and outrage on one side of the dispute. The developer and the Hitachi excavator on the other. The standoff ended in a cloud of dust and a pile of rubble.

Although not all redundant churches end up like Newgate Korean Presbyterian Church, heritage advocates in the city are certainly wary of losing other significant buildings especially as Toronto moves forward on its path to global status. Moreover, for some, the destruction or careless renovation of historic architec-

ture consistently displays the inability of local officials to control development and curtail the loss of heritage in the city. In this way local residents and advocates continue to fight for stronger legislation in heritage preservation and alternative re-development options like re-use, a process that, rather remarkably, sees secular communities as the saviours of a religious material culture that many say is increasingly 'endangered'. What this means is that historic churches are increasingly re-negotiated as 'heritage' – a process that seeks to categorize and manage built architecture, most often through legislative mechanisms like designation, with or without the input of religious organizations. As official objects of heritage, churches become a multi-stakeholder responsibility and their futures are often restricted with fewer options for re-development. Under these contexts, controlled adaptive re-use is increasingly considered as the most logical and practical means of conserving worship spaces. Considering the demands on the housing market and the pressures for expressive housing in inner city neighbourhoods this recycling strategy is most viable in the conversion to upscale housing – a process which theoretically protects a building's architectural heritage, gives religious managers or former congregations competitive re-sale opportunities in the private real estate market, and, increases the local stock of desirable quality housing.

Up to this point, I have described how the changing terrain of religion in Canada has played an important role in producing the contexts for church redundancies in the city. We must now add to this discussion the role of heritage as a key condition that also enables a church loft market. In this case, I focus on the concept of heritage to explore how urban churches are implicated in the complex process of heritage production, consumption and management. I argue here that heritage provides another contextual lens to view why and how the built material culture of religious organizations is being re-valued in the post-industrial and post-secular city. The central point made in this chapter, and one that is carried forward in the next chapter, is that re-used urban churches, much like other symbolically loaded and historically valued material properties, are re-positioned as secular heritage to perform new tasks as both socio-cultural and economic *resources*. As places of distinct heritage, either officially or unofficially recognized, re-used urban churches are part of a practice of mobilizing historical built form in the construction and display of identity, class and commodity, features that make such places active

players in the transformation and revitalization of the inner-city for new middle class residents.

In the first section of the chapter, I explore the growing literature in geography that deals with heritage. In particular, I focus on how geographers, along with historians, understand the relationships between heritage, place and space; and, pay particular attention to how heritage is viewed as a multifaceted *resource*. Beyond having a simple or static meaning, built material heritage is accompanied by a multitude of identifications and potential conflicts, processes that are influenced by how heritage performs as both socio-cultural and economic resources. I also highlight that along with its multiple uses and functions, heritage is deeply implicated in the construction and display of identity and class at the same time as it plays a key role as a driver in neighbourhood change and revitalisation. On this last point, urban geographers have been specifically keen to trace how heritage is used by local actors to remake urban spaces for new, often middle class, users. In the post-industrial and post-sacred city, outmoded properties find new uses as tangible sites of culture heritage, symbolic places that afford novel economic and socio-cultural functions.

Following this discussion, I examine how heritage, as a resource, is both conceived and managed. In this case, I explore the heritage policy environment in Ontario and Toronto and discuss the roles of various actors, including planners and policy makers, involved in constructing and maintaining the city's heritage landscapes. Extending this discussion, I focus on the condition and management of Toronto's religious properties and explore how these specific forms of material heritage are variously understood and managed in the local urban environment. As we shall see, not all forms of heritage are accepted in the same manner, for each contains specific cultural, social, political, and economic potential and conflict.

3.1 Conceptualizing Urban Heritage: Conserving Place and History in the City

“The city... does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lighting rods, the poles of

the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls” (Calvino, 1979, 41)

The conservation and protection of historic culture is, perhaps counter to most expectations, a relatively new practice. It is instructive to note, as most texts on the subject do, that what we conceive as heritage is largely a project of modern societies. Indeed, alongside the nineteenth century ‘invention’ of nation-states (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983), heritage, viewed in its early form as the maintenance of objects, buildings or landscapes in a condition defined by their historic contexts, was increasingly determined by elite groups who used culture as a means to control, defend and define national communities (Graham et al., 2000, 16). Landscapes, for instance, have long been commemorated and institutionalized in the formation of national boundaries, rendered as both physical and symbolic features delineating a territory and a people. Somewhat later the deliberate preservation of the existing built environment became a central aim for those seeking to preserve and protect past legacies that many perceived to be lost through modern urbanization and industrialization. Across Europe and North America all kinds of buildings were singled out by concerned private citizens, many among an educated minority, who lamented the transformations taking place not only in their local neighbourhoods but also throughout entire urban landscapes.

In its contemporary form, heritage has become a powerful tool put to use by a multiplicity of groups, from national agencies to local residents, for a variety of purposes (Crang and Tolia-Kelly, 2010). Mythologies, material artifacts, and traditions, all of which consistently change “through time and across space”, are variably selected and deployed to meet specific needs by particular communities (Graham, 2002, 1004). For this reason Graham et al. (2000, 17) argue that heritage is “that part of the past which we select in the present for contemporary purposes”. At the urban level, for instance, the preservation of built heritage is a key tool deployed by city makers and urban developers in order to produce ‘meaningful’ places. In fact, entire urban districts, neighbourhoods, waterfronts and streetscapes now commonly incorporate heritage as a way to build more attractive, sociable and distinct cities, features that have become, perhaps more than anything, assets in the competitive drive to attract domestic and foreign investments and mobile

professionals (Haider, 1992; Lynch and Ley, 2010).

Importantly, in the attempt to build more appealing cities, the forms of historic material culture that are included and the methods by which they are protected as heritage have changed. While early efforts were dominated by the preservation and fossilization of monumental landmarks, urban heritage now includes a wide range of useful built material forms - from medieval structures to unique examples of modern architecture (see for instance Markus, 1993). Moreover, in response to transformations in work and culture, some of which are described in other chapters of this section, cities are also increasingly protecting buildings that were long valued for entirely different functions. Redundant warehouses and churches, along with many of other structures that have outlived their former uses, are now firmly part of heritage programs. In response to development pressures, structures like these are also receiving increasing attention by heritage advocates and, in some cases, more stringent preservation legislation in order to secure their futures. In recent years, across Canada local planning policies and provincial cultural programming targets have included urban churches, both active and redundant, into heritage initiatives, citing their conservation as tools in promoting social, cultural and economic development (Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture, 2011). Churches of all kinds are thus valued beyond their religious histories and functions as sites of wider community significance especially in regards to their roles in representing identity and acting as spaces for local urban revitalization.

It is in this context of 'heritage' that adaptive re-use has emerged as a functional and legitimate form of urban conversion. In many cases church lofts are part and parcel of a revaluation of worship spaces as sites of public significance, protected throughout urban communities as valuable resources for new secular uses. Before I discuss in more detail these specific conditions with respect to redundant worship spaces, it is necessary to first describe how heritage is in fact a resource.

3.1.1 Urban Heritage as Socio-Cultural Resources

Since the cultural turn in geography, heritage, in both material and immaterial forms, has been increasingly understood as a source of cultural meaning and an aspect of political power structures. Cultural geographers have consistently pointed

out how various forms of heritage are sites charged with social and cultural symbolism, constructed spaces that play a fundamental role in the production, mobilization and representation of identity, class, gender, ethnicity and race (Hewison, 1987; Osborne, 2001). Through these complex categories, heritage is both variably understood and used for a variety of personal and/or collective purposes. For instance, in his detailed writings on the concept of the 'past' in contemporary society, geographer David Lowenthal (1985, 1998) argues that heritage offers individuals and communities important ways to engage with history, namely as sources of enrichment and escape, familiarity and guidance, and, validation and legitimation (Ashworth and Graham, 2005).

In terms of enrichment and escape, heritage has long been used as a bulwark against change. Whether one preserves historic properties or recognizes national landscapes, many perceive heritage as a material and cultural shield against social upheavals and as tangible places to realize nostalgic yearnings. Indeed, much urban conservation over the years is attributed to reactions against what some call a wide-spread de-traditionalization of contemporary society (Heelas et al., 1996). In this case, many often decry the loss of distinct local cultures or claim an erasure of 'roots' driven by the leveling force of globalization and its influences on such things as transnational mobility and immigration, but also in its effect on replacing local traditions and cultures (e.g. religion) with more diffused and commodified forms. Connection to this heritage preserves a link to the past and sustains a familiarity and continuity in the *present*. This, in some ways, is a reaction to the perceived disconnectedness and dehumanization evident in the modern age. At the city level, the fragmented function and form of modern urban landscapes present what some critics see as 'placeless spaces' increasingly defined through functional homogeneity and abstracted from any sense of past meaning and value (Jacobs, 1961; Kunstler, 1994; Relph, 1993). Against the machine age ideology and aesthetic (e.g. Le Corbusier's Radiant City form) the preservation of historic urban spaces re-configured the scope of modernist planning and fit in its place diversity, difference and historic character. We will come back to this point shortly, for in cities like Toronto heritage has become a rallying point in the production of a new post-modern urbanism.

Lastly, validation and legitimation through heritage are largely associated with

defining and displaying both power and identity, two aspects that are of particular interest here. In fact, the relationship between heritage and identity has long been a central focus of epistemological debates in heritage studies and historical geography. Assuming that heritage is “the contemporary use of the past”, questions circulate around how it may be used to construct, elaborate and reproduce specific identities and their components of race, ethnicity, class and nationalism. A good deal of writing on the subject shows that in both intended and unintended ways heritage becomes a focal point in the production and maintenance of shared identities and interpretations of the past. Narratives of nationalism, for instance, are routinely constructed out of heritage landscapes and historical spaces which help to define and differentiate specific communities both from within and from without. The development of Ottawa’s Confederation Square, a ceremonial space focusing on the Canadian National War Memorial and the tomb of the unknown soldier, draw upon geographical imagery and myth to represent a national “sacred space” and communicate specific and “privileged narratives” of the national experience and a *Canadian* consciousness (Gordon and Osborne, 2004). These, like other forms of national heritage in the city (e.g. street-names, monuments), act as stages for the explicit evocation of collective memory that help define specific beliefs and values of one community against ‘others’ (Said, 1987). Benedict Anderson’s (1991) concept of the ‘imagined community’ has been influential in understanding how an assemblage of heritage – as an attachment to landscape, the celebration of national myths, or shared linguistic traditions – are loaded ‘media’ conveying messages of national identity defined, in part, by their counter-distinction to those constructed and displayed by others. This point highlights just how pervasive a politics of heritage can be. In fact, a central function of heritage involves defining the criteria of social inclusion and social exclusion (Graham et al., 2000). Who decides what constitutes heritage and whose heritage is actually constructed and represented, and thus whose is forgotten, are key questions in this process.

But of course, symbolic urban heritage and the politics therein are not simply confined to the elaborate nation building projects in the capital city. The preservation of more ‘vernacular’ historic urban properties from community centres to churches to public spaces also elevate specific local, regional and community identities (Edensor, 2005). For the most part, these material objects are selected and

protected through the aegis of urban governance practices that take their cues from planning policies and local by-laws. In such cases, heritage is often used as a means to define ‘streetscapes’ and maintain the ‘urban fabric’, urban conservation discourses that are mobilized in an effort to revitalize particular city spaces. Although I discuss this issue in more detail below it is important to highlight here how heritage and identity are implicated in the patterns and conflicts of privileging and exclusion that result from the fractioning of society along other lines, namely class (Graham et al., 2000; Hayden, 1997).

The class dimensions of heritage have been widely noted in the literature. For the most part, conservation efforts in urban areas have traditionally been a project of the ruling elite groups. As John Tunbridge (1984) explains, “a generation ago, the ruling elites in most western countries held a narrow view of what merited conservation”, and these were invariably the strongest voices in preservation practices. Up until the 1980’s, but still in evidence today, most of what constituted as urban heritage in Canadian cities was related to white Anglo-Christian cultures reflected in colonial monuments and symbolic historic properties. The recognition of other ethnic groups like Eastern Europeans, Asians, or First Nations peoples in the urban landscape was either anecdotal at best, or at worst, simply erased as in the notorious case of Africville, Nova Scotia (Nelson, 2008). In these cases, lower income districts in the inner city, many of which disproportionately housed ethnic minority populations, were readily destroyed under the banner of urban renewal and highway construction. “In terms of legitimation”, argues Graham et al. (2000, 42), the selective protection of particular heritage and the disregard or destruction of others can be “interpreted as one means of perpetuating elitist control and power, if not always with conscious intent”. These authors also highlight the role of conservation trusts, a growing mix of public and private organizations, as long standing ‘paternalist institutions’ which have played a role in perpetuating an unequal application of urban preservation. For instance, national trusts, public institutions like Heritage Canada (now the non-profit Heritage Canada Foundation) or The National Trust (U.K.), have traditionally focused their preservation efforts on showcasing elite Anglo culture, the recognition of particular class and ethnic-based interpretations of what constitutes either national, regional or local identities (Tunbridge, 1981). In more recent decades, however, urban heritage, controlled under a vari-

ety of conservation organizations at multiple institutional scales and, increasingly, through private funding, has expanded to include the more vernacular built heritage of other cultural and class-based groups. This is not to say that heritage has been relinquished as a instrument of class power, but rather that the scope of the meaning of heritage has grown to encompass an increasing array of landscapes, properties and places as sites of social and, increasingly, economic value.

3.1.2 Urban Heritage as Economic Resources

The re-development and celebration of industrial spaces in the post-industrial era is an example of the widening criteria of heritage. To be sure, much of the relatively new focus on preserving industrial districts and properties in urban centres is attributed to their commercial appeal by a largely middle class market (Merriman, 2009). The explosion of industrial museums, the collection of antiquated manufacturing technology and the recognition of entire industrial landscapes is now a common strategy of the heritage tourism industry and as a lucrative elements in local economic development (see for instance Lucie Morisset's (1998) work on the bid to recognize Arvida (Québec), an Alcan industrial village, as a UNESCO World Heritage Site). Critiquing the rampant commercial heritagization of England's industrial past, historian Robert Hewison (1987, 9) argued that "[i]nstead of manufacturing goods, we are manufacturing heritage, a commodity which nobody seems able to define, but which everyone is eager to sell". Although the livelihood of many post-industrial towns and the preservation of countless inner-city districts now rest upon middle class desires and dollars, critics like Hewison continually point to the conflicts inherent in the relationships between the values of conservation and the pursuit of economic interests. The issues of commodifying heritage for profit have raised concerns about the types of narratives and (hi)stories of the past that have been selectively 'cherry-picked' to ensure their desirability to specific consumers (see Rofo and Oakley, 2006; Waitt, 2000). But of course, these issues also result in other debates surrounding the challenges and impacts of valuing heritage as a commodity. Some scholars debate the process by which tourism, for instance, consumes and alters heritage. As Brian Graham (2002, 1007) puts it: "taken to an extreme, the economic commodification of the past will so

trivialize it that, arguably, it can result in the destruction of the heritage resource which is its *raison d'être*." The preservation and maintenance especially of large tourist-heritage landscapes can thus generate conflicting sentiments by the differing groups involved, ranging from, for instance, those who might see the process as "successful and profitable providers of satisfying heritage experiences", to those who critique it as "little more than stage-sets for mock...displays and tawdry souvenir shops that demonstrate the primacy of economic advantage" (Graham, 2002, 1007).

In the American urban context, Sharon Zukin (1982b) explains that by the 1960s historic preservationists and local elites, many of whom were the children and grand-children of the nation's industrial workforce, began defending industrial spaces throughout the eastern rust belt cities as both a cultural and economic strategy. The dramatic revaluation of these areas occurred in part from a growing middle class taste for the industrial aesthetic, a classed perspective that, over time, came to see factories as vaguely familiar but ultimately 'enchanted' artifacts of the not too distant past (Zukin, 1982b, 75). Indeed, through the disuse and obsolescence of manufacturing culture, and also through the influence and emulation of European attitudes toward the preservation of historic urban structures as economically viable spaces, many middle and upper class urbanites began to perceive a social, cultural *and* economic value in keeping aged buildings in continuous use. Here is an example of the push to expand the meaning of urban historic spaces from simply fossilized symbols of identity, to include an economic value that acts further as an instrument in urban economic development. In fact, urban heritage now increasingly plays diverse roles in local development strategies including, but not restricted to, its use in forging and promoting urban cultural industries (Evans, 2002; Hannigan, 1998), urban tourism (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2000), urban economic clustering (van Aalst and Boogaarts, 2002; Hutton, 2008), place promotion (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2010), and, urban revitalization (Ley, 1996; Olds, 2001; Strom, 2002). Importantly, such interpretations of the built history of aging cities have consistently led to a re-negotiation of urban heritage as resources to be consumed, traded, packaged and marketed, practices which are firmly couched in the expanding entrepreneurial and neoliberal agendas of advanced Western cities (Evans, 2003; Hackworth, 2007; Negussie, 2006; Zukin, 1995). That is, over the

last many decades public sector investment in property conservation has continually declined leaving an increasing responsibility on private and voluntary sector actors to care for the renovation, rehabilitation and maintenance of designated buildings and districts.

Taking a step back, it is important to note that the economic valuation of heritage, however much it might be in conflict with other socio-cultural views, primarily derives from the fact that the preservation and interpretation of heritage resources costs an increasingly large amount of money. As Gregory Ashworth (forthcoming) points out “all heritage needs investment for its maintenance and for the realization of its potential utility, for whatever purpose”. But unlike other types of economic investment in the built environment, the relationships between investments and returns and the types of decision making that are involved in the preservation process are rather complicated. In his analysis of the ‘uneasy relationship’ of economics and conservation, Ashworth (2002) describes several key issues of heritage management in the contemporary city, three of which are worth discussing here.

The first issue reflects the fact that heritage (as artifacts, experiences, places and built properties) are difficult to value and calculate in the same way as most other goods and services in the market. Because heritage is valued in various and sometimes conflicting ways, demand is not equated only with direct consumption. Rather, since heritage is often produced to “satisfy deferred, option, existent or bequest demands” its pricing is largely determined through the aggregation of these direct and indirect valuations.¹ But such pricing is always imperfect and is fraught with incalculable cultural, social, and ethical dimensions – what Bizzaro and Nijkamp (2005) simply call a “social complex value”. As Ashworth (2002, 12) explains: “[w]hat cannot be priced cannot be valued, in the sense of compared with other priced commodities”. Of course, without clear values and prices it is equally difficult to locate appropriate markets for heritage commodities. The sustainability of heritage products, and especially built heritage properties, requires consistent inputs of capital, labour, and space, as well as the intervention by particular managers (political and private), which in turn enable and mediate heritage products to

¹Such valuations can be further monetized through a variety of pricing techniques like hedonic and contingent modeling (Ashworth, 2002; Stabler, 1996)

compete for all types of consumers. Without viable economic values and realistic pricing, defining consumer and producer markets, in this case as real estate, are thus particularly onerous.

The second issue concerns the notion of externalities. In this case, the costs and benefits of most heritage properties are not simply borne by owners or occupiers alone. Rather, heritage is largely produced as a 'public good' (Lichfield, 1996) and as such its consumption involves others who do not necessarily pay for it. As Ashworth (2002) notes because heritage tends to be a collective as opposed to an individual pursuit, public intervention is often justified in order to properly manage the distribution of costs and benefits between the public and private sectors.

The third and last issue involves the unique relationship between the costs of investment in heritage and its returns. In particular, the investment-profit cycle of heritage properties does not readily fit a straight economic model whereby an investor reaps benefits from restorations and renovations and realizes either profit or loss on the transaction as indicated by the rate of return to capital (Ashworth, 2002, 13). Certainly the issues of value and externalities addressed above compound the complexities of this type of investment, but Ashworth (2002) also highlights that investments in heritage tend to be 'front loaded' and 'all-or-nothing' ventures. In the case of front-loading, heritage properties generally require much capital expenditure and investment in the initial stages of redevelopment, but only effectively release their benefits over several generations. Official listings and designations, popular instruments of heritage protection, also fix further long-term investment responsibilities on the existing owners – a point which has been made by others (Lichfield, 2009; Stabler, 1996) to describe how such mechanisms can lead to an initial fall in property values even though values consistently rise in the longer term. Furthermore, especially evident with listings and designations in place, the restoration and maintenance of heritage buildings is rarely possible with small 'incremental investments', but instead tend to be all or nothing projects (Ashworth, 2002, 14). In this case, a long-term critical mass of financial commitments is generally necessary to realize future returns on a rising market.

All of this is to say that some rather complex economic decisions are consistently being made regarding the preservation of built heritage. Along with socio-cultural questions regarding whose heritage to protect, we must also ask 'who is

doing the protecting'? With the various economic decisions described, it is increasingly clear that all stakeholders involved in the heritage market are constrained by the unique contexts and uses of heritage. In the urban environment, perhaps more than anywhere else, the costs of maintenance, interpretation and display of built heritage are at their highest especially in terms of their location and value in local real estate markets. Fundamental questions of control and management have thus long been a part of the heritage landscape: should built heritage be a completely public or completely private affair, or, should there be a mix of approaches?

By and large most commentators agree that a level of public intervention is required to protect community interests in heritage especially in urban locations where property markets and real estate investors tend to value land and speculate on re-development options rather than value existing properties. Under a fully privatized system, the financial costs and other externalities associated with renovations and restorations may deter any worthwhile effort of heritage protection. Most often state-based listing and designations, of individual buildings or entire districts, can effectively control and demarcate private re-development options and "reassure the individual that private investment will be profitably secure and that externalities are likely to be positive rather than negative" (Ashworth, 2002). However, some argue that public intervention need not go too far. Government involvement should act to stimulate individual investment in heritage not "substitute for it" (Ashworth, 2002, 16). Besides raising public costs in heritage development, too much intervention potentially precludes development alternatives that might be considered as 'higher and better' use especially on desirable urban land or in costly centrally located buildings that carry strict development restrictions. "Restructuring the capacity to change", argues Ashworth (forthcoming), "can be a serious constraint upon the continuous evolution of cities", a process described by Baer (1995) as a "conservation time-bomb". In other words, as more and more buildings age and as economic and financial resources are committed to conservation efforts, a swelling list of eligible heritage properties potentially chokes development. As Ashworth (forthcoming) puts it: "an economic mortgage is taken out on the future, to provide for what the present perceives to be its needs, to be paid by the sterilisation of scarce urban space and the fossilisation of historic forms and morphologies as well as by a financial burden on future public and private funds."

Of course not all heritage conservation programs exist at one of these two extremes. Rather the choice of conservation strategy often depends on the views of various societies and based upon the participation level of the various sectors (i.e. private, public and voluntary) at various scales, including, national, regional and local (Howard, 2003; Pickard, 2001). In the next section, I highlight the management of heritage conservation in Ontario and Toronto and explore the roles and relationships between various sectors and actors responsible for the city's religious built heritage.

3.2 Managing Urban Heritage: Preserving Built Form and Religious Culture

“Change and recurrence are the sense of being alive – things gone by, death to come, and present awareness. The world around us, so much of it our own creation, shifts continually and often bewilders us. We reach out to that world to preserve or to change it and so to make visible our desire. The arguments of planning all come down to the management of change” (Lynch, 1976, 1)

By the early 1970s American planning theorist Kevin Lynch had accumulated and shared a wealth of knowledge about modern urban design and the experiences that such places had engendered on generations of urbanites. In his widely popular book *The Image of the City* and also in what became his favourite work, *What Time is this Place*, Lynch (1964, 1976) approached cities from the viewpoint of the user and the resident, a humanistic perspective which departed from the privileged technical gaze of urban experts. The modern city, a metropolis that had risen from advanced industrial production and expanding global networks, had become a place of considerable change, a place where ‘attachment’, ‘roots’, and ‘personality’ – the subjectivities of the urban experience – had been ignored in the name of ordered growth and prosperity. In effect, urban planning for Lynch became quite clearly a practice of *managing change*, a process that necessarily required, among other things, the careful protection and display of history and heritage in order to foster ‘good urban form’.

To be sure, Lynch's approach to the city was couched in a sentiment of anti-

modernist planning that had emerged largely in reaction to a progressive post-war urbanism. By the 1950s, cities across North America were quickly stretching beyond their boundaries through complex, and expensive, networks of freeways while much of their inner cities were abandoned, ignored or entirely re-developed. In fact, new development in the suburbs for the rising middle-class were eventually paired with private and public-sector intervention in 'slums' like St. Louis' Pruitt Igoe, Montreal's Jeanne Mance, or Regent Park in Toronto. Borrowing heavily from the Le Corbusier's 'Tower in the Park' concept, modernist design platforms simply replaced many bulldozed central-city neighbourhoods and offered vulnerable communities 'proper' social environments, clean and sanitized spaces that provided the order that was apparently lacking in the city. While this technical fix was most evident in urban renewal schemes, the modernist approach to urban building also re-defined other portions of the North American city. Highways and high-density tower blocks became the preferred form of the modern corporate society. These features largely squeezed out older architectural cultures in the name of rational and controlled urbanism. The rise of concrete and its numerous aesthetic forms like Brutalism or the 'space craft' style, quickly replaced architectures of old in corporate structures of the central business district and in public buildings, like city halls. In Toronto, as in other Canadian cities, large concrete forms rose from the dust of ornate Victorian buildings and other less celebrated but still distinct forms. Toronto's iconic new City Hall, CN Tower, and numerous corporate office blocks (e.g. Manulife Centre, The Sheraton Centre) are all fitting examples of modernist features built into the inner city landscape from the 1950s to the early 1970s (McClelland and Stewart, 2007) (Figure 3.1). These features, combined with new roads and surface parking (enabling ever-expanding car communities), multi-block shopping facilities, and dense slab-like apartment complexes, quickly pasted over much of the city's past. Preserving and protecting the old was simply not a priority. This modern culture was a culture of the new, a preoccupation in city building that razed built material heritage at a rate that former New York City preservation commissioner Anthony Tung (2001, 15) considers as "unmatched in human history".

The dramatic transformations in the city and the destruction of architectural assets eventually led to a growing resistance by local communities, civil activists,



Figure 3.1: Modernist Architecture in Toronto: Toronto's City Hall, circa 1965 (left); The Manulife Centre, circa 1974 (right), (Jonn Gilbert, April, 2012)

and design-oriented professionals. Reformers like Jane Jacobs (1961) unyieldingly questioned the wisdom of planning experts and their abstract designs so that by the mid-1960s ample critiques circulated arguing that modern planning was a model for monotonous, placeless and anonymous city living. According to these voices the formula of city making was seriously flawed. In her landmark book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs (1961) challenged planners, city managers and residents to think differently. Her popular treatise argued for embracing diversity and complexity, building for density and for protecting and conserving heritage places. Rather than demolishing entire neighbourhoods for 'impersonal' high rises, Jacobs fought for making new connections and establishing renewed interests in city parks, social and land-use diversity, mixed and ethnic neighbourhoods, meeting places, and old buildings.

Although Jacobs' work was an all out assault on modernism, it did prove increasingly relevant in contemporary conservation movements. Of course, urban preservation movements were well underway before the likes of Lynch or Jacobs. The beginnings of historic preservation, especially in the United States and Canada, are found in the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These were important periods that produced a number of institutions and ideals, not to mention countless officials, activists and professionals, that have since instructed contemporary practices of urban preservation (Page and Mason, 2004). But beyond these early efforts, the reform wave that took hold in the post-war metropolis was one that was increasingly involved in debates about the social and economic character of the city. Preservation efforts no longer aimed only at fossilizing the past – although there was certainly some of that – but rather focused on exploring new alternatives to city building. These were social reform ideals that would enable and celebrate meaningful urban spaces and environments by caring for aesthetic character and differences and by providing for new social and economic uses of heritage places. For her part, Jacobs argued for the protection of aged buildings primarily as a means to sustain and invigorate diverse local communities. “Large swathes of new construction built at one time are inherently inefficient for sheltering wide ranges of cultural diversity, population diversity, or business and commercial diversity”, she wrote (Jacobs, 1961, 191). Accordingly, old buildings, and not necessarily “museum piece old buildings ... or those in an excellent and expensive state of rehabilitation”, needed saving (Jacobs, 1961, 198). By encouraging a “good mingling” of all types of older and aging buildings, Jacobs was stretching the boundaries of conservation beyond its traditional scope of preserving simply monumental architecture. Preservation in this case meant also the protection of extra-local built forms, that is, of quotidian buildings and structures that may offer little in the way of outstanding symbolic value but which might still play an important cultural and economic role at the neighbourhood scale.

While Jacobs certainly had her critics, her reform message was quickly taken up by neighbourhood movements and local political regimes on both sides of the border. Ethnic and working class residents but especially the professional middle classes followed Jacobs' prescriptions for a *post*-modern urbanism. In Vancouver, for instance, opposition to a freeway system and the demolition of the Chinatown-

Stathcona neighbourhood sparked the formation of a “loose coalition” of urban professionals that eventually formed a liberal municipal reform party in 1968 called The Electors Action Movement (TEAM) (Ley, 1987). As Ley (1987, 45) argues, TEAM steered Vancouver’s development away from modernist approaches by “replacing a strategy of growth boosterism [with] the pursuit of ‘quality of life’”. Denouncing the formulaic designs of previous pro-business City Councils, TEAM’s reform platform pushed for careful ‘place-making’ to create “a humane city” not “the city efficient” (Ley, 1987, 45). Although this strategy was perhaps most notable in the False Creek re-development plans, TEAM also activated a city-wide post-modern practice by heeding much of Jacobs’ directives: dismantling the free-way plans, down-zoning inner city districts to exclude the construction of high-rise towers, expanding parks and pedestrian areas, building cultural and recreational amenities, and encouraging development with mixture of uses, tenants and building ages (Ley, 1987, 45).

In Toronto, the city that Jacobs would eventually call home, a similar culture of resistance took place. Like Vancouver, resident groups, activists and local municipal reform parties were instrumental in steering urban development away from large-scale modernist planning. Early conservation efforts were made in response to dramatic proposals that would re-make many of Toronto’s central city areas. For instance, the lofty modernist dream of Mayor Nathan Phillips (1955-1962) that sought to demolish and rebuild the old city hall sparked much debate in the mid-1950s and spawned the formation of ‘Friends of Old City Hall’. This was an unprecedented organization of architects, ‘historical building buffs’, and others interested in civic affairs, a group which John Sewell (1993, 140) explains “represented the solid middle-class professional ... [they] knew all the tricks about reading reports, writing to politicians... and generally making it clear its members would not permit Old City Hall to be demolished without a fight”. In the end, re-development plans were modified to conserve and protect the old structure while making way for the new city hall building in the adjacent block. Perhaps more importantly, the fight to conserve the structure set the tone for future planning and development in the city. As Sewell (1993, 144) remarks “[h]enceforth schemes that required wholesale demolition would not have an easy time of it. Modernists had to modify their approach, saving whatever buildings they were required to spare”.

Indeed, future building efforts like the proposed demolition and re-development of the Union Station, the renewal of lower income neighbourhoods like Regent Park and Trefann Court, and, perhaps most significantly, protests over the proposed Spadina expressway were consistently met with stern opposition. In fact, by the early 1970s a coalition of middle class urbanites, many of whom took part in the fights to preserve the city's historic buildings and repel calls for urban highways, continued their conservation goals by electing a reform-minded city council. Under David Crombie (1972-1978) the post-war modernist project in Toronto was severely reduced, making way for city-building philosophies that encouraged many of the 'good' planning strategies outlined by Jacobs. Discussing the transformation in Toronto, Sewell (1993, 198) explained that "there was no mistaking the intention or the result of the reform wave that gained a foothold in the city ... the day of destroying the existing city to replace it with a new Jerusalem was over".

In a relatively short time, the grassroots organizations, local coalitions and reform governments fighting for urban heritage conservation re-wrote planning ideology across the country. Out of the growing discontent of the modern age urban heritage became an important remedy. Far from being relegated to fossilized museum-like works, heritage has been re-conceptualized to include all types of architectural forms in singular properties and even as larger district-size areas. Moreover, the preservation of built form has come to mean much more than the representation of monumental or mythic narratives. Along with underpinning 'quality' social and cultural environments in the city – what Jacobs called 'people places' – the protection, renovation and re-use of heritage properties has become an increasingly important economic driver in contemporary central city development. This emerging reality has in turn encouraged increasing debate and interest among local residents as well as private and public institutions and has pushed for new forms of protection for vulnerable historic properties – a practice that has been made possible by reforming heritage and planning legislation at multiple scales.

3.2.1 Heritage and Planning Legislation in Ontario and Toronto

Emerging out of the protests and public rejections over the wide-scale modernist projects in growing cities like Toronto was a new ethos of heritage planning. By the

late 1960s Canadian authorities beyond the local level began revising their visions of urban futures to include distinct spaces of historical value, places that enabled each generation to “pass on cultural values through heritage sites which represented them” (Shipley, 2010, 83). As result, like most land-use planning, heritage conservation became chiefly a responsibility of each province, a process which led to the development of provincial legislation like the 1975 *Ontario Heritage Act* (OHA). In line with the 1964 Venice Charter², of which Canada is a signatory, the OHA authorized local governments to enact preservation practices. Most notably the original OHA (1974) provided the statutory framework for heritage recognition through producing local expert advisory boards (or Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committees, LACAC) that reported to municipal councils and provided mechanisms (i.e. designation and easement agreements) that “protected properties to be of architectural or historic interest, whether singly or in districts” (Fram, 2003, 204). A rather general approach, the OHA was successful at steering a new legislative culture in Canadian planning practices and, more specifically, at “induc[ing] second thoughts toward development practices and inculcating attitude changes, including the economic benefits of heritage conservation” (Tunbridge, 2000, 271). But however important these changes were in terms of a paradigm shift in planning, the OHA was arguably limited due to a set of ideological principles that created obstacles to effective implementation. According to Canadian heritage scholar Robert Shipley (2010, 84) effective heritage programs have traditionally been given only marginal legitimacy due to an “all-too-common notion that little is old enough... to warrant preservation”. What counts as heritage has long been dominated by specific views of what we understand as ‘old’, ‘antique’, and ‘traditional’, perspectives that carry privileged views of culture and history. Other architectural forms, as we have seen above, have simply not fit the category of heritage and have thus been consistently omitted from official protection. Furthermore, Shipley (2010, 84) also highlights that individual attitudes towards the sanctity of private property and the perceived impacts of heritage designation have discouraged the protection of many privately owned structures. “In general”, he

²The Venice Charter was produced by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1964 and provides the basic guidelines for the conservation, restoration, and safeguarding of international heritage monuments and cultural heritage.

argues, “people do not like property restrictions” (Shipley, 2010, 84). As I have discussed above, the combination of pricing issues, market externalities and preservation tools like designations and easements restrict what owners can do to their properties. One result is that many owners of historic property fear that heritage conservation reduces the pool of potential buyers willing to accept heritage restrictions and thus diminishes the potential market price for their properties. These perceived limitations create a continual conflict across Canadian cities and this is a particularly important issue for religious institutions which seek to maximize their property returns – a point to which we shall return.

Influenced by these complex obstacles, the original OHA offered only modest levels of protection by way of a nine-month stay on property demolition and rather minimal fines for non-compliance (Tunbridge, 2000). As Shipley (2010, 84) notes, the OHA lacked any real force as the LACACs were committees of appointed volunteers that could only make *recommendations* on the designation of historically and architecturally significant properties to their municipal councils. Even if a building received designation owners still had the power to exempt themselves from the process and follow through with a demolition after the waiting period. This lacuna, according to Catherine Naismith (in Shipley et al., 2006, 19) of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, led to an arguably ineffectual “culture of compromise” whereby numerous significant properties were lost in the process. For instance, Shipley and Reyburn (2003) found that over 400 designated or listed buildings in 22 Ontario communities have been demolished over a 15-year period, a fact that proved that municipal councils had little power to prevent the gradual loss of many local historic structures.

Responding to these inadequacies the government of Ontario passed comprehensive amendments (under Bill 60) to the OHA in 2005 to strengthen and improve heritage protection, including providing municipalities with the authority to refuse an alteration or demolition application for a designated heritage property or heritage district subject to a right of appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). In effect, the current OHA now provides most stakeholders and community groups with more negotiation power in terms of protecting properties long-term. But of course, not all groups agree with the changes. For some, like religious organizations, the amendments have become a source of contention since the power to

control the future of aging and costly buildings, whether in cost-minimizing demolitions or for profitable sale in the private real estate market, are reduced.

The formation of the OHA in the mid-1970s also sparked a considerable transformation in heritage preservation planning at the municipal level. With the rise of reform minded governments and a transition to alternative planning strategies, several key public actors, like the Toronto Heritage Preservation Services (HPS) and Heritage Toronto, among others, have evolved to manage and administer the growing number of heritage listings throughout the City of Toronto. The creation of Toronto's HPS was a first step in providing an expert presence and oversight in City Hall. As part of Toronto's City Planning Division, the HPS both advises and assists city council, the Toronto Preservation Board³, and community and property owners concerning the conservation of Toronto's various heritage resources. Since the mid-1970s HPS has been responsible for advising these stakeholders on matters relating to the OHA as well reviewing development proposals which may impact heritage resources, developing local heritage policy (including providing heritage research and recommending heritage listings, designations, and easements), and administering financial assistance programs.

In line with the HPS are non-for-profit organizations like Heritage Toronto. Originally formed in 1949, Heritage Toronto – then the Toronto Historical Committee – was the principal organization involved in the management of heritage at the municipal level. Becoming a registered charity in the late 1960s and then an advocacy group after amalgamation in 2000, Heritage Toronto finally became a voluntary agency of the City of Toronto which works with local residents, heritage experts, and local community groups to advocate, promote and protect local heritage sites across the city through research initiatives and heritage programming.

Even with the strengthening of the OHA and the continued participation of key heritage agencies, the designation and protection of Toronto's built heritage is far from guaranteed. The demolition or substantial re-development of numerous heritage sites continues especially in an urban context where growth and development often prioritize private-sector large-scale building. As Shipley (2007) notes there still remains a resistance to protecting what has not been designated in Ontario.

³The Toronto Preservation Board is the City's official municipal heritage committee that includes members of City Council, community representatives and local citizens.

Again much of this resistance lies in the perceived costs associated with sustaining and re-using historic structures, but also speaks to the capacity of heritage agencies to keep up with the pace of change given the resources and political will at hand.

These and other local heritage issues were examined in a recent report by Heritage Toronto and The Toronto Historical Association (2011). Through extensive consultation with the Toronto heritage community (including the public, private and voluntary sectors) the report found that the HPS is both understaffed and under-resourced given the lengthy list of historic properties endangered from development. At present, the HPS is in the undesirable position of ‘scrambling’ to designate structures often after an application for demolition is submitted. As result, numerous buildings and heritage sites have been reported lost. Furthermore, according to the report, the reduced capacity of HPS is also due in part to a general undervaluing of heritage at the political level. In this case, many in the heritage community felt that most elected officials were not aware of or interested in the environmental implications and social-economic values of preserving local heritage resources – a situation that has translated into less funds and staff support concomitant with preservation needs (Heritage Toronto and The Toronto Historical Association, 2011). Other findings suggest that heritage is insufficiently embedded in the planning framework at both the municipal and provincial levels. Concerns over legislative and planning processes, like the role of OMB of which many believe unreasonably sides with developers over heritage interests, the vagueness of heritage in the City of Toronto Official Plan, and the remaining weaknesses of the current OHA in granting local authorities sufficient power to stay demolition, remain as considerable challenges in the city’s heritage mandate.

Many of these issues are also raised in relation to specific properties in the city. Returning to our central topic, the culture of heritage conservation and the transformation of planning and legislation has had profound and lasting impacts on religious groups and their vast property holdings throughout Toronto. But while residents and conservation groups have been quick to seek protection for many of the city’s religious built heritage, other stakeholders like religious organizations have been less interested in preserving their structures especially if it means restricting the conditions on the sale of expensive properties in the local real estate market. While heritage works for some, it does not necessarily work for others.

In the last part of this section, I turn to discuss the relationships between heritage and religious properties. Conceptualizing and managing religious structures as heritage have many and varied implications for different groups. The re-use of churches throughout inner-city neighbourhoods is thus part of a dynamic heritage-policy landscape that is being negotiated and re-negotiated at multiple levels.

3.2.2 Churches as Heritage Resources

“Tangible or not, the value of the church, at the local or national level, extends far beyond its immediate function as a place of worship. Whether typical or one of a kind, whether the sole monument in a little village or rural hillside or the focal point of a dense urban neighbourhood, whether small and simple or oversized, the church is still centre of something” (Morisset et al., 2006b, 22)

In key urban centres religious values and beliefs have consistently shifted in ways that are making mainline institutions re-evaluate their ministries as well as their economic practices. The transformations of religious culture described in Chapter 2 have left many religious communities with a number of challenges including finding ways to re-populate dwindling congregations and reducing rising costs associated with the administration of aging stocks of urban property. Adding to these problems are mounting pressures in the city centre for new global developments, creative places, and character housing that will entice members of the professional middle-class. These factors have diversified the local real estate market and have created new demands for redundant religious properties and lands, especially those found in central urban neighbourhoods. Under these conditions the sale and redevelopment of religious structures to private developers has often led to major renovations or demolitions to make way for higher density, and potentially more lucrative, building projects. In recent years, new efforts in preserving worship spaces in the name of heritage have transformed the process by which religious properties are rationalized. While many churches in Toronto, for instance, are no longer used as religious sanctuaries, a number are finding new uses as heritage resources – secular centres of socio-cultural and economic value.

Since the establishment of the OHA, the Ontario government, through the aegis

of the Ontario Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism and the Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT), the province's lead heritage agency, has mapped the fate of places of worship in the province. They estimate that over 12,000 "cultural heritage properties" in Ontario are now or were historically in use (Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture, 2011). Importantly, of this relatively large number only a few properties have actually received official recognition (e.g. listing) or protection (e.g. designation, easement): approximately 400 non-designated properties are listed on municipal registers; 418 are protected by individual municipal designations; 30 are municipally protected as part of heritage conservation districts; and, 25 are protected under easements held by the OHT (Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture, 2011). In Toronto alone, about 306 religious structures are either listed or designated⁴ for protection – a substantial number given the province-wide estimates. Of course, official recognition of the city's worship spaces is far eclipsed by their 'unofficial' recognition; that is, an identified significance by interested groups who envision many of Toronto's older and aging religious structures as part of the local heritage landscape. In short, historic churches are not just significant places for religious communities but are also increasingly part of a larger and evolving terrain of local urban heritage. Through both official and unofficial means, provinces, municipalities, conservation groups and residents are effectively 'heritagizing' these properties – a process that changes the ways in which they are both valued and managed by local communities and their stakeholders. No longer is the fate of many local churches solely in the hands of their religious groups, but they are also increasingly governed by secular communities who have specific views on how these properties fit within a culture of urban heritage.

In the context of this thesis, re-conceptualizing places of worship as 'heritage' represents an important step in legitimizing not just their protection but also their re-use for other potentially non-sacred means. In the process of converting local churches to upscale housing, a church's 'heritage' is (re)constructed and (re)presented as social, cultural and economic resources, tools that establish and sustain post-sacred value. Put another way, the production of church lofts is

⁴Based on data from the Heritage Preservation Services' *Inventory of Heritage Properties* approximately 180 places of worship are currently 'designated' while 124 are categorized as 'listed' (data available at: http://www.toronto.ca/heritage-preservation/heritage_properties_inventory.htm)

deeply entangled with how local communities, residents, owners and governments view and manage heritage. By identifying particular worship spaces as heritage we simultaneously shift how religious organizations rationalize, how local authorities control, how developers renovate, and how users modify these properties. But more than this, we also re-negotiate how these places are valued variously as sites of cultural significance, as places that represent identity and community, and as spaces for economic growth and development.

From Sacred Space to Heritage Resource: The Re-use of Local Churches as Heritage

The destruction of the Newgate Korean Presbyterian Church in 2003 and the subsequent protests by local community members described in the introduction of this chapter was more than a simple episode of church redundancy in the City of Toronto. In short, the destruction of the church was an example of heritage *lost*. But the protest was much less about the loss of religious heritage in the city than it was about the erasure of a local landmark and unique architecture, the loss of a valuable centre of community, and a failure of local authorities to control the pace and form of development in urban neighbourhoods. Other examples of re-development and re-use which seriously alter the historic fabric and character of older and aging structures, like the recent debate over the residential facelift of Toronto's Deer Park United Church (Bradburn, 2012), have also driven protest and concern. As a site designated by the municipality and coveted by local residents, the current proposals to strip the church and develop a 27-storey condominium-tower, has become a space of contest over what constitutes urban heritage and also what should be the means by which it is to be protected. These protests, like those happening elsewhere (see for instance, Gillis' (2010) account of similar protests in Picton, ON), speak to a growing perspective that heritage conservation should protect worship spaces beyond their original functions from primarily places of religious values to sites of wider community significance.

It is important to note, however, that such values may actually be at odds with those of the former congregations or religious managers. For some groups, the demolition of a former worship space, although lamentable, might be a necessary evil in order to meet rising operational and ministerial costs. For others still, demo-

lition may be a favourable option beyond practical reasons. As Francois Matarasso (1995, 34) argues, for some congregations, church closures can often “seem like failure” and many prefer demolition for “the [sense of] clarity and completeness” that it offers. In this case the erasure of church buildings can be considered an “emotionally preferred option” to re-use, for instance, which may become, what one Diocesan Secretary claimed, a “focus of discontent” since “[n]obody wants to walk by a furniture warehouse and say ‘that’s were I was married’” (cited in Matarasso, 1995, 34).

Even against these views, the fate of many urban churches has increasingly come under the control of public and private authorities. As described above provincial and municipal agencies along with advocacy groups and interested residents have begun to pay particular attention to the loss of the nation’s churches and are seeking ways to slow the trend in the name of protecting national, regional and local heritage. In the current context of underfunding and understaffing, especially pronounced in the City of Toronto where stocks of historic buildings are vast, an ‘all or nothing’ approach toward religious heritage – a prescription which would seek to monumentalize historic properties and leave the costs of maintenance in the hands of the public – is simply not viable. For many, adaptive re-use has thus become one of the best forms of heritage conservation as it offers a reasonable financial option for religious sellers and at the same time establishes private economical means to conserve the local historic fabric and sustain past social and economic investments bestowed upon a building. In short, by including places of worship into official ‘heritage’ through relatively low-cost designations and easements, the public can discourage demolition and encourage re-use. Moreover, even without ‘official’ means, in the contemporary city former churches have also been appropriated into a larger context of heritage at an unofficial level - that is to say, many properties are valued, whether designated or not, as sites with historic secular meaning and are often fought over by residents and heritage advocates for their significance as symbolic spaces in local neighbourhoods.

Important to understanding the condition by which churches are revalued and re-used as heritage is the notion that beyond being sources of religious capital, places of worship are also sources of significant social and economic capital. In regards to the former, based on their past functions as spaces for both religious

and non-religious community, former places of worship often retain residual social values. It is in this way that religious structures are quite unlike other outmoded buildings such as those used for industry and manufacturing, or as military establishments. For many individuals, and even those who no longer or never were involved in religious practices, local churches may have played distinct roles in family histories or remain as symbolic linkages to other forms of sacred or secular personal or community heritage. Partly because of these connections, places of worship are often viewed by local residents as ‘community assets’ in the sense that living churches have long catered to the needs of local communities by providing opportunities for volunteer work or employment to those for whom access to paid jobs might be difficult, and for a variety of non-religious events ranging from acting as polling stations during elections, as concert halls or as shelters for vulnerable groups. Matarasso (1995, 29) also argues that local churches are often “repositories for stray items of local heritage, or communal talismans like regimental colours...even the porch is pressed into service as a communal and official notice board.”

The point here is that a great deal of social investment – as time, effort and emotion – from the community *at large* is often conferred on a building over its years. In some cases, like those in smaller townships but also in certain inner city areas, worship spaces have acted as the ‘original’ community centres, as hubs for all types of social gatherings for local residents. And although much of this investment may not have any direct relationship with explicit religious values it may very well instil a level of community responsibility and ownership – a fact that can be heightened especially in stable neighbourhoods where demographic transitions are less evident. In these and other neighbourhoods support for conserving religious structures often comes from a diversity of religious and, increasingly, secular residents, individuals who share the sense that a church is part of a collective or ‘joint’ heritage. But it is important to note, however, that a ‘collective’ heritage does not necessarily extend to all residents. As I have pointed out, the preservation ethic, especially in Ontario, has routinely privileged an Anglo-Protestant culture since this was the predominant religious heritage of the ‘established’ community. Thus preservation lists and local designations tend to include a large number of ‘representative’ Protestant worship spaces, sites that speak to particular social histories.

Conserving such worship spaces as heritage is also part of protecting the identity of local urban neighbourhoods. As discussed above heritage plays an important role in forging identities especially in regard to their relationship with equally complex notions of place and landscape. At the neighbourhood level, an urban church is often an important historic and architectural presence, creating in some cases the only clear symbolic element in the local built environment. These are often landmarks in prime locations, points of local pride, which help to define place through both unique displays of historic building styles and also through their often imposing positions in the urban landscape. “Sacred buildings have, in general, a prestigious role in the urban environment and a polarizing function in urbanistic terms”, writes Pino Rauti (1989, 15). As cultural landmarks churches help organize the way we think about urban space in the sense that they act to ‘humanize’ our experiences in the landscape by inscribing meaning but also by structuring the shape, form and flow of neighbourhoods. Conflict over the proposed demolition and re-development of St. Patrick’s Church in Halifax, for instance, circulated around the loss of historic character that this landmark provides in a downtown neighbourhood, a position that it has held since 1885 (Heritage Canada Foundation, 2008, 38). Mirroring the debate about Toronto’s Deer Park United Church, many residents feared that a proposed condominium-tower will adversely transform the quiet neighbourhood and destroy the community experience. In Edmonton, the destruction of the iconic Central Pentecostal Tabernacle was designed to do just that. Voted down by City Council for ‘A-list’ heritage protection, a recommendation put forth by the city’s Historic Resources Review Panel, the replacement of the unique worship space with a mixed-use condominium complex will, according to developer Eddo Cansian (in Farrell, 2007), “help resuscitate an area now filled with decaying walk-up apartment buildings, a Rent-a-Wreck outlet, tire shops and tattoo parlors...[o]ur new building will bring people, it will bring vibrancy, it will bring up the neighbourhood”. In depressed neighbourhoods where local resistance to development is relatively low, redundant urban churches typically fall to the bulldozer. The value and centrality of urban land and the opportunities to revitalize lower income neighbourhoods like Queen Mary Park in Edmonton tend to take precedence over any residual social value of the property. Like most other forms of urban conservation, the preservation of worship spaces is increasingly tied to the

ability of local residents and heritage advocates to mobilize opposition to development and garner support from public agencies. In more affluent neighbourhoods where middle and upper class homeowners are acutely sensitive to changes in their neighbourhood character and property-values, organized efforts to lobby municipalities and preserve former worship spaces as key elements of the urban fabric have much greater chance of saving local buildings. As a sign of the unequal politics of heritage, the potential certainly exists that preservation is more successful in affluent neighbourhoods whose voices and tax-dollars often speak louder than others.

Considering this issue, it is perhaps unsurprising that local authorities increasingly list and designate churches in inner city neighbourhoods, protecting them for their social capital but also for their unique opportunities as economic capital. As I have discussed above, urban heritage sites have been increasingly valued as spaces of economic opportunity, playing a key role in local development strategies in most, if not all, cities. Urban churches, like other historic properties, are now firmly established as elements in urban revitalization schemes promoted by local municipalities often in concert with private developers. In particular, the protection of worship spaces is often intended as a development catalyst to “stimulate action in other fields” (Graham et al., 2000, 169). In some cases, the conservation of both living and redundant churches is designed as an element of a ‘culture-led’ approach to urban regeneration, a process which often involves designating significant heritage structures, or landmark buildings, in order to entice tourism and secure new development in local neighbourhoods or central city places. Examples of this process often include the protection of large living churches that continue to service local but also commuter congregations (Sinha et al., 2007). Protecting these structures still in religious use is often meant to retain a level of diversity in the urban fabric and to build a signature status in the local urban environment. The construction and promotion of *The Spire Condominiums* (33 Lombard St.) in downtown Toronto is one example of this process. This luxury address plays off both the historical significance of St. James Cathedral next door and makes use of the quiet church grounds surrounding the structure as a type of sanctuary in the city.

The protection of landmark redundant churches is also designed as a tool to



Figure 3.2: Churches as Economic Capital: The Cecil Street Community Centre (left) and former Open Bible Standard (right) in Toronto (source: Robyn Cauchy, April, 2012)

stimulate local cultural and economic change sometimes through direct public intervention. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the re-use of the former Saint-Esprit Church, now L'École de Cirque, in Québec City represents a joint public-private initiative to preserve a valuable community asset at the same time as serving as a driver for urban development in the surrounding neighbourhoods and as an anchor of arts-based development in the city and region. With approximately \$2.6 million invested by various public authorities (e.g. Québec's Ministry of Culture and Communications support program for recycling religious heritage buildings) and Québec City (a loan agreement rebate by the Urban Renewal program) and private investors, this landmark property has retained a community function while being a source of significant economic capital (Goulet and Viau, 2008). Of the few similar examples in Toronto, like the Cecil Street Community Centre in Grange Park or the former Open Bible Standard in Trinity Bellwoods, now a mixed use public-private development, heritage designations and public grants have been instrumental in forging new uses that cater to community and economic diversity (Figure 3.2).

For the most part, however, heritage protection throughout the city fulfill conservation requirements without committing public funds or assets long-term. In

fact most designations only protect the exterior façades, or ‘envelopes’, of historic structures leaving the actual function of many buildings open to local market needs. In this way, the preservation of most redundant urban churches has become a part of ‘property-led’ approaches to local revitalization. That is, by protecting and designating specific redundant worship spaces in key neighbourhoods, municipal authorities can effectively encourage private adaptive re-use, a practice that, as I argue throughout this thesis, has readily transformed religious built heritage into new forms of inner city housing. Although I discuss this issue in detail in the following chapters, it is important to note that in the case of many of Toronto’s former urban churches, heritage preservation has become a useful tool used by local authorities to diversify the housing market and encourage revitalization and upscaling in central city neighbourhoods where housing development pressures have escalated in recent years. As we shall see religious heritage has become a selling point for niche developers and discerning housing consumers who are seeking unique and novel living spaces in the city. Apart from their social and economic values, redundant churches re-made as upscale lofts also activate a type of *cultural capital* – a highly symbolic form of capital deployed by owners in the pursuit of specific urban and class-based lifestyles (in particular see Chapter 4: §4.3.3 and Chapter 8).

3.3 Conclusions: Religious Heritage in Conflict

In 2008 the Ontario Heritage Trust, in concert with the Ontario Ministry of Culture, launched a province-wide ‘places of faith inventory’, a database and research tool designed to increase awareness and capacity of conservation across heritage communities. Although described by some as a little late in the game, the inventory is the product of consistent warnings by Ontario’s heritage advocates of the substantial loss of local worship spaces in both rural and urban areas throughout the province. A wide range of places of faith, now deemed redundant by religious organizations, have made it to this and other watch lists as an increasing number of buildings are slated for demolition or redevelopment, often to make way for new urban projects. In cities like Toronto, where new development is frequently considered paramount to local economic success, redundant urban churches, and more importantly the land they occupy, are targets for developers and key financial assets

for faith groups. For heritage advocates and residents, however, historic churches are a fundamental part of the local landscape, elements of urban history, defining features of neighbourhood identity and its 'sense of place', and part of the physical morphology of cities. In short, for many, urban churches are part of local heritage.

As I have argued throughout this chapter, heritage is not a natural nor given attribute but is instead produced from complex social, cultural, political and economic values and meanings. More than this, heritage is, as Graham et al. (2000) explain, the *contemporary use of the past*, a practice that variably understands, deploys and manages both material and non-material history in order to meet the needs and demands of present societies. In this way, churches, like other forms of built material culture, are viewed as resources – historic places that retain and represent both social and economic capital. In the case of the former, churches, whether active as a worship space or declared redundant, are valued for their symbolic and material roles in local neighbourhoods and as centres of secular, as well as religious, communities. In the case of the latter, historic churches represent important elements in producing not only interesting and 'humanized' streetscapes, but also diverse neighbourhoods that encourage a variety of economic activities, and, perhaps most important in this context, entice new types of consumers and residents through their roles in revitalizing central city neighbourhoods.

But of course, the valuation of urban churches as heritage is not an uncontested issue. Rather, tension and conflict surface around questions of how historic churches should be protected and managed. On the one hand, many heritage agencies and advocates focus on preserving worship spaces in order to capitalize on their potential as social and economic resources as a public good. On the other hand, faith groups increasingly seek control over their aging assets, including their sale for new development, in order to meet present ministerial and financial demands. Thus in both cases, urban churches are valued as resource commodities, but differently so and this dissonance results in some important challenges.

The first challenge concerns conflicts over who should control the fate of historic worship spaces. In Ontario, the recent legislative changes in the Ontario Heritage Act that expanded municipalities' power to limit the demolition and development of designated structures has drawn increasing criticism from many religious organizations. For mainline groups like the Catholic, Anglican and United

Churches, all of which operate over 3000 worship spaces across the province, restrictions on their capacity to rationalize property through demolition or sale for redevelopment represents a crucial economic and operating challenge especially considering the number of buildings which are deemed redundant in response to the transformations in religious participation and the increases of building maintenance costs.

In a recent discussion paper produced for the United Church of Canada, the impact of heritage policy on redundant religious properties was of central concern. In response to the legislative changes put forth in the 2005 OHA, the authors of this report argue that “faith groups and their churches are simply not structured to, nor capable of financing the long-term preservation of church properties that they no longer use” (Lehman and Associates, 2009, 2). “Church organizations”, they claim, “must be able to make reasonable and prudent decisions regarding the use of property” (Lehman and Associates, 2009, 2). Furthermore, they argue that “using church funds to maintain church buildings that are no longer needed may benefit the general public by providing a building of historic interest, but some other church funded program will not receive funding as a consequence” (Lehman and Associates, 2009, 2). Without the ability to demolish or alter church buildings in the way they see fit, many faith groups fear that they will have too many properties to maintain up to heritage standards. From their perspective, designations and easements result in faith groups losing ‘a basic element of property ownership’, a practice that also potentially limits re-sale options in the private real estate market. Against these limitations, faith groups have made recent calls to renegotiate the ways in which heritage policy regards religious properties. In particular, some groups are arguing for a type of ‘ecclesiastical exemption’ similar to that found in the United Kingdom (Mansfield, 2007). An ecclesiastical exemption would treat religious properties that are not of national significance differently from other heritage resources by giving individual faith groups the authority, in collaboration with local heritage agencies, to alter or demolish buildings in order to accommodate changing ministerial and congregational requirements. At present, although the heritage community in Ontario is largely sympathetic, the inclusion of historic religious structures under official heritage legislation is unlikely to change. In Toronto, this means that faith groups will likely continue to promote their redun-

dant worship spaces in the limited real estate market primarily for new secular uses like housing – the most viable and lucrative re-development option.

Linked to this, a second challenge involves the impact of the consumption and private appropriation of heritage, specifically in regards to the processes of urban revitalization (Moore, 2007). In this case, we must ask: whose interests are served by historic churches revalued as heritage resources and re-used by private individuals? While the production of church lofts, for instance, offers a way of preserving a building's envelope, and thus sustaining some forms of economic and social capital, it does not readily protect a building's capacity for wider civic value. That is, conservation policies do little to retain diverse community functions, for either secular or religious purposes. The privatization of religious heritage, especially evident through residential re-use, precludes alternative public access and uses. In this context, religious heritage is primarily appropriated as an aesthetic, a commodity that is readily bought and sold by private owners and valued as economic and cultural capital. In effect, the religious values and (hi)stories of local neighbourhoods, while supposedly retained in the facades and envelopes of designated worship spaces, can become little more than ambiguous hints of a sacred past re-used to produce interesting and upscale post-modern places.

In the following chapter I examine this last point in greater detail. In particular, we move from broad discussions of religious change and the practices of heritage to focus on how these issues play out in the spaces of the city, especially with regards to neighbourhood change and gentrification. As we shall see religion and heritage are deeply implicated in the production of loft living and particularly important in driving new demands for unique and expressive housing like church lofts in the inner city.

Chapter 4

Gentrification and Loft-Living in the Post-Industrial/Post-Institutional City

“I used to believe gentrification was awesome. I liked the ‘voyageur’ aspect of it. Besides, it’s part of the natural cycle of a neighbourhood. But today’s new form of gentrification has become pre-packaged goo. Nothing interesting about it...” (forum entry by ‘Carrefour’, Urban-Toronto.ca, Nov. 28, 2008)

“As for myself, I love gentrification. As I sit in my four-level semi in Cabbagetown, having owned it since the mid-1990s, I love watching the development all around me. Regent Park, Star of Downtown, lofts, Parliament semis [sic] and better retail [are all] coming our way.” (forum entry by ‘Admiral Beez’, UrbanToronto.ca, Nov. 28, 2008)

For several decades now dramatic change in the inner cities of many urban regions has consistently fed news editorials, magazine bylines, and academic research, at the same time as it has become the subject of intense debate on internet

forums, in protest graffiti and in local demonstrations. A principal focus of this exchange centres on gentrification, once an academic term understood by few but now a process well ingrained in popular media and the public vernacular.

From newspaper headlines (“Is Gentrification a Dirty Word?” *New York Times*, 1985) which tried to capture the “emotionally loaded term” in the hopes of legitimizing massive urban revitalization schemes throughout New York City to present-day live action role-playing games in the streets of Toronto (“Gentrification: The Game!”)¹, gentrification has become normalized as a regular process in cities, loved by some and hated by others, often viewed as simply a “*natural* cycle of a neighbourhood” (Smith, 1996; Wyly and Hammel, 2008).

Even some of the early metaphors used to describe the process have become codified in the popular urban imagination. If portions of inner city New York are routinely referred to as a “Wild-Wild-West” tamed by American urban pioneers (Palen and London, 1984; Smith, 1996), then perhaps the crude Canadian analogue is the ‘voyageur’ mentioned above. Like the real voyageurs before them, these trailblazers have created new routes for expansion; an expansion intended to revitalize, modernize and domesticate the supposed gritty and moribund neighbourhoods on the urban ‘frontier’. Unlike the colonial ‘adventures’ of Canada’s earliest voyageurs, however, the history of our voyageur gentrifiers has generally followed a popular script, a process described in ‘stages’ which began sometime in the 1960s (Gale, 1979).

The early gentrifiers in the stage model, also referred to as ‘pioneers’, were primarily artists and smaller, often counter-cultural, subgroups of the middle-class. Low on financial capital, these groups invested their own labour into the design and re-novation of older, often Victorian-style, housing stock. In places like Yorkville and Cabbagetown (Toronto), Plateau and Vieux Mont-Royal (Montréal), and Kitsilano (Vancouver), the ‘mundane’ aesthetic of working-class neighbourhoods were

¹According the game’s producers (www.atmosphereindustries.com):

“Gentrification: The Game! is a transmedia game, which uses mobile technology to facilitate and augment offline gameplay. Small teams compete to collect real-world properties, “convert” them, and transform the neighbourhood. As developers, they’ll build swanky lofts, erect coffee shops, and raise property values. Or, as locals, they’ll form BIAs, make community centres, and try to thwart the developers. The neighbourhood’s changing face is tracked on a mobile web app, which updates along with players’ offline actions, and allows them to strategize while moving around. The same data is replicated on a giant sidewalk chalk map, which serves as a central meeting point.”



Figure 4.1: Tim Hortons as Gentrifier along Vancouver's Main Street (source: Matt Dyce, 2010)

eventually incorporated into an 'edgier' urban cachet and a new diversity of culture and consumption. In following stages, the existing residents were often joined by an influx of wealthier groups of the middle-class – largely 'liberal' media and creative types, and younger professionals. Typically, neighbourhood land values rose through new rounds of renovation and in response to increasing interests of developers and real estate speculators. In time, rising middle-class demand for cheaper neighbourhoods helped to diffuse patterns of gentrification and upscaling into nearby areas substantially intensifying the displacement of lower income communities (for Canadian examples see, amongst others, Caulfield, 1994; Ley, 1996; Rose, 2004).

In the later stages, financially secure but risk-averse groups of urban professionals along with savvy property developers and large retailers routinely made forays in established neighbourhoods (Figure 4.1). In response to soaring property values, rental housing stock is often broken-up or lost to the private market while local commercial properties are renovated to cater to more affluent clients.

The classic three-stage of inner-urban change may make perfect sense for many urbanites witnessing the constant transitions around them, a seemingly legible pro-

cess reproduced, in due time, from one neighbourhood to the next. As Toronto Star reporter Ryan Bigge (2010) explains: “in past years, the mechanics of gentrification have become so predictable ... that the once-messy process of urban renewal is now as tidy and rule-based as a game”. In many ways this comment hits home. The common spatialization of gentrification understood through the paradigm of the stage model offers a great deal of explanatory power for the changes found in neighbourhoods in many urban regions. But, how ‘predictable’, ‘tidy’ or ‘rule-based’ is this phenomenon?

The brief answer is that gentrification is neither a complete nor a fully mapped urban process. Paralleling our discussion of secularization and religious change in Chapter 2, and contrary to a popular narrative of ‘tidiness’, gentrification is remarkably uneven and fragmented. In fact, in a relatively short time since Ruth Glass’ pioneering observations of class change in a London borough in the 1960s, the character of neighbourhood change and gentrification has been substantially differentiated (Wyly and Hammel, 2008). By the mid-1980s, this process had evolved enough to cause considerable debate in academic circles. Indeed, the origins, motives and forms of gentrification are still deeply contested, and numerous studies of the process use various, sometimes conflicting, definitions and methods in its research (Lees et al., 2008; Rerat et al., 2010).

As a result, gentrification is now studied at a variety of different scales. Scholars routinely investigate the relationships between gentrification and globalization (i.e. Smith’s (2002) account of ‘gentrification generalized’), neoliberalism and transnational immigration (Bridge et al. 2011; Hackworth 2007; Lees and Ley 2008); offer accounts of the process in ‘other’ socio-economic spaces like gated communities, suburbia, edge cities, and the countryside (Alvarez-Rivadulla 2007; Lees 2007; Phillips 2007); explore material forms of gentrification beyond the upgrading of working class housing to include its connections to public and commercial spaces, as well as ‘new-build’ and brownfield properties in the inner city (Davidson and Lees, 2010; Hamnett and Whitelegg, 2007); and, even demonstrate the various limits and barriers to its dispersion in the advanced post-industrial metropolis (Clark 2005; Ley and Dobson 2008). Moreover, ongoing research shows that contemporary gentrification also involves a diverse range of groups. Beyond the now classic profile of the young mobile professional, gentrification

involves expanding submarkets and social groupings like single women and dual-career couples (Rose, 1984), gay households (Knopp, 1997; Smith and Holt, 2007), small non-family young adult households (Ogden and Hall, 2004), and, empty-nesters (Ogden and Hall, 2000).

With this depth of writing on the subject, one thing is for certain: gentrification and its study have continued to expand in response to the ever increasing socio-spatial and economic diversity of the post-industrial and post-modern era. Put another way, this process consistently displays remarkably contrasting *geographies* (Ley, 1996).

The ever changing geography of gentrification is a key aspect of this thesis. In particular, I will argue that contemporary gentrification is a specific force in both the production and consumption of church lofts in the inner city. In many ways the church loft phenomenon is an extension of the post-industrial loft terrain that is readily visible in the inner cities of advanced urban regions. Following the artist-*cum*-upper middle class lofts described by Sharon Zukin (1982b) in New York, church lofts are relatively new material forms of gentrification. In this case, churches, in much the same way as outmoded manufacturing and industrial properties, represent spaces of high-status housing that cater, primarily, to a specific group of the new middle class. Moreover, these are spaces of capital investment in the inner city and places that both create and contribute to the social and cultural transformation of local neighbourhoods.

With these ideas in mind, in the first section of this chapter, I highlight several explanatory forces of gentrification. Key here are the arguments about the ubiquity of the industrial to post-industrial land-use transformations in major Canadian cities. With reference to the literature in urban and economic geography, I briefly explain the changes in urban land-use, class composition, and employment characteristics – elements of a ‘new urban economy’ and, its social correlate, the new middle-class. These explanations go a long way to explain how urban centres are re-imagined and re-valued by gentrifiers and entrepreneurial agents as material spaces for new forms of housing and consumption. Armed with this broad ranging perspective on gentrification, I examine specific patterns of the gentrification process in Toronto. I briefly highlight a set of descriptive and empirical analyses by several Canadian geographers that show the establishment of particular forms

and a general spatialization of gentrification across the city centre. Moreover, I pay particular attention to the development of the loft-landscape in Toronto. I will show, that while important, post-industrial lofts are not the only significant loft type. In fact, a variety of post-institutional lofts, including re-used churches, are also figuring prominently both in established and new terrains of gentrification.

Connected to these issues, in the second section of this chapter I explore the role of culture in gentrification. A particularly important issue in this thesis, I focus on the notions of aesthetics, habitus, and lifestyle, key factors in the rising demands for symbolic living spaces, like church lofts, in the city centre. I will explore the growing literature in geography and urban studies, which show how these cultural features also underpin complex social and political postures in gentrification, including a concomitant rejection of suburbia *and* 'condo-living', the entrenchment of class positions, and ambivalence toward institutional religion. I also argue that a contemporary culture of shared dispositions, also called 'habitus', and consumption preferences mark these spaces as distinct and unique geographies of gentrification – spaces that explicitly highlight symbolic and cultural capital, distinct class fractions, and post-secular tastes.

4.1 Gentrification: Urban Change and the Rise the New Middle Class

As I have argued in the opening of this chapter, the development of gentrification research over the past several decades has been substantial. In recent research, geographers and urban scholars have greatly expanded upon the understanding of gentrification to include different forms, actors and spaces which are involved in the remaking of the urban landscape. But it is important to note that much of this work comes on the heels of important treatments of the issue by several geographers which have viewed the process quite differently.

Neil Smith (1979, 1996), for instance, has routinely highlighted capital accumulation in urban land markets as the fundamental element in gentrification. In this case, Smith's focus on the "movement of capital rather than people" underlines the capitalist land market response to devalued inner-urban land from the decades long process of de-industrialization (see Chapter 1) (Smith, 1979). 'Rent gaps',

the widening gap between the *potential* value of centrally located urban land, and their *actual* value, are argued to accentuate an unequal access to urban space, due in large part to income disparities, and changes in land values (Bridge, 2001a, 205; Walks and Maaranen, 2008b)

But others, like David Ley (1986, 1996) and Chris Hamnett (1991, 2000), point to socio-cultural and lifestyle aspects of the new middle class as central factors in gentrification – a demand-based approach which I emphasize in this thesis. Importantly, the consolidation of the new middle class is made possible by the increasing emphasis on post-industrial occupations, especially but not exclusively, in large urban regions. As described in the introductory chapter, from the late 1970s to the present the employment landscape in Canada has been increasingly defined by a related decline in the goods producing industries and a growth and diversity of service producing sectors. As in other western nations, Canadians are increasingly choosing employment in ‘new’ economy jobs (Hutton, 2008) (Table 4.1, Table 4.2). Again these are jobs that are deeply connected to new forms of information, culture, and, the production of knowledge, creativity and talent – elements that are particularly intense in key cities. Looking more closely at the growth of professional occupations in Canada’s largest cities, for instance, we see just how remarkable the changes have been. Table 4.3 shows this change in the 35-year period. Every city across the nation has experienced a positive growth in this employment category, and the three largest CMAs account for well over one third of all professional jobs in Canada by 2006 (for full list see: Vinodrai 2010, 102).

The intensification of new middle class groups drawn to inner city locations plays a distinct role in steering the political priorities of cities into alignment with the preferences and values of these groups. Far from the needs and wants of previous urban communities, new middle class ‘desires’ (Caulfield, 1989) for specific urban infrastructure and cultural facilities (e.g. green spaces, sports and entertainment facilities), historic preservation and the consumption of non-standardized commodities, has been profound in creating a new social geography of the city increasingly defined by new demands for urban space and residential morphologies.

Describing their effects in London, Paris, and New York, Hank Savitch (1988, 5) argued that post-industrialization and the expansion of the middle-class

Table 4.1: Employment (000s) by Select Industry in Canada, 1976-2008 (source: Vinodrai 2010, 93)

	1976	2008	Change	% Change	Annual Growth Rate
<i>Goods Producing Sector</i>	3,371	4,021	650	19.3	0.6%
Agriculture	464	327	-137	-29.5	-1.1%
Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Oil and Gas	255	340	85	33.5	0.9%
Utilities	110	152	42	38.3	1.0%
Construction	110	152	42	38.3	1.0%
Manufacturing	1,861	1,970	109	5.9	0.2%
<i>Service Producing Sector</i>	6,377	13,105	6,728	105.5	2.3%
Trade	1,572	2,679	1,107	70.5	1.7%
Transportation and Warehousing	563	858	295	52.3	1.3%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Leasing	526	1,075	549	104.4	2.3%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	253	1,200	947	375.1	5.0%
Business Services	161	687	525	325.3	4.6%
Education Services	677	1,193	516	76.3	1.8%
Health and Social Services	794	1,903	1,110	139.8	2.8%
Information, Culture and Recreation	347	760	413	119.1	2.5%
Accommodation, Food, and Beverages	413	1,074	660	159.7	3.0%
Other Services	427	751	324	75.9	1.8%
Government Services	645	926	281	43.6	1.1%
Total, all Industries	9,748	17,126		75.7	1.8%

Table 4.2: Employment (000s) by Select Occupations in Canada, 1971-2006 (source: Vinodrai 2010, 97)

	1971	2006	Change	% Change	Annual Growth Rate
Managerial Occupations	372	1,632	1,259	338.4	4.4%
Professional Occupations	767	3,025	2,258	294.6	4.1%
Medicine and Health Related Occupations	327	950	624	191.0	3.2%
Business, Finance, and Clerical Occupations	1,374	3,025	1,652	120.3	2.3%
Sales and Services	1,786	4,038	2,252	126.1	2.4%
Primary Occupations	666	648	-17	-2.6	-0.1%
Processing and Machining Occupations	1,210	993	-217	-18.0	-0.6%
Construction, trades, transport equipment	2,127	2,550	424	19.9	0.5%
Total, all Occupations	8,627	16,861	8,234	95.4	2.0%

Table 4.3: Employment in Professional Occupations in Select Canadian Cities, 1971-2006 (source: Vinodrai 2010, 102)

	1971		2006		1971-2006	
	Local Employment	% Local	Local Employment	% Local	Local Employment	% Local
Toronto	122,055	9.8	562,550	20.4	440,495	10.6
Montreal	106,520	9.9	403,440	21.0	296,920	11.1
Vancouver	41,6005	8.8	231,515	20.1	189,915	11.3
Calgary	20,035	11.3	140,010	21.4	119,975	10.2
Ottawa-Gatineau	36,905	14.2	175,110	27.9	138,205	13.7
Quebec City	19,480	11.0	88,785	22.4	69,305	11.5
Victoria	7,450	9.2	37,735	20.8	30,285	11.6
St. John's	4,540	9.5	20,005	20.9	15,465	11.4
Canada	766,550	8.9	3,024,560	17.9	2,258,010	9.1

entailed a social upheaval: factories are dismantled, wharves and warehouses are abandoned, and working-class neighbourhoods disappear. Sometimes there is replacement of one physical form by another – the growth of office towers and luxury high rises or the refurbishing of old waterfronts. Cafés and boutiques arise to feed and clothe the new classes. At other times the transformation is truncated and nothing but an empty shell is left behind.

In much the same way, in Canadian cities, rising disposable incomes (especially in groups of higher income earners) and new industry formations shifted demands for central urban places away from the traditional forms of production to new forms of consumption and new types of distinct, and often upscale, housing (Bourne and Rose 2001; Hutton 2008; Ley 1996).

Beginning in the early 1970s, the shift away from industrial production and employment exhausted demand for inner city factories and manufacturing spaces in leading goods producing cities like Montreal, forcing, in many cases, their closure and abandonment (Germain and Rose, 2000). So too, redundant transport infrastructure (i.e. railways, canals, docks, warehouses) that once linked manufacturing economies were eventually discarded. Remarkably, however, what were once considered obsolete became, in a relatively short time, the ingredients of a new postindustrial urbanity. By the 1980s the re-use of old industrial lands quickly became part of a ubiquitous strategy for revitalizing ailing downtowns in many Canadian cities. Local governments and a rising group of private entrepreneurs increasingly paired the preservation of heritage sites with the construction of urban parks, plazas, and new waterfronts as a means to remake the inner city as a suitable place to cultivate the lifestyles of the growing middle-class and to facilitate the movement of corporate investment capital into select areas. No longer simply an initiative at the individual and household scale, gentrification thus also includes wide-scale involvement of private-sector and institutional agents, from large real estate developers to the state whose involvement, especially from the late 1980s onward, has been one of support through market friendly-policies and public private partnerships in revitalization and densification strategies (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Quastel et al., 2012; Warde, 1991).

Waterfront redevelopment, perhaps more than other early reclamation projects, represented the ambitions of expanding cabals of inner-urban property owners, developers and politicians. In Toronto, controversial harbour-front redevelopment plans included a combination of demolition and rehabilitation of aging industrial rail-yards and warehousing districts to make way for expanding multi-use retail and entertainment-cultural zones (Hoyle et al., 1988). Queen's Quay and Harbourfront Centre, for example, were specific results of combined multi-state and private funding. These projects intentionally re-made the lakeshore in response to the changing needs of Toronto's inner city residents and businesses, a new economic reality that had cut ties with a dwindling port economy. But so too, these were sites re-designated as 'spectacles' intended to enlarge the urban public space and encourage a sense of 'play' – a setting not for production but for consumption (Ley, 1996).

Following these and other examples, vacant post-industrial sites increasingly became prime targets for large-scale redevelopment schemes that incorporated retail, housing and entertainment spaces. In fact, since the 1990s, building multi-functional 'cosmopolitan' places has taken precedence in most metropolitan areas. In these cases, the redevelopment trend in the city centre has been increasingly determined by mega-projects designed to entice national and, increasingly, international private-sector development and at the same time, cater to demands for cultural amenities like galleries, ethnic restaurants and interactive waterfronts (Mitchell, 2004; Olds, 2001). Expo- and Olympics-led initiatives, highlighted by Vancouver's private mega-development called Pacific Place, were particularly influential in this case, remaking large sections of the inner city. More recently, old industrial districts like Yaletown in Vancouver or Liberty Village in Toronto were directly involved in a combined process of residential upscaling, in the form of lofts and condominiums, and in the production of cultural quarters (e.g. new media firms, graphic/industrial/fashion design, film and television) tied to the new economy (Catungal et al., 2009; Hutton, 2008).

Although older industrial harbourfronts and manufacturing districts are commonly repurposed as flagship developments in the reconfiguration of the post-industrial city, these are not the only sources of residential infill and reuse. The growth of the new economy and its urbanized professional middle class, and new

directions in municipal planning, guided especially by densification strategies, sustainable development policies and regional economic growth initiatives, has shifted demand for both corporate and institutional (state and public) space in the inner city (Barnes and Hutton, 2009; Heath, 2001; Phipps, 2008).

In the face of global economic transformations and local shifts in corporate organization, Barnes and Hutton (2009) describe Vancouver, especially since the mid-1980s, as a “post-corporate” city. As these authors report, in Vancouver, the number of head office jobs, those primarily connected to the region’s declining staple economy, has consistently fallen over the decades, from 16 894 employees in 1999 to 11 983 employees in 2005, resulting in, among other things, a relative suspension of new office block construction in the downtown core (Barnes and Hutton, 2009, 1255). With pressures for residential development in the inner city, numerous vacant corporate offices have been converted into condominium and loft units – the BC Electric building and the iconic Westcoast Transmission Building (now the ‘Qube’ condominiums) being two examples (Barnes and Hutton, 2009, 1255-56) (Figure 4.2).

Like the residentialization of corporate office space, redundant institutional properties are also routinely targeted for reuse as inner-urban housing. These properties, however, range considerably from publicly (state) funded and managed facilities like schools, hospitals and government offices, to religious institutions and their various spaces of worship. The closure of institutional facilities is often connected to political-economic shifts, some of which are linked to the emergence of new urban politics that foster entrepreneurial and private market policies at the expense of social services. For instance, the formation of distinct neoliberal agendas, especially evident in Ontario during Mike Harris’ ‘Common-Sense Revolution’, led to the rationalization of public properties as a means to meet public-sector austerity measures (Basu, 2004). Many public facilities declared redundant were thus destroyed or sold off for new uses like housing. Likewise mainline religious institutions, feeling the bite of socio-cultural and demographic shifts associated with post-industrialism, have necessarily cut properties to meet tightening financial budgets. As described in the previous chapters, these institutions have increasingly released and sold properties to local real estate markets for private residential redevelopment. Here again, the pressure to house a growing population of urban pro-



Figure 4.2: The ‘Qube’ Condos in Downtown Vancouver (source: author’s photo, 2009)

professionals is both producer and consumer of post-industrial and post-institutional change; and gentrification has become one specific outcome of these transformations.

Some geographers, however, hesitate to consider these ‘new’ forms of residential re-development as gentrification. Canadian geographer Larry Bourne (1993), for one, has argued that the gentrification of working-class neighbourhoods is best conceptually separated from patterns of elite and middle-class ‘upgrading’. In this case, Bourne (see also Boddy, 2007) considers housing re-developments on brown-field (non-residential manufacturing) and greyfield (including “new build” condominiums and non-residential commercial or institutional buildings like churches) sites as distinct from standard gentrification since these projects do not cause any direct displacement of existing residents and communities. Others, like Davidson and Lees (2005) and Lehrer and Wieditz (2009) have argued otherwise. Although direct displacement may not occur, these authors show that non-conventional developments have lasting impacts on the character of neighbourhoods, including

reorganizing these areas into consumptionscapes for new middle and upper class residents, causing an increased desirability of specific neighbourhood areas, increases in land costs, and spiking real estate speculation. Taken together, these forces can dramatically transform local neighbourhoods and the availability of affordable housing, a process which can *indirectly* displace lower-income groups (Marcuse, 1986). In this case, lower income residents are routinely ‘priced out’ and symbolically ‘elbowed out’ of desirable residential markets, public spaces and retail areas. In some instances new build gentrification carries with it physical reorganization of public spaces, referred to in the literature as a ‘revanchism’, that encourages specific consumption based activities, while punitively deterring other types of public use and interaction (Atkinson, 2003; Macleod, 2002). In effect, the ‘class based nature’ of neighbourhoods in the inner cities of places like London or Toronto are considerably altered, a case which is also evident, as we shall see, in the upscale conversions of outmoded neighbourhood properties like churches (Davidson and Lees, 2005).

Importantly, this process also concerns what is described in policy language as an ‘urban renaissance’: “a concerted effort from all levels of government, combined with interests of the private sector, to reinvest in underused areas in the inner city” (Lehrer and Wieditz, 2009, 155; Porter and Shaw, 2009). Under this banner, new builds along with the conversion of redundant buildings for residential use are part and parcel of gentrification especially evident in the transformation of local neighbourhoods into places that cater to specific, capital rich, residents.

4.2 Geographies of Gentrification in Toronto

Toronto is a well-studied city when it comes to issues of gentrification and neighbourhood change. For decades, geographers and urban scholars have described in various detail the social and physical transformations which have occurred across the region, from massive ongoing waterfront redevelopment schemes (Lehrer, 2009), to local community upgrading (Caulfield, 1994; Slater et al., 2004), to elite resettlement of the area’s exurbs (Walker, 2000). More recent work has also uncovered deepening trends in Toronto’s neighbourhoods. In separate reports, MacDonnell et al. (2008) and Hulchanski (2010) confirm that many of Toronto’s residents are

facing increasing poverty especially concentrated in key neighbourhoods. In particular, David Hulchanski (2010) shows how Toronto is polarised into three distinct cities based on income change: an expansion of lower income neighbourhoods in the city's postwar suburbs; a consolidation of upper income neighbourhoods mostly concentrated in the inner city; and, shrinking middle-class neighbourhoods in what were Toronto's older inner suburbs. Much of these dramatic transitions are part of wider processes of change including large-scale growth of suburban regions, dis-investments in the older inner suburbs and, as described above, substantial reinvestments in inner city areas, often in the form of gentrification, as a means to cater to the growing population of urban professionals (Hackworth, 2007; Lehrer and Wieditz, 2009).

In a recent report, geographers Walks and Maaranen (2008b) mapped the timing, patterns and forms of gentrification over the postwar period in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Results for Toronto demonstrate a remarkably diverse geography, influencing and impacting much of the contemporary inner city. In terms of timing and pattern, the authors show that by 2001 gentrification and upgrading are "virtually ubiquitous", leaving only a few prewar neighbourhoods unscathed by the process (Figure 4.3).

The earliest patterns of gentrification, also called 'first wave' (from 1961-1981, labelled black and purple in Figure 4.3), were well established in stable neighbourhoods like Riverdale, Don Vale, and the Annex. But, quite clearly, these places also became influential in elevating the social status of nearby neighbourhoods. Confirming David Ley's (1996) previous data, by the late-1970s the vast majority of neighbourhood upgrading and gentrification took place in close proximity to high-status neighbourhoods, especially around the downtown edges of Rosedale and the Annex, and in areas close to the expanding subway lines which first opened in 1956 and expanded throughout the following decades (Walks and Maaranen, 2008b, 28).

By the 1980s and then into the 1990s and later, the second and third waves of gentrification (labelled in red and orange respectively in Figure 4.3) expanded outward into new territory beyond those previously established, notably to the south and western areas of the inner city, in neighbourhoods now known for their emerging or established upscale status – Little Italy, Little Portugal, Dufferin Grove, Trinity Bellwoods, and Bloor West Village. Although not as evident along the

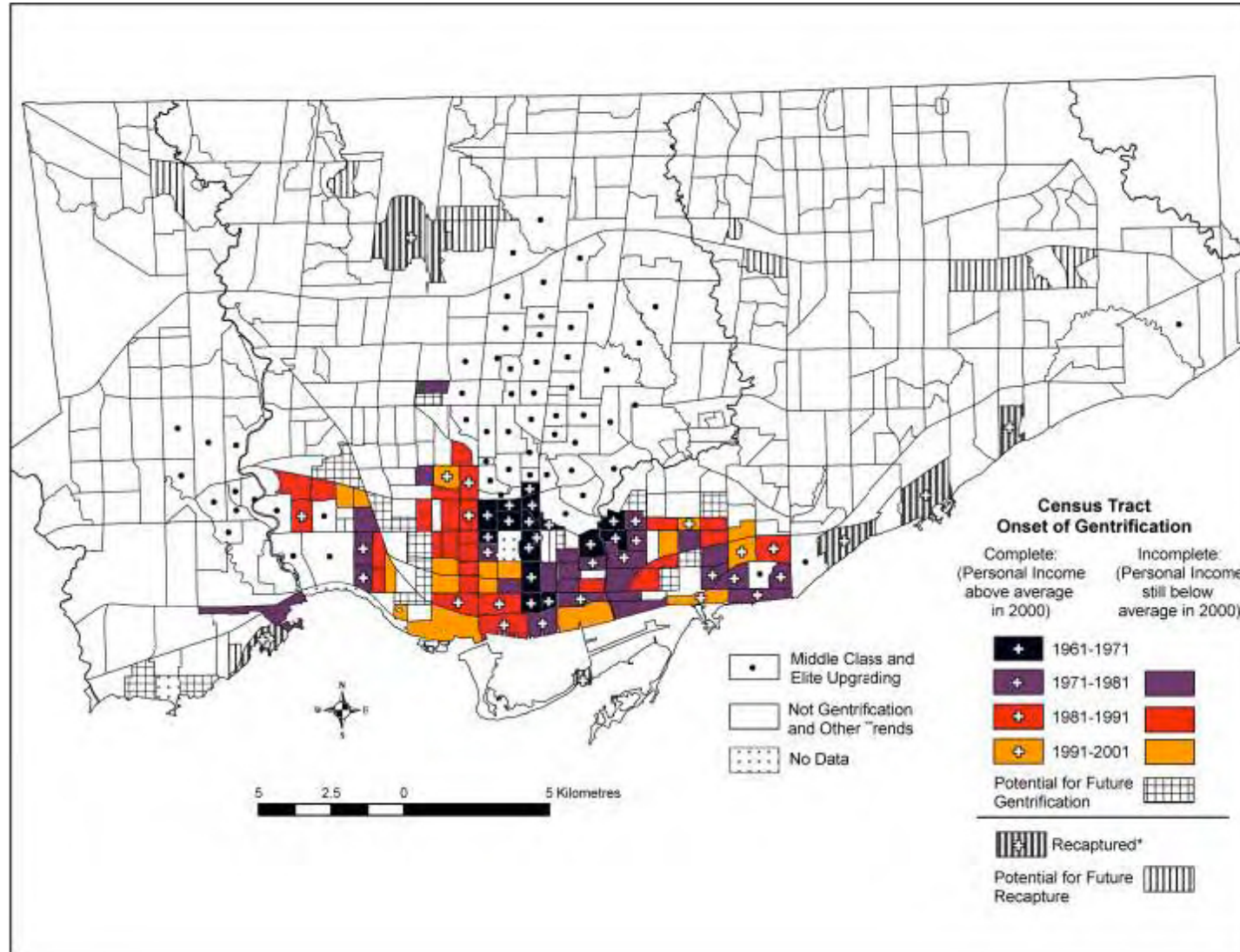


Figure 4.3: The timing and patterning of gentrification and upgrading, City of Toronto, 1961-2001 (source: Walks and Maaranen 2008b, 29)

eastern sections of the inner city, several significant pockets of advanced, later wave, gentrification have made inroads in key neighbourhoods like Riverdale and The Danforth – areas both well connected to transit and rich with high-order retail and commercial establishments. The authors note, however, that gentrification in these neighbourhoods is not necessarily ‘complete’ (i.e. neighbourhoods in which the average income remains below the metropolitan average), suggesting that new rounds of reinvestment and social upgrading are never even or homogenous. Nevertheless, the data represent a clear spatial pattern of gentrification expanding out from the inner city, especially along key transit nodes, close to emerging retail corridors (e.g. Bloor West, College Street West of Bathurst Rd.), and near existing gentrified and elite areas.

It is important to highlight here that the growth of gentrification throughout Toronto is connected to a decades-long agenda of urban renaissance – emerging urban policies that focus extensively on stimulating the economy by providing sites for capital investment, intensifying the urban fabric through seeking highest and best use, redeveloping brownfield and greyfield sites, and re-casting city spaces as ‘creative’ in order to entice new industries and their knowledge workers. It is in this way that many commentators have described Toronto as a decisively neoliberal city increasingly shaped by state intervention (Kipfer and Keil, 2002; Keil, 2002; Slater et al., 2004; Walks and Maaranen, 2008a). Beginning in the 1970s Toronto’s planning and development priorities began shifting away from blue-collar employment, housing and the traditional industries that built the city in the decades prior. Following cuts to both federal and provincial governments in the 1980s and 1990s, especially in housing and urban development, Toronto shifted rather quickly to supporting a diversifying range of private sector developers to building product for expanding housing needs in the downtown core and other priority areas.

By the mid 1990s, Toronto had made firm strides in creating a pro-business and pro-developer environment, which made possible the re-zoning of large sections of the downtown core for new uses catering to the emerging knowledge industries and professional classes. Lehrer and Wieditz (2009) see former Mayor Barbara Hall’s 1994 news conference concerning the conversion of old industrial properties along King Street West and Dufferin Street (now Liberty Village) as the landmark moment in Toronto’s neoliberal urbanism. The mayor’s announcement, they argue,

confirmed an economic perspective and political position that the revaluation and reuse of redundant urban resources are key engines in urban development. As they put it,

[the announcement was an] important signal in sparking a renewed, post-recession real estate interest in Toronto's inner city. It demonstrates a new emphasis on the re-creation of markets in the inner city, and the reintegration of former Fordist areas into the circuits of the global economy (Lehrer and Wieditz, 2009, 146).

By the late 1990s this new urban politic gained considerable steam especially as a means to support development and growth during the city's amalgamation in 1998. As Roger Keil (2002) has noted, it did not take long for Toronto to rewrite planning documents and implement planning policies, most firmly established in the *City Council's Strategic Plan*, that positioned private real estate interests into new planning practices (Toronto City Counsel, 1998). Regarded as 'soft', 'fast' and 'municipally managed' urban policy, Lehrer and Wieditz (2009, 146) argue that Toronto's entrepreneurial approach, discursively disguised as 'revitalization', has effectively "allow[ed] the socio-economic upgrading of entire neighbourhoods [...] a means for transforming Toronto into a global city". In particular, the reports and policy changes that came out from the Strategic Plan, including *Toronto Competes: An Assessment of Toronto's Global Competitiveness* (ICF Consulting, 2000), *Toronto Economic Development Strategy* (City of Toronto, 2000) and *Toronto's Culture Plan for the Creative City* (City of Toronto, 2003), set the stage for a policy environment and urban vision that prioritized the private sector and the property development industry – key components of the knowledge-based economy that has come to dominate the city's growth.

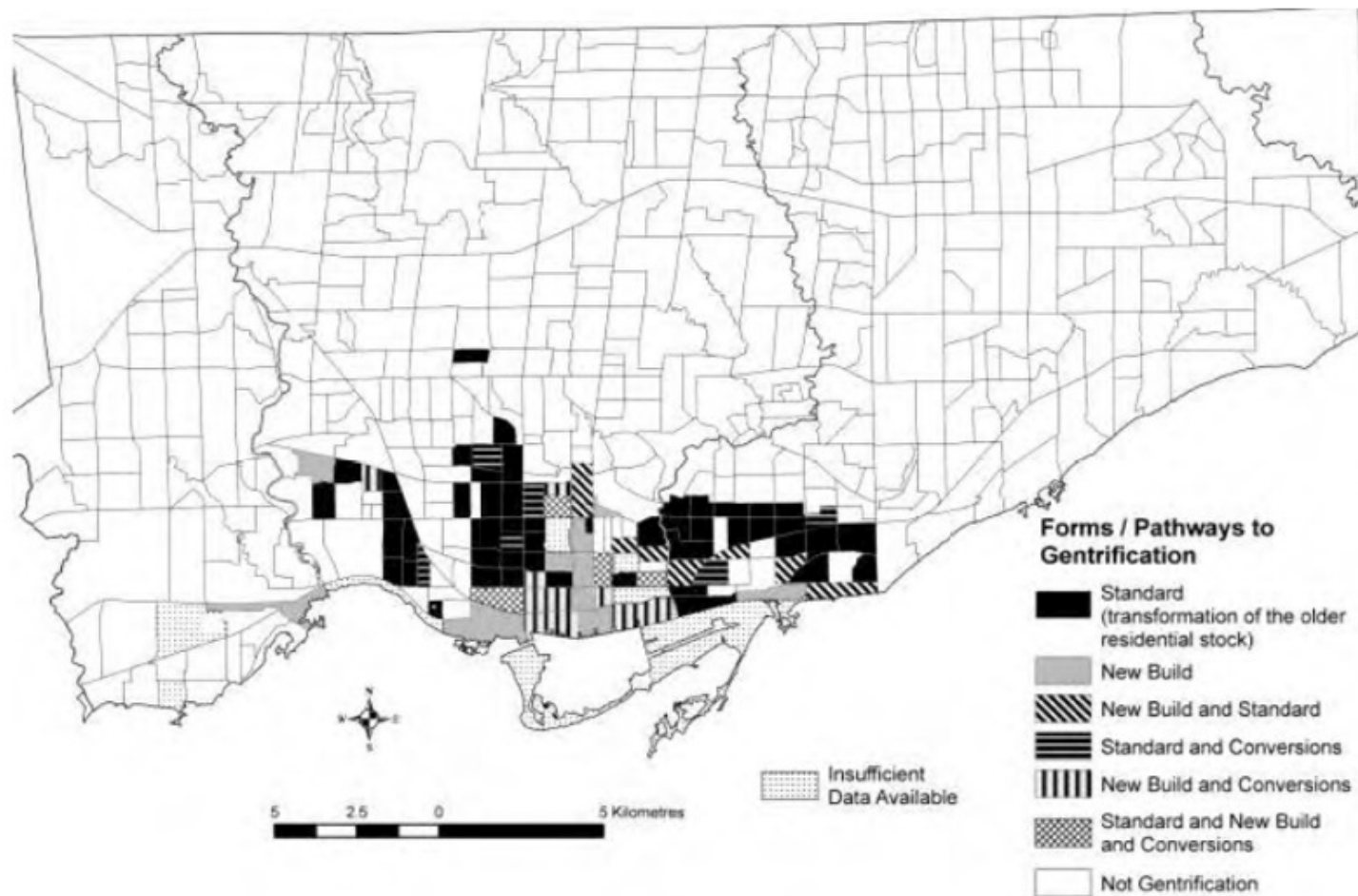
In the *Toronto Competes* report, for instance, specific policies relating to reurbanization and housing clearly demonstrate the linkages between a knowledge-based economic agenda and ongoing gentrification. In regards to reurbanization, the report focusses on attracting specific people to Toronto, groups of "highly skilled, innovation and entrepreneurial knowledge workers which are mobile" (ICF Consulting, 2000, 67-8). Moreover, the report stresses that this group is attracted through "a unique city that cannot be found elsewhere", "a city with low crime

rates...a vital arts and cultural scene, and through the production of high quality urban amenities such as shopping and restaurants” (ICF Consulting, 2000, 67-8). Here, a creative city is the lure for the creative class. Connected to this is a new vision of housing policy. In this case, the report stresses that

[p]roviding the right kind of housing in the right location [...] the availability of affordable, *funky downtown housing and loft units* [...] can play a key role in economic development. [Housing policy] must create an appropriate mix of housing, in terms of type and location geared to attract and retain the knowledge-economy workforce that drives the City’s economy. (emphasis added)

On the ground, policies like these have played a key role in shaping the different housing market forms of gentrification. In their evaluation, Walks and Maaranen (2008b), for instance, report on the upgrading and gentrification of Toronto’s housing stock in its three general forms: the ‘standard’ form, characterized by the renovation and deconversion of older residential housing stock; ‘new build’ gentrification, the construction of new dwellings; and, conversions of non-residential buildings to owner-occupied residential use (i.e. lofts), and/or the conversion of old rental apartments to owner-occupied condominiums (Walks and Maaranen, 2008b, 47).

By and large, gentrification and upgrading in Toronto are dominated by the ‘standard’ form, especially evident in the long-standing elite neighbourhoods (Figure 4.4). According to Walks and Maaranen (2008b, 51) this marked pattern is due, in part, to the “strong political voice of middle-class gentrifiers in the city which has enabled them to preserve their neighbourhoods and limit redevelopment, coupled with the ward system, which keeps politicians focused on local issues”. But in the last decades, Toronto’s very public aspirations to become, and remain, a global city and to carve a ‘competitive’ edge (Kipfer and Keil, 2002) has put considerable pressure on the city to produce many more desirable living spaces in the inner city. In this case, condominiums and lofts have been thrust into the real estate development spotlight and have dominated neighbourhood growth in the urban core. New build condominiums, especially the high-rise towers concentrated along the post-industrial waterfront and the burgeoning commercial districts along



Note: Census tract boundaries are for 2001. Forms of gentrification are shown only for gentrifying areas.

Figure 4.4: Gentrification Forms and Pathways, City of Toronto (source: Walks and Maaranen 2008b, 52)

the Yonge, Bloor, Queen and King Street corridors (Figure 4.5), are specifically important. Lehrer and Wieditz (2009) have called Toronto's rapid high-rise expansion a process of 'condofication', a practice prioritized by the renaissance agenda. In fact, this growth has been staggering: 17,000 new housing units built between 2002 and 2006, a number which represents 25% of residential growth in only 3% of City's land area (Lehrer and Wieditz, 2009, 152).²

But this also involves a variety of conversions of non-residential uses concentrated in districts bordering the east and west of the inner city where older industrial fabric still remains (Figure 4.6).

Walks and Maaranen (2008b) note, however, that the conversion-form of development was never the only source of gentrification in any of the census tracts outlined in Figure 4.4. In fact, the authors suggest that "conversions would appear to be stimulated mainly by investment in other forms, and thus a reactive process rather than the driver of gentrification" (Walks and Maaranen, 2008b, 50). Much of this redevelopment is a result of new postures to create the "funky downtown housing and loft units" so desired by the segments of the creative class. And these forms of housing are growing in number. Walks and Maaranen (2008b, 49) point out that conversions are present in over 30 percent (64 tracts) of gentrifying neighbourhoods across the central city and "in some places would appear to have significantly contributed to the full gentrification of the local neighbourhoods" (Walks and Maaranen, 2008b, 49).

Since the publication of the Strategic Plan subsequent reports fleshed out Toronto's path to urban revitalization. In both the *Toronto Economic Development Strategy* and the *Culture Plan*, the City elevated private sector real estate investments in the inner city by prioritizing, i) renovation, renewal, new development and infrastructure improvements in already existing neighbourhoods; and, ii) the improvement of Toronto's business climate by "creating an environment where businesses feel welcome, appreciated and recognized as the principal generators of employment and wealth" (City of Toronto, 2000, 87; Lehrer and Wieditz, 2009, 147).

In the 2003 *Creative City Plan* and the later *Creative City Planning Framework*

²More recently, observers have dubbed 2011 as the "year of the highrise" in Toronto, and quite dramatically so since it ranks as the world leader for the most high rises (132) under construction in 2012 (Pigg, 2011).

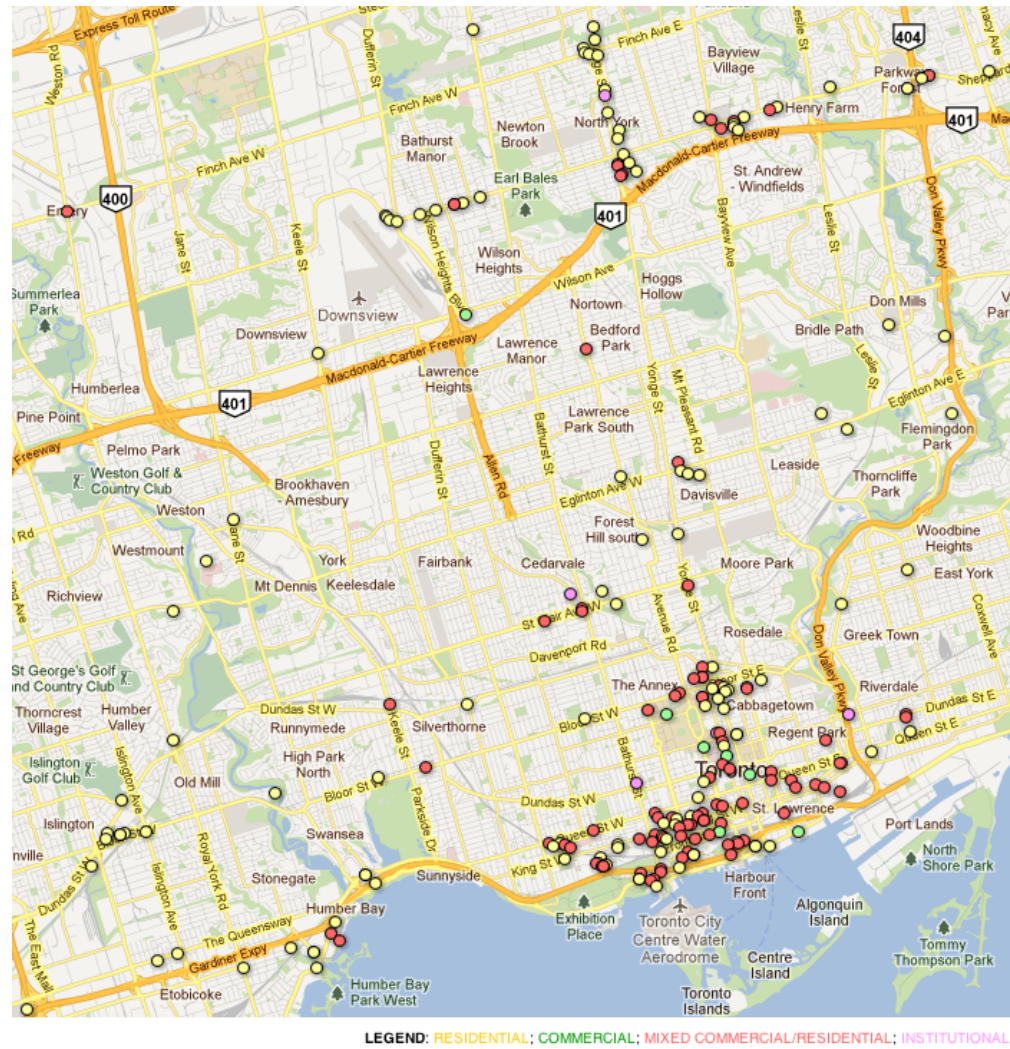


Figure 4.5: Select New Build Construction in the City of Toronto, 2011 (source: The Grid, available online: <http://www.thegridto.com/images/Map.html>)



Figure 4.6: Select Loft Conversions in the City of Toronto, 1995-2009 (generated in google maps)

(AuthentiCity, 2008), Toronto's vast 'culture capital' is regarded as a key feature of economic development. In this report, culture, arts, heritage, and ethnic diversity – elements of creative enterprise – are specifically targeted as the means to replace the traditional economic activities and jobs associated with manufacturing and industrial production: "once upon a time, most Torontonians laboured with their hands...[now] Toronto works with their minds" (City of Toronto, 2003, 5). Lehrer and Wieditz (2009, 148) consider this document as a clear case of culture "being absorbed and commodified under neoliberal conditions, into a marketing strategy that strives to demonstrate Toronto's uniqueness to the world while, ironically, replicating and following the entrepreneurial strategies of other urban governments around the world". It is, according to these authors, a "document that implies that only the strategic commodification of culture and ethnic diversity can possibly prevent Toronto's bleak future of falling behind other global cities". Furthermore, both creative city reports have established and maintained a policy framework promoting urban intensification (either through new build church lofts on brownfield sites or the residential conversion of redundant inner city properties) through the guise of culture development. In particular, Lehrer and Wieditz (2009, 148) consider the effects of these reports on Section 37 of the *Ontario Planning Act* – a provincial development policy, which in concert with municipal regulations, is used by private developers to provide public amenities in exchange for development bonuses like adding to building density and height.

In general, Section 37 is intended to directly benefit local communities through developer-based financial contributions reinvested into neighbourhoods often in the form of public art, community centres, affordable housing, park land and other such improvements (Down, 2008; Lehrer and Wieditz, 2009). In Toronto, however, Section 37 is very broadly interpreted. In fact, with the introduction of Toronto's newest *Official Plan* the City "reduced and removed restrictions on developers ... in an effort to attract private sector real estate investment" (City of Toronto, 2002; Lehrer and Wieditz, 2009, 149). By and large, the effects have been successful in promoting upscale brownfield re-developments (e.g. Toronto Wychwood Barns) as revitalization tactics. Instead of providing for diverse community needs like affordable housing, Toronto's implementation of Section 37 has largely "provide[d] art and park space [as these features more than others] enhance developer's prop-

erty values” (City of Toronto, 2002; Lehrer and Wieditz, 2009, 149). At present, policy tools like these have been instrumental in forging a development culture of intensification and gentrification – a planning ideology that has actively promoted Toronto’s inner city as a live-work-play space for the creative class.

For the most part, research and writing that investigates Toronto’s changing inner city landscapes deal primarily with the impacts and transformations of new build condominiums. And although these particular forms of development make up a large part of the contemporary story of gentrification in the City of Toronto, the conversion of older terrain for private residential use also represents key spaces that are reconfiguring the material and socio-cultural dimensions of life in the city. Remarkably, there is limited literature critically evaluating the effects and impacts of these changes on the city. In the following section, therefore, I briefly highlight Toronto’s post-industrial, post-corporate and post-institutional lofts. As we shall see, the development and promotion of these diverse residential markets has taken place over decades and involves a host of key players beyond individual homeowners. In various ways, local urban governments, corporate stakeholders and real estate developers come together to re-make upscale residential spaces for new middle class residents. In each case, these converted landscapes play complex but connected roles in advancing an agenda of ‘urban renaissance’ of the central city.

4.2.1 Loft-Living in Toronto: Remaking Post-Industrial, Post-Corporate and Post-Institutional Places

“The proliferation of lofts and the increasing popularity of loft living are phenomena of our age...Loft living proclaims a quality of life based on a sense of space and spaciousness. In short, the loft is a blank canvas on which original features and innovative design can be successfully combined according to personal choice”, Lofts: A Style of Living (Piveteau and Wietzel, 2004, 6)

The loft concept has come a long way. Spaces that were once the haunts of marginal, often starving, artists have become the pinnacle for new urban living. Far from the dingy, often bare, abodes romantically portrayed in film and art magazines in the 1970s, lofts are trend setters in upscale urban residential design, they

are the subject of countless coffee table books (like the one quoted above) and design sections in daily newspapers, they are the real ‘blank canvases’ for discerning urban dwellers. Moreover, no longer simply confined to abandoned warehouses dotting the inner cities of large urban regions, lofts have consistently breached their post-industrial (and even urban) boundaries to include a variety of property types like offices, barns, schools and churches. And while lofts of all kinds have certainly sustained popular appeal amongst designers, urbanites and the cultural media, they have also been the focus of much academic debate. As the authors of the above passage take the notion that lofts are ‘phenomena of our age’ and are an unproblematic reality, critical research by urban scholars debates these very points.

In *Loft Living*, Sharon Zukin (1982b) was the first academic to comprehensively trace the conversion of derelict manufacturing buildings to popular living spaces. Focused on the industrial warehousing district of SoHo (south of Houston Street in Lower Manhattan), Zukin highlighted the processes involved in transforming a derelict industrial area (officially condemned in 1962 by the City as “an industrial slum with no buildings worth saving”) to a thriving artist district, and later to an upscale residential market (Jackson, 1995, 167). According to Zukin (1982b), from the outset artists were the innovators of the emerging loft trend as many in their ranks began targeting a growing number of relatively cheap but uniquely large industrial properties for their potential as live-work spaces. Described as “the artistic mode of production”, the eventual wide-scale appropriation of industrial loft spaces by artists accentuated, but was also contingent upon, wider shifts in the planning policies of Lower Manhattan and the sociopolitical control of the city. In this sense, Zukin argued that loft living was inherently connected to a process of urban social change and a marketable residential style in a number of North American and West European cities which are “old enough to retain an early industrial architecture and sufficiently diversified to support an expanding middle class” (Zukin, 1982b, 256). Fundamentally, the SoHo loft landscape was part and parcel of the deindustrialization taking shape in the 1970s, for as she put it: “the residential conversion of manufacturing lofts confirms and symbolizes the death of an urban manufacturing center” (Zukin, 1982b, 4). But this was also a process inscribed by wide-scale capitalization of the inner city:

Change in the use of lofts corresponds, in general, to the movement of corporate-sector investment capital into a selected number of decay-ing downtowns. As part of a long-term change to the city’s political economy, loft living contributes to the de-industrialization and gentri-fication of the urban core (Zukin, 1982b, 256).

In fact, by the mid-1980s artists were no longer the dominant group in the loft market as rents inflated beyond their means from the rising demands of artsy urbanites and new corporate interests looking for higher-profits and higher-value uses in SoHo and elsewhere. Rather than seeing the process as a ‘purely volun-tarist cultural initiative’ Zukin insists on linking the cultural values of loft living to the transformation which has occurred in the economy of cities and to the ne-cessity for the profitable reuse of central space (Hamnett and Whitelegg, 2007). Indeed, she asserted that without the expansion of the financial and business ser-vice sector and “the expansion this shift implies in high price commercial property markets, the transformation from productive to non-productive uses would hardly have occurred” (Zukin, 1982b, 257). This was, therefore, an “historic compromise between culture and capital” – a practice whereby capital incorporated culture to open up devalorized industrial land markets to more market forces (Podmore, 1998, 283).

Following closely to Zukin’s (1982b) work, several geographers have exam-ined patterns of gentrification and their connections to artists and live-work loft spaces in local neighbourhoods throughout Canadian inner cities (Bain, 2003, 2006; Ley, 1996; Mathews, 2008, 2010; Slater, 2004). David Ley (1996, 2003), for in-stance, has explored the spatiality of urban artists in the gentrification of the inner cities of Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. Using data from multiple censuses, Ley shows that artists have similar locational characteristics to middle-class house-holds. Moreover, he concludes that artists act as key agents in the production of inner-urban gentrification:

the urban artist is commonly the expeditionary force for inner city gentrifiers, pacifying new frontiers ahead of the settlement of more mainstream residents (Ley, 1996, 191).

Further data from interviews with local Vancouver artists also proved that these

agents colonized key areas in the inner city and sought live-work studio spaces, like lofts, for more than just their affordability and proximity to customers and suppliers. Many artists, it seems, locate in marginal urban areas as a means to distance themselves from the homogeneity and conformity of the suburbs. Alison Bain's (2003) research of artists in Toronto shows similar conclusions. Drawing upon interviews with local artists, Bain (2003, 308) traces a crude territoriality of Toronto's art scene: Queen Street West and Yorkville as a set of developed "art-world" metropolises with well established live-work lofts, studios, fashionable art galleries, and luxury condominiums; and artistic outposts in key eastern and western inner city 'frontier' neighbourhoods like Riverdale, Leslieville, Parkdale, Liberty and the Junction. In fact, a large number of the conversions in Figure 4.6 are associated with the activities of artists in these neighbourhoods. Along both the south-west and south-east fringes of the urban core many of these neighbourhoods offer an abundance of relatively large low-rent live/work spaces, and are also routinely targeted by artists for their particular socio-cultural dynamics (e.g. working class communities) and aesthetic qualities of 'grittiness', and 'decay' – features said to "nurture and sustain artists' occupational identities" (Bain, 2003, 311). Furthermore, in many of the fringe neighbourhoods, like South Parkdale or the Junction, artist-based gentrification has taken several decades to mature, but recent evidence of converted warehousing sites to upscale lofts and the establishment of 'edgy' art galleries and trendy cafes catering to more affluent clients continually speak to their up-and-coming status (Bain, 2006; Slater et al., 2004).

Apart from the gradual revitalization of specific neighbourhoods, there is also considerable effort aimed at re-making entire landscapes as cultural destinations to help inflate local land values, produce positive images of the city, and sell condominiums and lofts. Along King Street West, especially in Liberty Village, and Toronto's Distillery District, public-private initiatives, staples of neo-liberal urban politics, are building new 'creative' and high-profit spaces from old industries and heritage sites (see Chapter 3). In the Distillery District, a project co-managed by local heritage developer *Cityscape* and non-profit arts promoter *Artscape*, involves the wholesale renovation of a former industrial area into an upscale leisure destination. According to Margaret Kohn (2010, 361), this is a project *par excellence* which exemplifies of commodification, gentrification, and the socio-political drive

to cater to the consumer preferences of the ‘creative class’. About a decade after closure and sale in the early 1990s, the Distillery District, the former site of the world’s largest urban distillery, became an upscale consumptionscape and backdrop for profitable post-industrial urbanism (Mathews, 2010). In a process described by Kohn (2010, 363) as “carefully orchestrated...piecemeal gentrification”, the re-development of the Distillery District was made possible by the establishment of upscale art spaces, a strategic move which branded the area as a unique and ‘creative’ cultural centre and consumption space apart from pre-established retail zones in the city. Moreover, by re-casting the arts-based developments as ‘community benefits’, the project’s developers gained zoning exemptions and favourable land-use policies by the City for the construction of high-rise condominium towers and low-rise loft conversions. Still under construction, but quickly sold out, the *Gooderham*, *Pure Spirit* and *Clean Spirit Lofts*, offer luxury living in what is now one of the city’s premier festival marketplaces. As Lehrer and Wieditz (2009, 143-44) point out, the city’s collaboration with groups like Artscape, now firmly established as a developer of arts districts and live/work art spaces, has been crucial in creating “Toronto’s own local version of creativity-inspired gentrification”, a practice of “using local urban neighbourhoods as place-marketing strategies [that help cities] compete for capital investment, tourists, and ‘creative workers’”.

Besides the conversion of post-industrial spaces, Toronto has also seen a considerable number of post-corporate buildings renovated for residential use. But while the conversion of industrial sites has been ongoing for several decades, the residential conversion of office towers has only been evident in Toronto since the mid-1990s.

In a rare look at the adaptive reuse of offices for residential spaces, Timothy Heath (2001) shows how the public sector was instrumental in adopting an office conversion policy as a means to simultaneously stimulate Toronto’s economy and generate tax revenues while acting as a key agent in new urban policies geared toward densification and the transformation of downtown spaces into a ‘24-hour city’. In this case, Heath (2001) highlights that surplus office space was made available from the fallout of the 1990s recession in which demand for high-quality office buildings catering to financial and professional services bottomed out. In fact, by the mid-1990s downtown office vacancy rates peaked at about 20% (1.5 million

square meters), a stark change from 7% in 1986 (Heath, 2001, 176). By this time, the City of Toronto, following an entrepreneurial strategy in other planning areas, approached vacancies as a means to consolidate the re-development of the downtown core. In particular, Heath (2001, 177) cites the creation in 1993 of a specialty working group of the City of Toronto Planning and Development, Works, Buildings, and Parks and Recreation Departments as instrumental in forging public-private partnerships with banks, developers and other government groups. Along with these players and charged with addressing the city's declining tax base, enhancing the streetscape and 'bringing more people downtown', the working group successfully fast-tracked the permitting process for office conversions (from a two year to two/three month process), amended building codes and changed the open space requirements – two fundamental obstacles for widespread conversion. In fact, the City followed the lead of developers in Vancouver who converted the B.C. Hydro Building which resulted in a number of early office conversions and acted as catalyst for further office to residential re-development throughout the central core³.

By the late 1990s, over 16 such projects, focussed almost exclusively along the Yonge Street corridor (e.g. 555 Yonge Street and 7 King Street East), were completed or underway, a process which Heath (2001, 180) considers as crucial to "re-kindl[ing] a tradition of downtown living within the City".

Since the 1990s, the appetite for post-corporate adaptive reuse has declined. By the beginning of 2000 office vacancy leveled off while most of the viable vacant building stock had been successfully converted. Although several residential projects are currently underway (e.g. Imperial Plaza, 111 St. Claire Street West, once the headquarters of Imperial Oil), it remains to be seen if recent economic downturns will impact the commercial property market in the same way as in past decades. Nevertheless, other forms of residential conversion in the inner city still supply key residential spaces for Toronto's downtown homebuyers. In particular, the conversion of various post-institutional buildings primarily for private lofts and apartments continually feed the city's diverse real estate market.

³According to Heath (2001) the City of Toronto Working Group comprehensively studied the B.C. Hydro Building and included that project's marketing team in the development of early office to residential schemes in Toronto's financial core.

Remarkably, although post-institutional reuse has long been a reality in the City of Toronto, very little academic research and analysis is available. In fact, an abundance of news bylines and headlines cover much of the city's institutional transformations (see Boyle, 2006; Black, 2004; Casey, 2010). Recent conversions in the urban core, like the 51 Division (a former police station in Regent Park), the Royal Canadian Military Institute (in Grange Park), and the Madison Lofts (a former Ontario Hydro building in the Annex), for instance, are properties of notable heritage value converted for private uses. Like most institutional properties viable for reuse, these buildings exist in or close to established neighbourhoods and have been repurposed due to a variety of reasons relating to such things as shifts in the budgets of local and provincial governments, and the changing demands and needs of the local communities. Unfortunately, with such a paucity of data on these buildings, general remarks about the impacts of such conversions on the real estate market or their local neighbourhood are not possible. In Chapters 5 to 8 of this thesis, I close some of this gap through a detailed description and analysis of Toronto's urban churches – a remarkably large portion of this city's stock of re-used institutional buildings.

4.3 Culture, Class and Identity in the Gentrified City

The rising diversity of gentrification, indeed entire geographies of gentrification, renders the process infinitely more complex than in its earliest conceptualizations by Ruth Glass. The past debates in academia concerning whether the process is motivated primarily by an accumulation of capital or is a defining social-political practice have, besides frustrating some observers, contributed to an expanding awareness of the roles of both *economy* and *culture* in gentrification.

My focus in this section concerns the latter of these two issues. Although economic explanations of gentrification, that is, the changing values of inner urban land, are fundamental to the process, I concentrate on specific social and cultural elements of gentrification with respect to the re-valorisation of redundant worship spaces in the city. In this case a cultural perspective is important as it offers a theoretical pathway to understanding how redundant churches have become both object and subject of gentrification. In particular, we can ask specific questions which

are at the heart of this thesis, including, how gentrification shifts to new *cultural* terrains and landscapes, and how demands for new forms of gentrified housing, like churches, take shape. Furthermore, an important element is to recognize that investments in redundant worship spaces reflect cultural and institutional transformations; transformations which are made possible, in part, by ongoing struggles of class-constitution and new cultures of consumption. In this case, the gentrification and upscaling of redundant churches is part and parcel of a consistent effort by new middle class residents to differentiate themselves from others, especially those located in socio-cultural spaces like suburbia and inner city high-rise condominiums, and to carve out distinct urban identities and lifestyles through the consumption and display of religion and heritage.

4.3.1 Gentrification and Class-Constitution

For some time now, urban scholars have drawn on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984) to help explain how gentrification began and how it has transformed, aesthetically as well as materially, from its earliest forms (e.g. working class inner housing) to more contemporary manifestations (e.g. lofts) (Jager, 1986; Bridge, 2001b; Ley, 2003; Podmore, 1998). Much of this literature focuses on the inherent relationships between economic and cultural capital, key elements of Bourdieu's (1984) conceptualization of class distinction, and their deployment in urban space, especially in housing. Recall from above that the accepted model of gentrification argues that pioneering gentrifiers are generally poor in financial capital and depend on their high cultural capital as a means of distinction (Ley, 2003). By colonizing inner urban spaces for their own live-work arrangements, early gentrifiers (especially artists) reconfigured not just matter but also meaning; "an act of transformation", like the re-use of manufacturing spaces, that "convert[s] junk to valued products" (Ley, 2003, 2529). The transformation of meaning, in this case the "privileging of pro-urban lifestyles" in previously devalued urban spaces, was eventually taken on by the educated but youthful middle-class. As a class strategy, these gentrifiers, short on economic capital due to their junior career status, deployed their cultural (and social) capital, including education, social networks, and access to secure public-sector jobs, by reclaiming and renovating inner city

housing – a direct means of distancing themselves both spatially and symbolically from middle-class suburbia. This gentrified housing, as Jager (1986, 79) explains with reference to the rise of *Victoriana* in Melbourne, designates “the social position and trajectory of the new middle-class fractions”. That is, it acts beyond either an economic or positional good, a status symbol, in that it also “mediates the constitution of class”. Jager’s argument invokes Bourdieu’s (1984) research which shows how individuals of specific class groups unconsciously transmit class dispositions through things like dress, leisure styles and cultural preferences (Bridge, 2001a). According to Bridge (2001a, 206) gentrification is thus argued to be an “unconscious response to the new field of possibilities in the relationships between cultural and economic capital in social space”. With dramatic changes in urban-economic conditions, like expanding rent-gaps in inner city land and new investment opportunities made possible with the growth of the service class and professional employment, gentrification affords new middle class groups the possibilities to deploy economic and cultural capital as a means of class differentiation (Bridge, 2001a; Jager, 1986). Thus, inner city housing ‘rescued’ from the lower classes and the bulldozer and lifted to new aesthetic heights demarcates specific social taste and helps, as a class marker, to produce distinct urban middle-class identities.

A key point, therefore, is that while the ‘restoration’, ‘rehabilitation’ and ‘renewal’ of working class housing is a project paid for by the sweat (and dollars) of the individual middle-class homeowner, the aesthetic dispositions and palates – the design schema, the ‘updated’ and modernized spaces – are decisively sub-cultural acts. The combined practices of architectural exposure (of brick, wood and stone), the “stripping away of external additions”, sandblasting, whitewashing, and the “internal gutting” which remakes and re-writes domestic space, are at once economic necessities and acts of differentiation based upon a collective of cultural markers of class (Jager, 1986, 83). This collective action is rather important, for “no one wants the conspicuousness of acting differently” (Bridge, 2001a, 211). So while certain interior designs or colour patterns may represent individual idiosyncrasies, the production and display of gentrified housing are, in general, co-ordinated activities or ‘focal points’ that are “seized upon because they have certain qualitative aspects that recommend them, through prominence or conspicuousness” (Bridge, 2001a, 211). The renovation of *Victoriana* in Sydney or whitewashing in

Toronto, are focal points around which middle class individuals in the ‘know’ rally, and these are decidedly public and self-conscious acts deployed as direct displays of cultural capital and social position.

In its advanced form, however, gentrification relies on wealthy professional and managerial groups whose high economic but less avant-garde cultural capital, results in expensive and expansive commodified forms of gentrified housing like those found in heritage sites previously too costly to renovate, along urban waterfronts, and near cultural venues in the city centre. Key aesthetic markers in these landscapes are not produced from the direct involvement of owners themselves, but are instead often pre-packaged by entrepreneurial developers and based upon the demands of the consumer market, information derived from marketing analyses, focus groups and cultural media research. Instead of appropriating local working class history, however, these aesthetic frames are typically plucked from a global design menu, often ambiguous but recognizable cosmopolitan symbols of worldly-fusion or of romanticized and exoticized bygone landscapes. Moreover, branding and marketing campaigns, symbolic substitutes for the material renovation done by individuals in previous waves of gentrification, circulate images and narratives of quality and lifestyle as a means to communicate legitimate distinction. The entire symbolic apparatus is paired with notions of accessibility to cultural sites and urban *consumptionscapes*, spaces which increasingly define new middle-class living (Quastel et al., 2012). In many ways too these practices tap into and simulate “insideness in the traditional social life of the city”, locales, as Caulfield (1989, 626) puts it, “of prefabricated carnival... new housing designed to look old...boutique malls in modes of Victorian elegance and industrial kitsch”.

Importantly then, the (re)production of distinct new middle-class identities is linked to the formation of taste and lifestyle, elements of social distinction, that are situated and expressed in ‘things’ or commodities like housing. Gentrified neighbourhoods, for instance, are argued as the ‘spatial manifestation’, the ‘socio-cultural milieu’, or, the ‘stage’ for the performance of the new middle-class *habitus* (Bridge, 2001a, 207). Bourdieu’s (1984) conceptualization of *habitus* is of central concern here, especially as gentrification entails, in part, a cultural construction and re-valuation of housing specifically located in the urban core, as a space and practice for the production of new middle-class identity. Geographer Gary Bridge

(2001a, 207) summarizes habitus as the following:

The habitus is individually embodied and a shared body of dispositions – a form of collective history. It provides the background dispositions and practical (but unconscious) reason in its everyday reproduction. In the case of the new middle-class gentrifiers, habitus is characterized by distinction in neighbourhoods, housing, lifestyle and consumption. The motive force that reproduces the habitus in this case is the drive to maintain distinction in the struggles over status in social space. Distinction is conferred by the ability to define and possess rare goods such as taste and discernment.

Habitus is therefore an important feature of gentrification not simply in its social force in the collective renovation of blue-collar homes, but also, remarkably within other articulations of the process, namely, new middle-class re-use of post-industrial and post-institutional properties.

Julie Podmore (1998), for instance, argues for the ‘SoHo Syndrome’ in Montreal, a process in which the taste and style of SoHo lofts is not bound to its specific urban environment. Rather, the SoHo habits are taken up or ‘embodied’ as social space and an aesthetic disposition, what Bourdieu (1984) calls ‘a system of classified and classifying practices’, that middle class urbanites in other cities use as a form of distinction. In fact, Wendy Shaw (2006) has more recently explored Sydney’s encounter with the ‘SoHo Syndrome’ and in that city too, loft development in the core has expanded and been legitimized, in part, from media representations that fetishize the Manhattan lofts as character housing and reproduce a recognizable loft lifestyle. As result, these loft landscapes are “generalized urbanity that pretend to hark from *elsewhere*”, a space of opportunity for Sydney’s middle class to live a cosmopolitan and “globally generic fantasy” (Shaw, 2006, 184).

The development of new middle class habitus, however, is not limited in its expression to just post-industrial lofts. Although the SoHo-style has become the basis of loft-living, the aesthetic frame or ‘shared body of dispositions’ in which it operates broadly captures other expressions of housing. Like manufacturing lofts, post-institutional buildings like churches, schools, hospitals and other public properties, offer symbolic spaces, explicitly displayed in historic architecture and dis-

tinct cultural iconographies that fit the aesthetic demands of discerning middle class homebuyers. In many cases, these properties are impulsively promoted as variants of the original SoHo lofts. In many other cases these places offer entirely unique stories, narratives and histories; aesthetic *novelties* that both legitimize their status as ‘authentic’ places far from the supposed humdrum of the ‘prefabricated’ suburban world, and create a material and symbolic distance between ‘other’ middle class housing like condominiums and older renovated working class homes. As we shall see in later chapters, the gentrification aesthetic has expanded to post-institutional terrains creating, in the case of redundant churches, spaces altered and re-valued for their possibilities as yet another platform for *distinct* expressions of class, and lifestyle.

In the remainder of this section, therefore, I briefly discuss the arguments of gentrification as part of a practice of class-constitution and middle class habitus within two constitutive conditions which promote the upscale re-use of urban churches, namely, the rejection of suburbia and the high-rise lifestyle; and a complex relationship between gentrification and religion represented both by a case of ‘secularization by gentrification’ and an appropriation of religion into a gentrification aesthetic.

4.3.2 Rejecting Suburbia and High-Rise Condo-Living

Although gentrification entails new patterns of inner city living, its social and cultural functions of building and presenting ‘class’ is also argued to be part of a consistent socio-political rejection of its supposed opposite – the suburbs. Indeed, suburbia offers a key spatial and ideological referent for gentrification, a point made by several Canadian geographers. Writing mostly about Toronto, Jon Caulfield (1989, 622) highlights gentrification as an emancipatory process, an opportunity for middle class groups to escape what he refers to as “the perceived threats to values and meaning directly linked to modernist and capitalist city building”. As highlighted in the previous chapter, middle class Torontonians took to resettling the city as a firm critical response to postwar landscapes in which modernist development and suburban expansion aggressively re-wrote urban life. As a ‘critical social practice’, gentrifiers staunchly rejected the homogeneity of the machine age, “a routine

of placeless space and monofunctional instrumentality” (Caulfield, 1989, 624-5). Simply put, the city’s middle class, he wrote, “find suburbs and modernist spaces unliveable” (Caulfield, 1989, 625). In their place, this cohort helped instead to rebuild, through the various material forms described above, a new post-modernism that circulates ‘lifestyle’, consumption, heritage and culture.

The rejection of suburbia is also a crucial facet of David Ley’s (1996) investigations of the *embourgeoisement* of Canadian inner cities that has taken place since the 1960s. In *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, Ley (1996, 24) points out that the middle class resettlement of Canadian inner cities is primarily a “statement of social identity and cultural politics”. This is a class practice that evolved from a marginal counter-culture, situated in the 1960s student movements. As he puts it, “hippies became yuppies” that spatialized their rejection of a standardized Fordist-corporate culture, expressed most compellingly in the mass-produced suburbs, in devalued neighbourhoods in the urban core (Ley, 1996). Specific inner city neighbourhoods, places like Kitsilano in Vancouver and Yorkville in Toronto, represented “oppositional spaces” aimed to simultaneously counteract the lack of distinctiveness, and ‘anywhereness’ of the suburbs, and, offer a critical celebration and awareness of the possibilities of progressive reform in local urban politics (Bridge, 2001b; Ley, 1996). In time, however, the reform ‘language’ that was at the forefront of the movement transformed from a socio-political critique to a “language of lifestyle”, from “democratic public goals to therapeutic pursuits” made possible, above all, through a new culture of consumption (Ley, 1996, 25).

But of course a post-modern rejection of suburbia is not the only contemporary lifestyle measure of the new middle class. It is increasingly possible, especially now that inner city restructuring and gentrified landscapes have evolved and matured over the years, that various gentrifiers, from single women to empty-nesters, are negotiating different (sub)urbanisms in their resettlement of the urban core. This perspective necessarily espouses work by urban sociologists, Butler and Robson (2001), whose research highlights the ways in which different middle-class groups ‘come to terms’ with the city, in this case London. Their research agenda cuts into a tidy view of a coherent middle class:

One criticism of existing approaches to gentrification is that they tend to see gentrification as a more or less homogenous process – whatever their differences, neither Smith (1996) nor Ley (1996) appear to explore differences within the gentrification process. Our hypothesis is that different middle-class groups would be attracted to different areas and this would be determined by a range of factors, in addition to what they might be able to afford in particular housing markets (Butler and Robson, 2001, 2146-8).

Importantly, in interviews with gentrifiers in London's neighbourhoods of Telegraph Hill, Battersea and Brixton, Butler and Robson (2001) uncover that gentrification in these specific places involves and consolidates different forms of middle-class identity. Thus the housing choices that middle-class gentrifiers make are based upon more than housing cost. Different housing sub-markets are making different decisions based upon other options that cultivate specific identities and lifestyles. Housing choices, therefore, include weighing amenity and aesthetic packages that range from proximity to consumptionscapes, access to local social networks, the style and structure of buildings (i.e. unrenovated properties, new build, loft conversions), and the lifestyles and aesthetics of the local community. So it is not just suburbia that is being rejected. In fact, anecdotal evidence suggests that certain segments of the new middle class are also repudiating 'condo-living'. In this case, much like the cultural criticism of suburban life, condo-living, specifically understood as living in dense high-rise towers, is perceived by some as a homogenous, commodified, cookie-cutter landscape that caters to young professionals living a particular urban lifestyle. For instance, Toronto journalist Edward Keenan (2011), argues that CityPlace, a 44-acre waterfront redevelopment project complete with 19 high rises and seven midrise towers,

has the feel of a university quad, right down to the demographic – you have your hard-bodied twenty-somethings in Lululemon on the artificial turf field kicking a soccer ball around, your hungover twenty-somethings in Lululemon letting their dogs run free on the grass, and your helmeted twenty-somethings in jeans and plaid conducting a skateboard race through the park's winding mile of meandering pathways.

Fishnets and miniskirts on a Sunday afternoon in November? Absolutely. Neon orange plastic shades? Check. Tights as outerwear? They're everywhere you look, as the young creative-class crowd embraces autumn's pleasures near Douglas Coupland's sprawling landscape-architecture tribute to Terry Fox.

This "demographic" is argued to have left an undesirable mark for others seeking an upscale 'mature' urbanity. Instead of being longterm desirable places for the city's growing population of creative professionals, Keenan (2011) sees this as a project of building "glass-and-steel suburbs in the sky" – a prelude to the formation of new urban ghettos in Canada's metropolis.

In other cases, the rejection of 'condo-living' is also consolidated in the perceived class lines that are now argued to be clearly visible even within individual condominiums. Again, only anecdotal evidence suggests that as development priorities in large cities press for denser living in condominium-towers with multiple points of affordability, households in different life-cycle stages are having to co-exist and manage (or not) their housing together. According to journalist Kelvin Browne (2006), the class lines in many of Toronto's condominium towers are simple to draw:

The bottom third of the buildings usually consists of small suites stuffed with first-time buyers, often in their 20s... it'll likely be their first home... [w]eekends can be a blur with lots of loud music. In the middle are larger units, populated by young couples without children. These people are often saving for a home so they can start a family.... in the top third, are the empty-nesters, many of whom have sold their houses at great profit and bought a condo for their retirement. They travel, have summer homes and/or places for the winter in Florida or Arizona. They spent a fortune buying their condo and likely invested in costly upgrades.

This mix of retirees to twentysomethings, according to Browne (2006), amounts to a "high-rise hell", a dysfunctional community of gentrifiers in different stages of their life having troubles co-habiting because of conflicting notions about how best to live. Whether or not this is entirely true remains to be seen (c.f. Kern,

2009a). However, the emerging discourse of lifestyle ‘wars’ inherent in the high-rise condominium potentially pushes certain members of the new middle class who have the financial and cultural capital to other forms of urban living, like upscale lofts, that properly accommodate their socio-cultural and lifestyle needs. In other words, for those who have the means, spatial and aesthetic distance from other sub-groups is paramount to constructing their identities and lifestyles. Like the rejection of the suburbs in which the new middle class demarcated socio-cultural space *at a distance* from the “middle middle class”, so too, segments of today’s new middle class fractions may seek their own space outside of the stigmatized multi-class high-rise (for more on this point see Chapter 8, especially §8.2.2) (Bridge, 2001b, 93).

4.3.3 Ambivalent Religiosity: Religion Gentrified, Religion Commodified

Unlike other forms of gentrification and upgrading, the reuse of urban churches directly involves and influences specific religious cultures. In particular, emergent relationships between gentrification and religion are rather complex, including, on the one hand, a case where gentrification is argued to be a contributing factor to the secularization of the inner city; and, on the other hand, a case where religious cultures and iconographies, abandoned or sold during the retreat of congregations, are appropriated by new middle class consumers into a gentrification aesthetic. I will deal these two issues in turn.

‘Gentrification as Secularization’

In Chapter 2, I discussed at length the transformation of religion in contemporary society and pointed to several long-term studies that have shown that while religiosity, specifically in Canada, is increasingly variable, there is evidence of decline in traditional worship in the mainline religious institutions. These declines, I have argued, are also pronounced in urban regions, places where new religious diversities and demographic transitions have significantly pressured heretofore-dominant religious organizations like the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada. We can also add to these pressures issues of neighbourhood change and

gentrification.

Although there is ample literature detailing the economic and socio-political implications of gentrification, very little academic work has explored how it affects local religious communities and the status of religious belief. However, for the limited number of studies that do deal directly with these issues research has shown that post-industrial neighbourhood change and the residential location of urban professionals contributes toward secularization (Horvath et al., 1989; Ley and Martin, 1993; Ley, 1996). Work by Canadian geographers Ley and Martin (1993) perhaps best illustrates this point. In their research the authors create a measure of post-industrial status, called a 'post-industrial index', from a set of 35 independent variables (e.g. demographic, housing, economic conditions) in 22 Canadian metropolitan areas. The post-industrial index is correlated against the percentage of religious unbelief, a variable derived from the 1981 census, which was expressed for each of the metropolitan areas. At the broadest level, the results show a remarkably strong correlation ($r=0.79$) between religious disaffiliation and the post-industrial index, a good indication that an evolving post-industrial society has influenced specific religious patterns. Moreover, in some of the largest metropolitan regions, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal, religious disaffiliation was a consistent predictor of gentrification (Table 4.4) (Ley and Martin, 1993). In the inner cities of these metropolitan areas, the leading correlates of unbelief show a close profile to non-Catholic, immigrant and anglophone areas. Furthermore, religious unbelief tends to increase with higher social status, a lower presence of blue-collar workers, and close proximity to elite districts and key public institutions like hospitals and universities (Ley and Martin, 1993, 224). Ley and Martin (1993, 224) also highlight that previous rounds of gentrification in certain areas are influential, in that "the restructuring of space through gentrification is significant, and in all three cities the gentrification of a tract in the preceding decade is a strong predictor of religious disaffiliation in 1981".

While certainly not complete, the picture drawn here shows some of the force that post-industrial restructuring and neighbourhood change have had on religiosity. Many of the new middle class groups that have moved into the inner city are demonstratively secular gentrifiers. In a recent text, religion scholar, Robert Wuthnow (2010) confirms these conclusions and highlights how many of America's

Table 4.4: Leading Correlates of Religious Unbelief in the Inner Cities of Major Canadian Metropolitan Areas, 1981
(source: Ley and Martin 1993, 225)

	Toronto (n=119)	Montreal (n=214)	Ottawa (n=40)	Vancouver (n=50)
Social Status	.41	.56	.78	-.51
Blue Collar (%)	-.46	-.52	-.71	.57
Catholic (%)	-.58	-.65	-.90	
Distance to University/Hospital	-.59	-.59	-.79	
Gentrification Index	.57	.60	.77	
Artists	.46	.55	.68	
Distance to Elite		-.61	-.73	.49
Born Outside of Canada (%)		.69	.75	.64
Distance to Downtown	-.63	-.51		
Anglican (%)			.74	-.61
English Speaking (%)		.45	.79	
Median Rent			.70	-.38
Low Income Individuals (%)			-.61	.65

urban ‘thirtysomethings’ and ‘twentysomethings’, key gentrifiers, have weak congregational ties in their inner city neighbourhoods. Perhaps more important, the in-migration of secular middle class residents also brings with it material transformations of the local neighbourhoods. In this sense, substantial changes occurring at the level of the local neighbourhood include the upscaling of services and establishments (housing, restaurants and entertainment venues) that cater to middle class demands at the possible expense of local congregations (Cimino, 2011). In fact, Richard Florida (2009, 171), the pioneer of so-called ‘creative class’ research, has since argued that the *creatives* are much more likely to embrace secular values and “opt to forego church for less traditional methods of spiritual or religious practice” (Cimino, 2011, 159). As I have pointed out above, even with an incomplete secularization of the inner city and small but persistent populations of religious urbanites, traditional forms of religious participation are giving way to other, potentially more flexible, practices like private worship.

In sum, the significance of the new urban economy and the steady rise of the professional class represent not just a material force for gentrification, but are also key agents involved in reconfiguring the *religious* culture of the inner city. Thus along with labour and housing market changes, cultural and political lives are duly transformed into sites where traditional religious activities, such as congregational worship, are either dismantled in favour of new post-modern consumptionscapes or restructured for new post-secular forms of religious practice that may have different demands for worship space (Beaumont and Baker, 2011).

The Commodification of Religion and the Gentrification Aesthetic

In accounting for the demand of redundant worship spaces as housing, it is essential to discuss the role of consumption, or rather, a middle-class ‘culture of consumption’. Indeed, thinking about the church loft as a housing product, we must answer the question as to how places that were once ‘sacred’, either literally so from the perspective of believers or symbolically accepted from the perspective of non-believers, are legitimately incorporated into a gentrification aesthetic. Put another way: how does a worship space become a desirable domestic place that meets the criteria for new middle class tastes?

Superficially, the secular re-valuation of a church could simply be understood

as a general acceptance of such buildings as ‘fair game’ after official de-sacralization ceremonies (especially, but not exclusively, pertaining to the Catholic faith), which cut a building’s ties from its religious functions. In this case, however, while the church may no longer retain an institutional linkage with its past, for many, the sacred and/or symbolic weight of the building lives on. This represents an inherent conflict: a church loft acquires much of its symbolic cachet and uniqueness from its connections with its religious history, but too much of a connection might communicate a sense of spirituality that disrupts its conceptualization as loft/house/home. Thus, the struggle in making a post-religious space as an upscale domestic place involves a partial rewriting of the symbolic and cultural meaning of the building in a way that corresponds with the expectations of the middle class habitus. For the most part, this process of rewriting is done through the various design and branding practices of developers and architects who have acquired the buildings for redevelopment (see Chapters 5 and 6). But even before developers and private owners claim redundant churches as their own, there is necessarily a reworking of their symbolic valence and value at a societal level. That is, supply alone does not in-and-of-itself generate demand. Demand for post-religious places as upscale housing comes, in part, from an appropriation of religious culture, of which religious structures like churches are a material part, into (secular) commodities that are used to forge things like distinction, identity, and social bonds. What I am arguing therefore, is that church lofts are made possible through a *commodification* of religious culture, a process that places religion among other social and cultural fields as a *thing* to be consumed. Moreover, the commodification of church buildings, the process of turning these public spaces of worship into private domestic places, unmoors religious structures from any *deep* sense of ‘sacredness’ and repositions them as secular commodities that fit an aesthetic menu desired by gentrifiers. It is worth expanding further on these last points.

First, much of the writing in the social sciences that deals with consumption commonly describe the commodification of culture as a process in which the “habits and dispositions learned in the consumption of literal commodities spread into our relationships with culture” (Miller, 2005, 32). As I have mentioned in the introduction, culture like most everything else has become, in one way or another, a commodity that is readily bought and sold. Art, architecture, and heritage,

for instance, all feature as commodities – elements of their cultures reduced to objects of consumption. Religion, too, is certainly not immune to the process. Countless examples showcase how religion and religious messages are packaged as commodities for sale: a popular t-shirt of a passing university student embossed with the pronouncement “‘God is Dead - Nietzsche 1882’, ‘Nietzsche is Dead - God, 1900’”; Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*, a highly controversial Hollywood film that was a marketing juggernaut (\$600 million from theatre revenues, \$400 million from DVD sales, and millions more in ancillary products: book-tie ins, coffee mugs, promotional crucifixes, and, most popular, Christ-nail pendants (Einstein, 2008)); the triple platinum album, *Chant*, by the Benedictine Monks of Santo-Domingo; or even the renovation and sale of loft units in Toronto’s *The Church Lofts*.

Such commodities are understood and used in different ways by various users. In one way, consumers can employ these commodities as expressions and engagements of religious and spiritual beliefs outside of official institutional contexts. This is now commonly understood as a post-modern and post-secular practice of bricolage spirituality (Lyon, 2000; Miller, 2005). Again, this ‘a la carte’ metaphor of religious identities described in Chapter 2 is made possible in part by collecting, displaying and embodying spiritual commodities, a practice that enables a certain amount of spiritual flexibility and alternative ways for ‘seekers’ to participate in religion. But these commodities are also consumed by non-believers. In this sense, religious messages and content in the commodities themselves are not necessarily their only or their most important aspects. In complex ways, these commodities can be used as statements of irony, parody, nostalgia, or simply valued for their unique or distinct aesthetics.

This then relates to the second point, in which an important result of turning culture(s) like religion into commodities is that our relationships with culture – their traditions, practices, symbols – are transformed. For critics like Fredric Jameson (1991), this transformation represents a crucial context of the post-modern era of consumption. In *Postmodernism or, the logic of late capitalism*, Jameson paints consumption as a dominant aspect of human action, an “apparent victory of commodification over all spheres of life” (Felluga, 2011). With a rather dystopic view, Jameson sees consumption as an eviscerative force: marketing and branding prac-

tices, and the commodification of culture(s), borne from advanced capitalism, reduce and disengage everything from any real depth (Miller, 2005). As example, Jameson, like Derrida and Heidegger before him, contrasts two paintings depicting shoes: Van Gogh's classic *Peasant Shoes* and Warhol's glittering, multi-coloured *Diamond Dust Shoes*. In Warhol's depiction, Jameson (1991, 8-9) argues that the image is without context. The shoes in this piece showcase an aesthetic of floating 'depthless' symbols without ground:

Nothing in this painting organizes even a minimal place for the viewer, who confronts it at the same turning of a museum corridor or gallery with all the inexplicable contingency of some natural object... There is... no way to complete the hermeneutic gesture and restore to these oddments that whole larger lived context of the dance hall or the ball, the world of jet set fashion or glamour magazines.

Following earlier work by Baudrillard (1981), Jameson (1991, 9) argues that today's commodity culture signals "a fundamental mutation of both the object world itself – now become a set of texts or simulacra – and in the disposition of the subject". In this sense, commodities, like Warhol's shoes, have become so fetishized that they are stripped of their history. Left in its place is a fanaticism of the present, for advanced capitalism has rendered the historical past as a series of "emptied out stylizations", or *pastiche*, which are easily repackaged for consumption. The power of pastiche is certainly not lost on Jameson. The expansion of 'styles' and the production of aesthetics, like free-floating jigsaw pieces made to fit endless commodities, are said to liquidate the subversive effects of symbols and texts creating instead 'blank ironies'. Moreover, Jameson points out that pastiche progresses through expressions of nostalgia and the 'retro'. Products, from houses to cars, are given an historical veneer but make little effort to build meaningful linkages to the past. The New Urbanist movement, made popular by architects Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, for instance, takes many of its aesthetics qualities from a romanticized American nineteenth-century Main Street (Mcann, 1995; Lynch, 2005). But this postmodern design, also called neo-traditionalism, breaks from a 'deep' sense of the past as it uses history as a spectacle for new urban living. As an historicist style, new urbanism has been repeatedly critiqued as superficial and

nostalgic place-making, a largely communitarian project that relies on a model of village life and a face-to-face politic that ignores some of the realities of village living (e.g. cultural homogeneity, surveillance) (Kohn, 2010). But it has been very successful in market terms, suggesting that it does meet demands for a more socialized past.

Although Jameson's thesis has been critiqued as problematically over-stating the existence of a postmodern condition contingent upon consumption – a limited theory which both over-determines the signs of commodities as more important than the commodities themselves and sees individuals as powerless to forge true identities in the commodity *maelstrom* – many religion theorists have interrogated this work for its impact on theology and religious culture (Clarke, 2003, 13). For theology scholar Vincent Miller (2005, 66), Jameson's thesis is important because it links together the commodification of culture to “particular habits and dispositions”, in that, “[it] both expresses the liquidity of culture in advanced capitalism and trains us to engage culture in such a fashion”. All of this, he argues, is a “profound problem for theology” since it functions fundamentally upon “retrievals, interpretations, and syntheses of doctrines and symbols” which are intended to “impact the life of the believing community” (Miller, 2005, 66). If theological and cultural elements, he continues, “are encountered and engaged in commodified fashion – as floating, shallow postmodern signifiers unrelated to one another or to particular communities and practices – interpretation and syntheses, no matter how sophisticated, will have little practical impact” (Miller, 2005, 66).

We need not take this argument to its full force in reference to theology, for the central point is that the potential overproduction of signs and loss of referents in the postmodern age have conditioned consumers to value commodities, which increasingly include cultural products, out of their contexts. Thus while some argue that contemporary religion can survive the onslaught of commodification (see Beaumont and Baker, 2011; Lyon, 2000), surplus ‘traditional’ religious iconographies and symbols may be claimed and abstracted from their origins by secular consumers and put to uses “unrelated, indeed, contradictory, to the meanings they bear” (Miller, 2005, 72).

Returning to my main argument, the demand for urban churches as domestic space is partly made possible by the commodification of religion and the transfor-

mations that such a practice engenders between consumers and religious culture. In this case, churches released from the ecclesial fold and taken up by secular consumers are separated not just institutionally from their origins but also culturally. In particular, the religious histories of the buildings are often rendered ambiguous, ‘shallow’ and ‘weightless’ at the same time as they play the role of ‘texts’ and ‘signs’ which constitute an aesthetic frame, features that are highlighted to “deepen [an] aura of desirability” (Miller, 2005, 67). This takes place partly through the physical removal of overt religious symbolisms (e.g. steeple cross, altar space) but also through discursive devices and legitimizing practices that owners use to inscribe new secular meanings, a process which is best exemplified through a discursive shift from seeing churches as part of religious culture to seeing them as heritage commodities. As we shall see in later chapters which explore the material and symbolic renovations of Toronto’s urban churches for lofts, religion is effectively decontextualized and *disarmed* through shallow references to heritage, history, past and tradition, elements which unmoor church buildings from any deep sense of the sacred only to re-anchor them to an established gentrification aesthetic.

It is in this way that Jager’s (1986) explanations of *Victoriana* and the role of taste expectation in the housing market run parallel to the restoration of churches for upscale domesticity. In both cases, the “cultivation of an aesthetic faculty”, a means by which class groups signify social distinction, is “associated with an attempt to appropriate history”. Stripped of its content, bygone religion, as opposed to bygone industry, is the aesthetic frame by which ‘history’ is given meaning. Jager (1986, 81), like Jameson, evokes Baudrillard to make this point:

The taste for the bygone is characterized by the desire to transcend the dimension of economic success, to consecrate a social success or a privileged position in a redundant, culturalized, symbolic sign. The bygone is, among other things, social success that seeks a legitimacy, a hereditary, a “noble” sanction.

In the drive for status, association with a generalized history and the ownership of historical artefacts, in this case possession of a church loft as part of a bygone religiosity, “testify to the discerning taste of the possessor” (Jager, 1986, 81-82). Importantly, these are habits and dispositions that have become inscribed in the

class habitus. But here too, middle and upper class desires for history may not simply be a “longing for a ... halcyon past”, for “custom and routine in a world characterized by constant change and innovation” (Holcomb and Beauregard in Caulfield, 1989, 624). Instead they can represent an impulse for a “subjectively effective present”, an *escape* from a routine “placeless space and monofunctional instrumentality” (Caulfield, 1989, 624). In this case, church lofts are also overt means for central city homebuyers to distance themselves in space and time from the supposed ‘placelessness’ of suburbia and the homogeneity of high-rise condominium landscapes.

4.4 Conclusions: Church Lofts as New Terrains of Gentrification

There is almost no type of building that is not fair game for residential conversion in the post-industrial inner city. The housing menu on offer in many cities has consistently expanded over the years, including working class homes ‘with potential’, iconic luxury inner city condominiums, and unique lofts in interesting properties like offices, factories, and churches. As we have seen throughout this chapter, these housing options are intimately tied to the changing demands of urban residents, many of whom are increasingly part of a growing contingent of the urban new middle class. In the case of Toronto the production of ‘funky’ homes at a short distance to ‘cool’ downtown spaces is part and parcel of forming a creative city – a place catering to the desires of creative knowledge workers. I have argued here that the contemporary logic of the creative city is an important element in the patterns and process of gentrification. In this case, I have focused on discussions that see gentrification primarily as a class strategy that symbolically and materially reconfigures central urban landscapes. Ranging from multi-use waterfronts to re-invented industrial districts, the inner city is clearly a centre for the realization of a live-work-play philosophy that is now a staple of the global city. In Toronto as in other key urban regions, new political regimes routinely extol the virtues of post-industrial private sector led economic development – a process which highlights investment in culture, heritage and real estate as key elements to growth. Arguably, this neo-liberal stance is considered an important factor in the

successful and sustainable renaissance of the urban core, a process which has led, most visibly, to the production of vast ‘condofied’ landscapes (Lehrer and Wieditz, 2009).

Much less evident, however, are the conversions of outmoded properties to upscale homes. In this case, I have argued that the concept of loft-living is not restricted to the post-industrial loft alone. In fact, lofts are now part of a wider revaluation of a diverse range of symbolically loaded inner city properties. Post-institutional conversions, properties that were once public spaces, are now firmly part of the private residential real estate market, and are, as I argue, emerging terrains of gentrification. In this case, like their post-industrial counterparts, post-institutional properties represent places of capital reinvestment, middle class colonization and social upgrading. While each of these issues can be examined in different ways, I have highlighted the roles of class and aesthetics. In particular, I have argued that post-institutional properties, among which churches are the most predominant, are swept up in an ever evolving ‘gentrification aesthetic’ – a shared sense of class distinction expressed in conspicuous material and symbolic markers of housing. Churches, specifically, offer discerning new middle class consumers unique spaces of distinction and taste. Far from both suburbia and high-rise condominium living, church lofts set a stage for a class presence. Moreover, the overt displays of ‘religion’ expressed in a church building are showcased as defining features of a property’s singularity in the market. But of course the expression of a specific religion is not what is being displayed. Rather, religion in this case is re-written and re-used as ‘heritage’ and ‘history’, focal points in the construction of authenticity and cultural capital that is imparted to a loft owner as markers of class. In Chapter 6 through 8 (Part 2) of this thesis, I examine these complex issues in greater detail. Through interviews, site observations and analysis of policy and marketing texts, I show that the church loft market in Toronto is a local terrain of gentrification and explore how owners of church lofts produce and deploy these spaces as markers of class, distinction and identity.

Part II

Altering Space and Place in Toronto

In this section we shift our attention from the abstract to the grounded. Taking with us the broad discussions concerning the transitions of religious culture, the emerging perspectives and roles of heritage conservation, and the socio-economic transformations of central city neighbourhoods, we turn to explore the church loft market in the City of Toronto.

It is important to note here that the City of Toronto represents a particularly important context to explore the various issues related to the development of church lofts. In recent years a growing number of mainline churches have been rationalised, sold and converted for a variety of uses – religious and secular. Compared to other cities in Canada, residential church conversions in Toronto are immensely popular. In many older residential neighbourhoods that skirt Toronto's inner city, a variety of churches have been adapted as upscale lofts: in Greektown the former Riverdale Presbyterian Church is now the *Glebe Lofts*; in High Park the former Howard Park Methodist Church is now the *Abbey Lofts*; in the Junction the former Victoria-Royce Presbyterian Church is now the *Victoria Lofts*; and so on (Table 4.5). Together these loft conversions highlight the changing contexts described in the opening section of this thesis. It is worth briefly summarising several key points here.

First, although Toronto was founded primarily upon an Anglo-Protestant culture, it has become in recent years a profoundly multi-religious and multi-cultural place. Importantly, however, growth of social and religious cultures in Toronto has also meant the expansion of a distinctly urban secular community with loosening ties to religious and spiritual services. As a result, a fragmentation and waning of demand for urban worship spaces has placed considerable pressure on local religious organisations and communities. Second, the rise of urban conservation has meant new protection for historic urban properties including active and redundant worship spaces. Over the years, the heritagization of local churches has driven an expansion of preserved properties ripe for private re-development and re-use. Third, urban change especially since the 1970s has brought new demands for inner city land use highlighted by increasing pressures for the re-use of non-residential character properties as living spaces. In this case, loft conversions have become a prime target for upscale living as they incorporate a menu of lifestyle and personalisation options, lofty interior spaces, and, unique historical architecture and

Table 4.5: Redeveloping Toronto's Religious Landscape - Contemporary Church Conversions Across the Inner City

Church Name	Loft Project	Address	Developer	Project Status
St. Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Episcopal Church	The Church Loft	111 Robinson Street/Trinity Bellwoods	Private Developer	Completed, 1990
College Street United Church	The Channel Club	456 College Street/Little Italy	Greywood Developments	Completed, 1990
Woodlawn Avenue	Woodlawn Church Lofts	11 Woodlawn Ave./Summerhill	Matthews Group	Completed, 1990
Century Baptist	Macpherson Church Lofts	12 Macpherson Ave./Rosedale	unknown	Completed, 1990
Dovercourt-St. Paul's Presbyterian Church	Hepbourne Hall	110 Hepbourne St./Dufferin-Grove	Bob Mitchell and Associates	Completed, 1992
St. Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Episcopal Church (Manse)	The Claremont Hall Lofts	34 Claremont/Trinity Bellwoods	Bob Mitchell and Associates	Completed, 1995
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church	Symphony Place	71 Simcoe St./Downtown	Rose Corporation	Completed, 1995
Eglinton United Church	St. Georges on Sheldrake	65 Sheldrake Blvd./Sherwood Park	unknown	Completed, 2001
Private Sanctuary: Assemblies of the First Born Church	The Euclid Lofts	257 Euclid Ave./Little Italy	Hippo Properties	Completed, 2003
Riverdale Presbyterian Church	The Glebe Lofts	660 Pape Rd./Greektown	Bob Mitchell and Associates	Completed, 2004
Howard Park United Church/Howard Park Pentecostal Church	The Abbey	384 Sunnyside Ave./Roncesvalles	Mauro Galati	Completed, 2007
Victoria-Royce Presbyterian Church	Victoria Lofts	152 Annette St./ The Junction	Triumphal Developments	Completed, 2010
The Centennial Japanese United Church	The Church Lofts	701 Dovercourt Rd./Dufferin-Grove	Dovenco Inc.	Completed, 2010
Swanwick United Church	The Swanwick	21 Swanwick Ave./ The Beaches	Dovenco Inc.	Completed 2011
Czechoslovak/Annette Street Baptist Church	The Park Lofts	200 Annette St./High Park	Terra Firma Homes	Completed 2011
Third Church of Christ, Scientist	High Park Condominiums	11844 Bloor St W Toronto/High Park	The Daniels Corporation	Completed, 2012
St. Mary the Virgin/St. Cyprian Anglican Church	The Westmoreland Lofts	40 Westmoreland Ave./Dufferin-Grove	Lux Group Inc.	In process
Seventh-Day Adventist Portuguese Church	Private Development	512 College St./Little Italy	Private Developer	In process
Dentonia Park United Church	In process	107 Dawes Rd./East York	Private Developer	In process
Bellefair United Church	Bellefair Kew Beach Residences	2000 Queen Street East/The Beach	Reserve Properties	In process
Deer Park United Church	In process	120 St. Claire Avenue/Deer Park	In process	In process

aesthetics. Church lofts, a distinct variation on the loft living theme, are now firmly part of a new housing landscape that caters primarily to upscale consumers and members of the new middle class.

With these ideas in mind, the chapters in this section explore the various aspects of church lofts in Toronto. Using a series of novel qualitative data, including interviews with a variety of key informants, site observations of church properties in various stages of the development process, and, marketing and advertising materials produced by developers, real estate agents and the media, I trace the factors contributing to the supply of and demand for re-used churches as domestic spaces. In particular, I explore first the practices and decisions governing the sale and re-use of religious properties in the city. In this case, interviews with church administrators and heritage policy makers are discussed to highlight the processes involved in releasing and regulating religious historic properties in the urban land markets. Second, I focus on the re-development of redundant churches for the private real estate market. With the help of interviews and site observations, I highlight the practices of urban development specialists (i.e. developers and architects) and uncover both the material and symbolic practices that are made to transform places of worship into places of domesticity. Third, I highlight the role of branding and marketing in the sale of church lofts. In this case, I deconstruct several developers' branding campaigns to show how the redevelopment and re-use of urban churches relies on representing and selling particular ideas of religion, history, and place. Fourth, I explore the demand side of church lofts. In particular, I present the experiences and opinions of church loft owners in several conversions in Toronto to explore how church loft consumers make residential decisions and how they interpret church loft living.

Chapter 5

Church and State: The Rationalisation and Protection of Religious Properties in Toronto

“God wants us to be here in this place, in this community/ God wants us to be together/ God wants us to let go of our past/ God wants us to do something new” – Notes from Annual Report (1997-1999), Riverdale Presbyterian Church (1999)¹

Like many faith groups in Toronto’s urban core, the Riverdale Presbyterian Church, a long-standing Presbyterian congregation in what is now Greektown, has had to contend with remarkable changes in the demand for religious services and the rising costs associated with ministry and property maintenance. Established in 1912, this worship space has long been an important part of the local neighbourhood, serving as a community centre and an important site for the administration of the Presbyterian faith for the city and region. By the mid-1990s, however, transformations in the membership, attendance and the age of the congregation forced the church to re-evaluate its future. Much of this exploration dealt with how best to manage the deteriorating worship space in a time when renovation costs have con-

¹This archival information was accessed with the help of Robb Gilbert, 2012.

sistently increased.² By 1995 the congregation, led by the church trustees, began exploring options for redevelopment, focusing on ways of keeping at least part of the original structure for worship services and of fulfilling the congregation's wish to remain "in this place, in this community... together" (Riverdale Presbyterian Church, 1999). Armed with the resolve to stay put, the trustees outlined several development options, ranging from leasing space to other religious groups, demolishing the property for a community centre which could house a smaller sanctuary space, and the outright sale of a large portion of the building either for new townhouses or converted for loft apartments.

In the end the congregation settled on selling their property to a local loft developer, Mitchell and Associates, for a reported value of over \$1.3 million. According to the Riverdale Church trustees the loft re-development option effectively met the growing needs of the congregation, a list that included "finding someone we can trust, an ability to keep faith with the past while creating a new future, and provide 'more money' as to meet future needs" (Riverdale Presbyterian Church, 1999). With the Presbytery's blessing, the Riverdale congregation successfully sold the property and covered the renovation costs to build a new sanctuary space from a portion of the old nave. Sandwiched against the current altar wall now sit 34 upscale loft units – a property that locals simply call "The Glebe" (Figure 5.1).

The successful re-development of the Riverdale Presbyterian Church into the *Glebe Lofts* is routinely cited by many as a project to emulate. The sensitive architectural design that preserves some of the physical envelope of the old structure and retains a worship space for the existing congregation speaks to the capacity to bridge the present needs of faith groups while creating new residential spaces that sustain the urban fabric. Yet, however precedent-setting, it is important to note that this example of adaptive re-use in Toronto took place without the protection (and constraints) of heritage designation. To be sure, some congregations continue to sell their assets without the challenges of heritage restrictions as many historic buildings, while perhaps eligible, are not officially protected. In these cases, the financial returns for religious groups who own inner city properties can be substantial since the redevelopment possibilities range from the complete destruction

²A feasibility study performed in 1995 appraised renovation costs for the structure at approximately \$990,000 (Riverdale Presbyterian Church, 1999).



Figure 5.1: The Glebe Lofts: The partially redeveloped Riverdale Presbyterian Church is now an exclusive and widely popular loft space in Toronto's Greektown (source: author's photo, 2009)

of historic buildings, often for higher density new build projects, to the partial re-design of aging structures.

In many other cases, however, religious properties are rationalized with official heritage restrictions. At the same time as faith groups seek to offload costly properties, groups like Heritage Toronto and the Heritage Preservation Services have advocated for increased sanctions against the destruction of an expanding number of endangered churches. With rising awareness of the value of material heritage and a growing demand for heritage preservation by local communities an increasing number of congregations are having to sell their assets as listed heritage properties. A conflict-laden process, the official 'heritagization' of religious buildings, realized through easements or designations, has several results. First, by protecting these buildings and limiting the forms of renovation and re-development, faith groups may not realize maximum returns on their costly assets. For some, this financial shortfall has serious repercussions for maintaining the level of religious programming that is necessary for fulfilling a church's mission. In a time when demands for mainline religious services are declining, recuperating capital locked in fixed assets has become a priority.³

³It is worth noting, however, that faith organisations, in Canada and most western nations, are not required to pay taxes on their religious properties. Legitimized on the grounds of free exercise of

Second, restricting the redevelopment of religious properties significantly limits the types of re-uses or conversions possible. In effect, heritage designations, placed especially on redundant inner city worship spaces, have been instrumental in encouraging residential re-use since housing conversions are among the more viable options in the current private real estate market. Now more than ever, faith groups are forging relationships with niche developers who are responding to consumer demands for unique housing in the private real estate market. While I examine this demand in later chapters, in this chapter I consider the role of two key actors – the church and the state – in creating the conditions possible for the production of church lofts in Toronto.

I begin with an examination of the role of the church. In particular, I present and evaluate interview data with key informants involved in the administration and management of properties in several mainline religious organisations in the city (appendix A.1). These interviews flesh out the processes by which faith groups evaluate their properties and determine the future of their worship spaces. Moreover, they confirm that in response to increasing challenges of local ministry and shifting demands for worship spaces, mainline faith groups are turning ever more to realising their building's potential in local real estate markets. In this case, many religious organisations and their local congregations have intensified relationships with urban developers in order to offload surplus buildings and recuperate costs. Considering the demands for housing especially in Toronto's inner city, these administrative and financial decisions are consistently edging toward corporate-based strategies. These consequences are pivotal in supplying stock of new and novel up-scale church lofts.

In the second part of the chapter I turn to highlight the practices of state-level actors in Toronto's church loft market. As discussed in Chapter 3 state agents play a large role in influencing the types and forms of (re)development in the city and, with regards to places of faith, their actions in conservation are instrumental in creating a heritage landscape that is increasingly dependent on the private sector

religion and the separation of church and state, such an exemption does confer a substantial financial advantage for faith groups (Dueck, 2013). For many heritage advocates this exemption represents part of a fiscal responsibility that religious institutions must take into account when maintaining properties to minimum heritage standards.

for its sustainability. Thus, through interviews with municipal and provincial civil servants, like those in the City of Toronto Heritage Preservation Services and the Ontario Heritage Trust, I explore the role of heritage advocates in upholding a regulatory practice of urban conservation that actively enables the recycling of urban churches for new secular uses (appendix A.2).

5.1 The Burdens of Property?: Church Property Managers and Perspectives of Property Rationalization in Toronto

“We don’t want to be landlords, we are not good building managers, and we are not developers! That’s just not our business” – personal interview with *Albert*, senior administrator with the United Church of Canada: Toronto Conference, 2010.

Scholars of religious history and geography have consistently noted that conceptions of ‘sacred space’ are not universally held by all groups (Clark, 2007; Kong, 1992, 1993; Visser, 2002). In particular, interpretations of the church as a ‘physical place of worship’ and the church as ‘the people’ are not only varied among different religious institutions but also among individual congregations themselves. Thus, while for some a church property may embody the spiritual life of a congregation, for others a religious building may merely facilitate spirituality in practice. But this diversity of perspectives of living churches is sharply contrasted by a remarkably common view, at least among those individuals charged with maintaining buildings, of the potential financial burdens of worship spaces. For many of Canada’s mainline religious groups, whose expansion through the 1960s and early 1970s led to periods of overbuilding in key suburban regions and urban neighbourhoods, religious properties are becoming increasingly difficult to finance and maintain – an issue that is the focus for many denominations and congregations shrinking under the weight of demographic and social-cultural changes taking place in the advanced postsecular and post-industrial city.

Throughout interviews with church administrators and property managers, the notion of religious property as a burden was consistently noted. *Catherine*, a senior administrator in the United Church of Canada, highlighted that many congregations

throughout the country are finding it increasingly difficult to balance building costs while sustaining a focus on ministry. “Now more than ever”, she argued, “people who are in charge of stewarding these [religious] buildings are saying that they simply can’t afford it and it’s patently obvious. The realities of maintaining these old buildings while providing quality services for the congregation is just getting that much harder”. Indeed, funding capital repairs on church properties, many of which have distinct architectural features – steeples, slate and copper roofs, delicate masonry – is a constant struggle for congregations or even larger dioceses (Fraser, 2009). Reflecting these sentiments, *Matthew*, a senior property manager in the United Church General Council, explained that the sustainability of the Church and of local congregations rest largely on how property is managed. As he put it,

Buildings are a problem, they are a burden, especially for the congregations that are shrinking. The first priority is that you have to pay your minister, the second priority is that you have to heat your building, it doesn’t matter if your shingles are curling and your roof is leaking like a sieve, it’s all about Maslow’s hierarchy... so it’s increasingly challenging within dwindling congregations to maintain buildings really well. And this becomes a process that we here at the General Council and the individual congregations need to work out. The outcome of how we all handle this means a lot for sustaining our future.

To be sure, the United Church has a significant number of viable congregations across Canada but according to *Albert*, a senior administrator with the United Church Toronto Conference, an increasing number of their churches are only sustained by carrying substantial annual deficits. “We have many churches that are living on their income, that is, they are living beyond their means”, he pointed out. “If it weren’t for outside income many of these congregations would have closed their doors a long time ago” (Interview, *Albert*, 2010). Importantly, however, ‘outside income’ or capital assistance programs, like the United Church Modernization Grant (money awarded by the General Council to congregations in need of property renovation or re-development) are increasingly limited in their financial value since church administrators are implementing fiscal austerity measures in response to decreasing membership and private donations.

Of course, the emerging realities of shrinking congregations and operational budgets, increasing ministerial expenses, and costly aging properties are not shared by those in the United Church alone. Senior property managers from the Presbyterian Church and the Roman Catholic Church also described the difficulties of congregations in Toronto, but also across Canada, in caring for their places of worship. *Kevin*, a senior property manager in the Presbyterian Church of Canada, reports that

Our congregations are finding it increasingly difficult just to make ends meet...there is the cost of maintenance and repair of the actual buildings but in addition to that they also have the burden of the insurance of the building and ... they have to pay not only a stipend, or a salary to a minister, but they have to pay benefits and make pension contributions on behalf of a minister... All in all it is getting harder and harder for congregations to deal with these mounting issues, and when you compound this with an aging building many of our congregations are fighting what seems like a losing battle.

Along with increasing financial challenges also come considerable socio-cultural changes. The demographic and lifestyle transformations explored in Chapters 2 and 4, for instance, have taken their toll on both the capacity of religious institutions to care for their ailing congregations and for local congregations to remain viable. “It’s almost all related to diminishing numbers of people”, *Albert* asserted. At the neighbourhood level, many local urban churches that once catered to a Christian community are simply no longer in demand:

I used to live in the east end of the city and there were still a number of United Churches there but there were waves of immigration that would just change the nature of the community – one whole area turned Greek and, well, not a lot of Greek people are members of the United Church. We are seeing this at Ebenezer United, for instance, a church that has served for well over one hundred years, and now almost the entire community around it is Chinese. So sometimes it’s that type of a situation. For the most part, like every other denomination, we’ve been experiencing declines for the last forty years. And

the congregation that I attend is a good example. We have a building that would seat 350 to 400 people, and on a Sunday if there was 35 to 40 of us, well, that's a good Sunday. (Interview, *Albert*, 2009)

Following the path of Ebenezer United many churches end up losing the 'battle'. According to *Catherine* this is, in part, a result of the fact that a good number of Protestant churches "exist in prime urban locations that simply no longer serve the community". This also means that the United Church, for one, is having to close many more churches than it is opening and the "order of magnitude", *Catherine* explains, "is something in the realm of 450 churches in the last decade against about twenty that we have opened. It is surplus real estate, there is no question about that!"

This 'surplus' or redundant real estate represents a substantial financial burden. Indeed, with a total property stock insured at over \$3.5 billion and an increasing number of buildings serving shrinking or 'dying' congregations, the financial costs of retaining redundant properties are beginning to take their toll (Interview, *Matthew*, 2009). The most common response, especially evident in the last several decades, is to amalgamate congregations into centralized or destination churches and rationalize properties, either through redevelopment or their outright sale in the private market.⁴ In a place like Toronto, where redevelopment pressures and housing demands have consistently risen, this has become an increasingly popular and lucrative option. According to *Matthew*, many churches are responding to the benefits of "highest and best use" for redundant properties in the downtown core, which in this case can mean selling the property to developers who can then "obliterate the site and put up sixty story glass luxury condos", a prospect that can translate into a financial windfall and help sustain a church's mission. Of course, not all highest and best use of redundant churches are high density new build construction. "In some parts of town", *Matthew* argues, "it's social housing or a community centre that can work, while in downtown it's a sale in the private market for complete

⁴Another increasingly viable rationalization option includes selling 'air rights'. In this case, faith groups can sell their underused spaces above a building to private developers seeking to build high densities often in centrally located land. As Nadia Mian (2008, 2154) explains selling air rights is an increasingly popular approach for many religious institutions in New York City seeking new revenue in order to "expand their programming and services".

knockdowns for luxury condos or if the building has a heritage designation then lofts.

In some ways the now popular response of turning to the private market to offload property came from earlier failed attempts by the Church to *build* out of trouble. In fact, in the 1970s and 1980s many shrinking United and Methodist congregations built seniors' homes on newly acquired land close to neighbourhood churches or rebuilt sections of worship spaces to attract the seniors' community. According to *Bernard*, a United Church minister and former researcher for the Toronto Conference's property division,

we built those projects as boxes on the cheap with funding from the CMHC (the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation) on long leases, but they didn't turn out as expected. And now we've got a dilemma since the congregations that built the housing are now dying or have since died and we're stuck with a piece of property that has a high-rise and no congregation. There were certainly unintended consequences that we didn't think about. So we need to think ahead, and we are not good at this. Thirty to thirty-five years down the road, what are the potential implications of this? We don't have the expertise, and we are now still struggling to get our head around the fact that congregations are struggling in ways that, when most of us were growing up, they weren't struggling at all. So we are having to do an emotional shift and that's very difficult to do.

Such decisions are also fundamentally difficult ones especially considering how the closure and sale of a centrally located worship space might impact a church's ability to keep a foothold in the city:

[I]n an urban setting, like Toronto, it's an interesting debate as whether to monetize something. What I mean is, a church that I am currently working with has revenues of under \$100,000 a year and can't pay the heat or pay the staff so they have to wind down. But two years ago their land would have been worth \$20 million so what is the right thing to do in those contexts? If you exit you can't re-enter, you will never

have the money to re-enter these urban settings so you are making a vital departure. (Interview, *Matthew*, 2009)

In light of the present and future value of sustaining worship spaces in strategic inner urban locations, many denominations have begun to focus some of their efforts on strengthening and supporting destination churches. In fact, funds garnered through property rationalization are sometimes redistributed to help preserve and enhance popular landmark worship spaces like St. Thomas's Anglican Church in the Annex or downtown's Toronto Metropolitan United Church and St. Michael's Cathedral. These historic urban churches routinely draw their congregations from all over the city, through what one respondent claimed as a type of "resilient geography", and maintain a church's symbolic capital in the urban landscape (Interview, *Bernard*, 2009). Thus, while important urban worship spaces are routinely sold off, 'vital departures' of iconic central urban churches are much less likely given their role as flagship worship spaces.

It is important to note here that in denominations like the United and Presbyterian Church the practice of closing and selling worship spaces is a relatively complex multi-stakeholder process. Unlike the Anglican or Catholic Churches whose operational structures are much more hierarchical and centralized (i.e. managed by appointed bishops or controlled by the Archdiocese), both the United and Presbyterian denominations conduct lengthy consultations among the various 'tiers' involved – down from the Council Church (a national body), to the Conference (a regional body), to the Presbytery (a local body) and finally to the individual congregation. In fact, many of the calls for closure and sale of buildings (as well as relocation and amalgamation) often begin at the congregational level and are then worked out among the various stakeholders (more detail on this in the following section). Moreover, the proceeds of a sale are rarely if ever the sole property of the selling congregation, as they are commonly divided out amongst the different tiers or re-allocated by a national steering committee, as with in the case of the Presbyterian Church (Interview, *Kevin*, 2009, 2012). In such a decentralized system there are relatively few top-down preventative measures aimed to reduce closures or maximize the proceeds of sale as many administrative responses are made on a case-by-case basis (Interview, *Albert*, 2010). Far from a systematic practice, the

redundancy and rationalization of most worship spaces is contingent upon the decisions made by local as well as institutional agents and these vary considerably depending on the context of each worship space.

The fate of the Deer Park United Church is a case in point of the deep politics involved in closing and rationalizing costly worship spaces (see also Chapter 3). *Matthew* explained that this large church in Toronto's Deer Park neighbourhood had dwindled from a thriving congregation to just a handful of surviving members still eager to hold onto the building. After extensive consultations with members of the Conference and the Presbytery, the congregation reluctantly acquiesced to the closure and sale of the property. According to *Matthew* the majority of the congregation

didn't want to leave at all and they certainly didn't want the church touched at all after it was sold – you know the people that were the most sentimental...some were hoping to give it to a social services or an arts school while others were hoping to just give the property away. So those were some of the voices in the mix. Another voice, and those coming from people higher up in the United Church, were saying “we can't just give this away, we are not going to survive ourselves, let's sell it at a market price hoping that the building will be kept the way it is” - a prospect that would generate over two million dollars.... now with the credit crunch it's a different ball game, the tradeoffs are huge and your decisions are different. You have to focus on the big picture too.

In many other cases, like the Riverdale Presbyterian Church or the Centennial Japanese United Church, the congregations often take the initiative to sell off their properties, giving pause for some at higher institutional levels. “I get nervous when we look at churches as dots and not as dynamic things, as numbers instead of something that is more complex than that because I don't think it is that easy to determine what's surplus”, argued *Catherine*. Continuing, she explained that congregations often make decisions for themselves while “we [the General Council] don't give much in the way of resources because we are often hesitant to promote amalgamation or the selling of buildings as solutions... sure we have more build-

ings than we need and we should figure out a way to let some buildings go, but we don't really want to do that because it will cause conflict". Certainly, balancing the needs of individual congregations and caring for the wider church mission is an increasingly difficult process to manage given the current context. Yet even with the potential of conflict many congregations, especially those in highly valuable inner-city neighbourhoods, are continuing to sell their capital assets and make their 'vital departure' in order to survive.

With these processes in mind we now turn to explore the experiences of two congregations that have recently rationalized burdensome property in Toronto's private real estate market. These vignettes highlight how religious groups, at the local level, negotiate change and utilize property rationalization as a means of surviving the constant social, cultural and economic transformations in the city.

5.1.1 The Role of the Congregation: Closing and Selling the Church in an Environment of Change

Although religious organisations of all types manage their properties through the practices of key actors at an institutional scale, each individual congregation or parish largely determines the fate of worship spaces. Indeed, these groups have much say in the rationalization process at the local level. All of the churches that are currently listed in Table 4.5 tell distinct stories of their congregations. Every church closure and sale marks a set of difficult decisions that have been made in response to social, cultural, and economic transitions – changing conditions that have increasingly challenged the sustainable future of local faith groups. It is at the congregational level, particularly for those of the Protestant faith that many of the decisions to rationalise properties are made. As the comments above highlight, congregations in the United and Presbyterian Churches, for instance, generally manage their own properties and services without the intervention of their superior institutional assemblies. In this decentralized process, it is congregations themselves that must pay the bulk of building maintenance fees, clergy salaries and benefits, and property insurance premiums. But so too, it is within the congregations that critical administrative decisions such as amalgamation, closure and sale are often made. Although these processes certainly involve other sectors of the church such as the Presbytery, Conference or General Council, much of the respon-

sibility lies with the local parishioners and church trustees with whom the life of the congregation and condition of the worship space primarily depend. It is essential therefore to explore how these groups steer the rationalization process and make key decisions about their religious properties in the face of growing pressures of change. Using interview data with church managers (e.g. ministers, council members) and congregants from two recent redundant church projects I explore how property rationalization takes place, the types of decisions and planning that are made by those individuals at the local level and the impacts that church closures and re-sale have on the future of faith groups.

Making Ends Meet: The Centennial Japanese United Church and the sale of 701 Dovercourt Rd.

The story of the Centennial Japanese United Church (CJUC) begins over 120 years ago when a group of European immigrants formed a large Methodist congregation in West-Central Toronto. In 1891, this group formed the Centennial Methodist Church (CMC), named in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the death of Rev. John Wesley, and built a new worship space in the growing Dovercourt community (Livey, 1986) (Figure 5.2). In a short time, the church became a central landmark in the rapidly developing neighbourhood, attracting new congregants from outlying areas and new ministers to its pulpit - by 1904 the church was led by its 7th minister, the Rev. E. A. Pearson (1904-1906), father of the late Honorable Lester B. Pearson, former Prime Minister of Canada (Livey, 1986).

Responding to a rising popularity, after the turn-of-the-century a much larger structure was commissioned to meet future needs. Designed by local architects Edmond Burke and J.C.B Horwood, the new church was placed directly in front of the original structure, making use of the old sanctuary space as a Sunday school (Figure 5.3). At that time, the original church was almost entirely conserved and the front porch was the only feature removed in an effort to maximize the footprint of the new building. Restricted by the re-use of the original church, however, the new design was a relatively unique wide square plan that, by necessity, utilized almost three city lots (Interview, *Lawrence*, 2009). Burke and Horwood's design was a grand neo-Gothic structure complete with front double towers, pointed arch entrances, extended stone courses and elaborate Tudor-arched stained glass win-

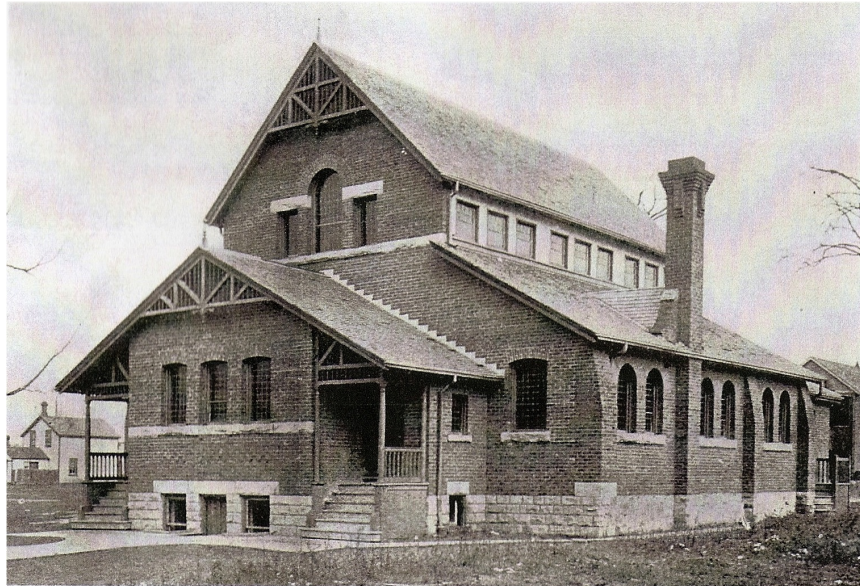


Figure 5.2: The Centennial Methodist Church, 1906 (source: United Church Archives)

dows. In the interior, a variety of spaces continued the motif. With seating for up to 1200 people, a Tiffany stained glass skylight, full choir seating and a large organ, the main sanctuary space was a central focus for the new development.

With the merger of Canada's mainline Protestant denominations in 1925 and the creation of the United Church of Canada, many landmark Protestant churches in Toronto, including the CMC, received a large number of congregants in response to amalgamation efforts. Once again, keeping up with expanding demands and a record-high membership (over 1700 congregants by 1930), the church, then dubbed the Centennial United Church (CUC), redeveloped the original rear worship space in its entirety (Livey, 1986). In 1927, a large two-storey rear annex was built to accommodate multiple uses, including providing larger Sunday school space and new capacity for both administrative and community functions (offices, change rooms and even a basement basketball court) (Figure 5.4).⁵

⁵Remarkably, the original front wall of the 1891 church survived the rear annex development. Squashed between the front annex wall and the rear 1906 church wall, remnants of the 1891 church, including brick elements such as original window openings, remained intact and are currently restored features in the present loft conversion (for more on this point see §6.2.1) (Interview, *Lawrence*,

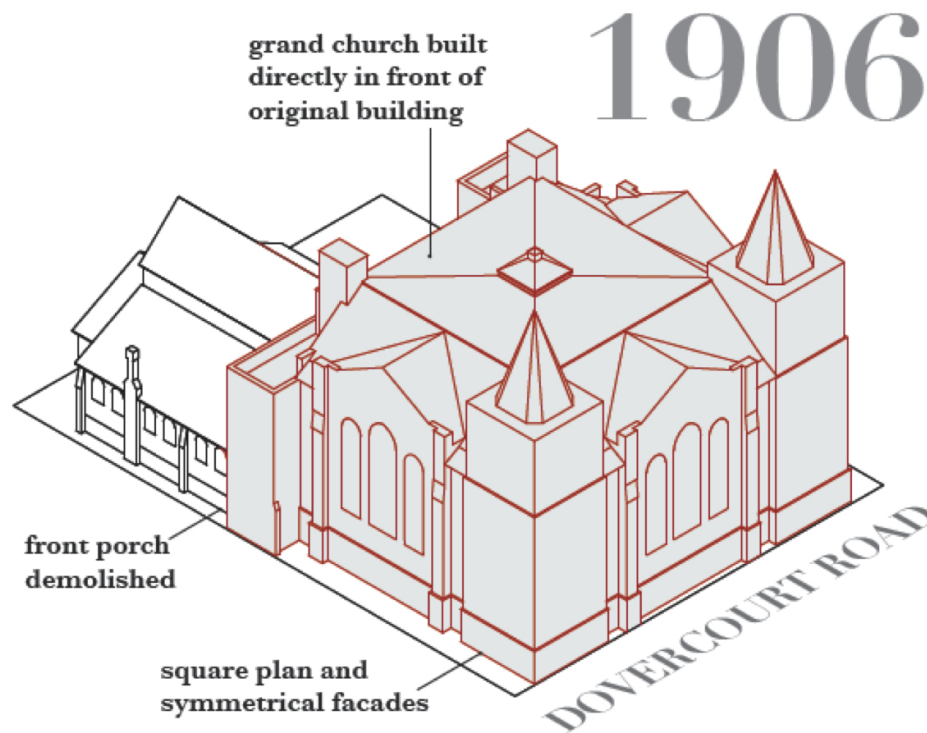


Figure 5.3: The Centennial Methodist Church: Architectural Rendering, 1906 (source: Benjamin Watt-Meyer, Dovenco Inc., 2009)

The post-war period marked a turning point for the CUC. By the 1950s, a considerable drop in membership and support placed new pressures on the ministry and on the viability of the congregation. As was common in this period of decline, the CUC decided to share their worship space with the nearby Toronto Japanese United Church. In 1958, a new chapel space was constructed for the Japanese Nisei congregation in the rear annex (Figure 5.5). Designed by Canadian architect Raymond Moriyama, the chapel provided the primarily English speaking

2009).

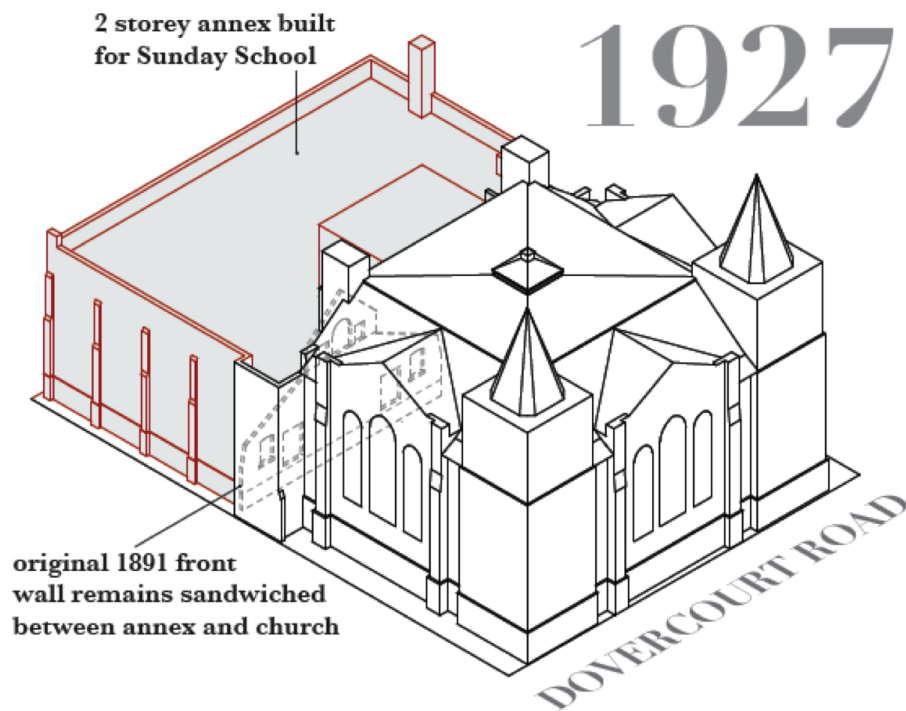


Figure 5.4: The Centennial United Church: Architectural Rendering, 1927
(source: Benjamin Watt-Meyer, Dovenco Inc., 2009)

congregation a formal worship space of their own. Moreover, the chapel was a unique architectural feature, and, being one of Moriyama's early projects, it was an important piece that reflected the fusion of modern aesthetics with traditional ecclesiastical designs. The historical significance of the worship space prompted the Toronto Heritage Preservation Services to designate the structure in 2004. As is common with structures like this, only the built envelope or exterior ornamental and structural walls of the 1906 building were to be preserved, leaving the rear annex open to re-development.

Although the CJUC remained relatively unchanged for many years after amalgamation, by 2001 it had become increasingly clear that the congregation was ex-

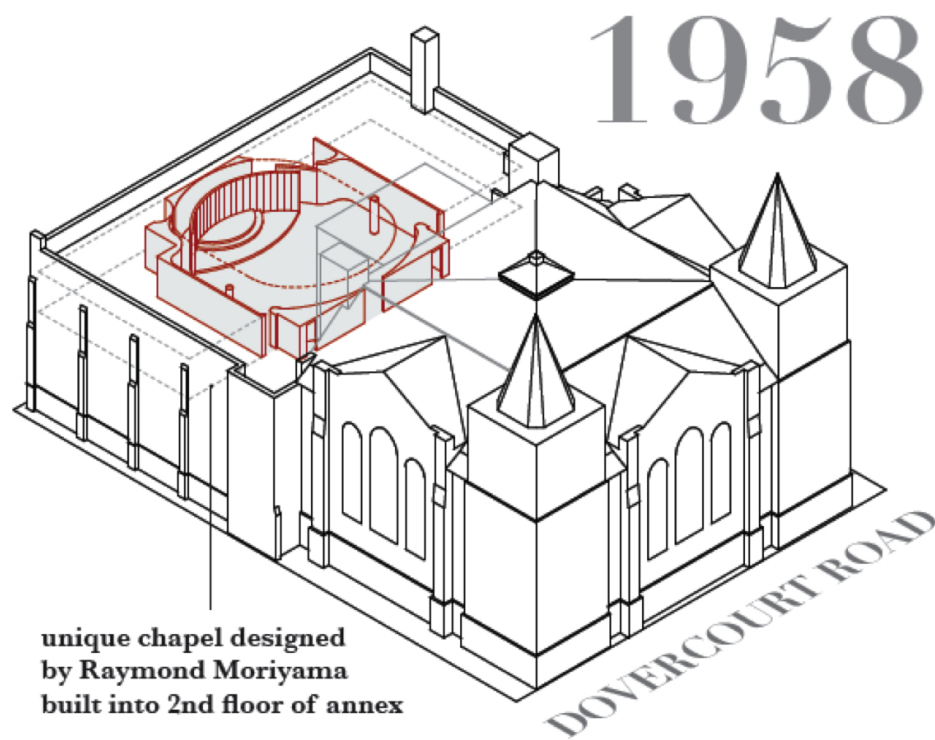


Figure 5.5: The Centennial Japanese United Church: Architectural Rendering, 1958 (source: Benjamin Watt-Meyer, Dovenco Inc., 2009)

periencing difficulties. *Stephen*, a CJUC member and special task group chair responsible for evaluating the future of the church, describes several trends that had emerged by this time: a distinct transition in the socio-cultural makeup of the congregation including a shrinking and aging group of parishioners and a continual loss of returning younger members; a change in the social geography of the local neighbourhood; and the rising costs associated with maintaining the century old structure (Interview, *Stephen*, 2012).⁶

While the first of these issues relates directly to the changes in religious culture

⁶Renovation estimates that would make the church both “safer and more efficient for the congregation” reportedly cost over \$1 million (Interview, *Stephen*, 2012).

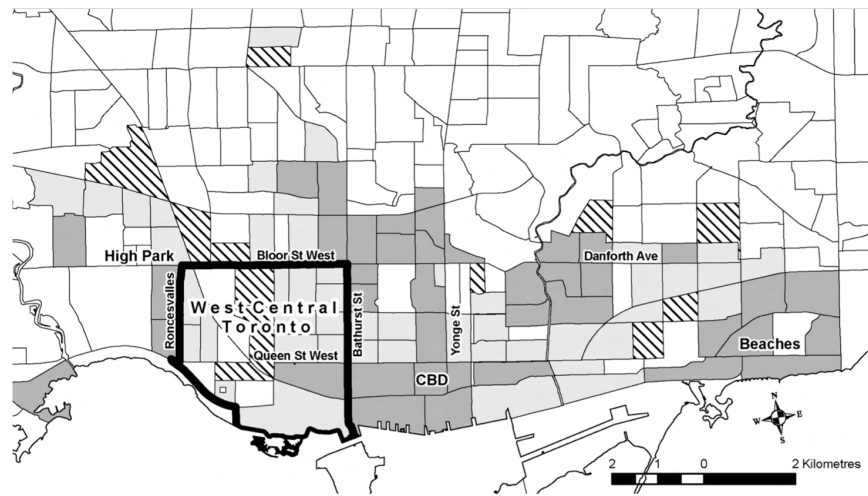


Figure 5.6: Map of West-Central Toronto and Gentrification in the Inner-City, 2000 (source: Murdie and Teixeira 2010, 8)

and practice described in Chapter 2, it is worth noting that the second is explained, in part, by a set of countervailing trends that geographers Murdie and Teixeira (2010) explore in their recent research of West-Central Toronto (Figure 5.6), the broader neighbourhood around the church.

In particular, these authors show that a marked out-migration of established Portuguese residents to the northwestern suburbs has been partly replaced by a relatively large group of immigrants and refugees from eastern and southern Asia, Latin America and Africa. Furthermore, they also point out that in the last decade an increasing number of middle-class professionals have also targeted the area in search of relatively low-cost housing with renovation potential in close proximity to the downtown core. Although originally attracted to the older Victorian houses in the eastern-half of the region, over the years a steady progression of renovation, revitalization and, ultimately, gentrification has slowly migrated westward. This creeping change is illustrated in the shading of the region's census tracts shown in Figure 5.6. In particular, Murdie and Teixeira (2010) show that while the region has some areas of 'complete gentrification' (dark grey shading, representing personal income above the average), it is primarily a space in transition, highlighted by 'in-

complete gentrification' (light grey shading, representing personal income still below average) and 'potential future sites of gentrification' (striped shading). Along with the CJUC, several re-use projects for upscale residential purposes are sited in these upscaling areas: the former Dovercourt-St. Paul's Presbyterian Church (now the Hepbourne Hall Lofts) and the former St. Cyprian Anglican Church (now the Westmoreland Lofts).

Additionally, patterns of commercial change have also been noted as a significant part of the transformations in the area (Rankin et al., 2008). In particular, the process of retail gentrification has expanded in recent years as numerous restaurants and boutiques catering to more affluent consumers have been slowly displacing older establishments that traditionally provided more affordable products and services to low-income residents. In Little Italy and Little Portugal, for instance, an upscaling of ethnic restaurants and boutiques which were partly influenced by the activities of local business improvement associations (B.I.As) has dramatically transformed both the commercial and social culture of the surrounding neighbourhoods, enticing higher-order consumption and patterns of gentrification and secularization now common in other ethnic neighbourhoods in the city (Hackworth and Rekers, 2005).

Considering the mounting challenges – an aging and declining congregation, the expansion of gentrified new middle-class neighbourhoods, and rising renovation costs – by 2002 the CJUC formed the special task group of which *Stephen* became chair. As he explains,

considering what was happening to us we came to the conclusion that we had better do something and quick ...I had said in the past that we needed to start planning where we were going with this, the economics of it, and plan a new strategy because things in the church, the people and the neighbourhood [were] changing.

Early efforts of the task group involved conducting financial feasibility studies on the church, that, according to *Stephen*, “did not tell a good story!”. Indeed, three-to-five year financial estimates projected that the CJUC would move into bankruptcy, ultimately unable to pay for vital upgrades like a new boiler system and roofing, or, for funding ongoing religious ministry and community programs. In

response the task group had concluded that the most prudent course of action was to sell their assets, a prospect that meant the congregation could “stop worrying about the building, about the bricks and mortar” and re-focus on “the people aspects, the spiritual end of things” (Interview, *Stephen*, 2012).

Faced with the rising burden of the property the task force then had to convince the congregation to give up the building and consult with the United Church Presbytery and General Council, a process that *Stephen* explains took almost three and a half years:

We had to take [our evaluation] to the [various groups] gradually and really show proof of what was happening, what it all cost, what the future effects would be... we had to back our decisions up with facts, then you got to show it to the congregation and present some alternatives and let them pick.

According to the task group’s report the alternatives to major renovations were building a new smaller sanctuary outside of the urban core; rebuilding the current property and leasing out portions of the building for other users (i.e. retail) while leaving a smaller worship space for the congregation; or, selling the building outright and leasing worship space elsewhere in the city. Eschewing the first two options on the basis of the need to re-mortgage and re-finance, a precarious position considering the mounting loss of both members and their donations, the CJUC congregation finally settled on the last option: selling 701 Dovercourt Rd. in the private real estate market and using those funds to lease a smaller space in a suburban location.

With the blessing of the Conference and Presbytery, the congregation began the process of selling the property on the market. Much like any other building sold as private real estate, the task group consulted with experienced local agents:

We went to three different real estate companies and had them come and evaluate the building and they gave their re-sale estimates and how long it would take to sell, how they would propose to sell it. And of course, their idea was to sell it to a developer, which we figured was going to happen anyways, and re-sold as condos or lofts. So we

selected who we felt was comfortable to deal with and we took them on. Then we would come back as a group and decide on the offers.

Although interest in the property was very high the task group rejected a number of early “low-ball” offers. These, according to *Stephen*, were largely in response to the heritage designation and the architectural difficulties of building parking space into the old structure. As *Stephen* explains,

there would be more options for us if there wasn't heritage designation because then you are not putting so many restrictions on something. If they wanted to break it all down and rebuild it probably would be simpler, especially when you are talking about a 100-year-old building...maybe we could have sold it for another half a million!

As discussed in Chapter 3, heritage protection through easement agreements and official designations can create complex economic issues for owners of historic properties. Faith groups, in particular, are acutely sensitive to the effects of preservation policies since these tools routinely interfere with the market potential of redundant property. While a heritage designation by the City of Toronto offers a level of protection to the Dovercourt building, a means of sustaining a portion of the urban fabric in this upscaling neighbourhood, for the CJUC congregation fossilizing the building's envelope limits redevelopment options and reduces potential re-sale value. But the CJUC congregation is not alone in this regard. Many other congregations face this burden, an issue that I will explore in greater depth in the following section.

Regardless of these difficulties, by 2005 the congregation finally settled on an offer by a local developer seeking to convert the property into lofts (for more on this see Chapter 6). Sold for over \$1 million, the congregation, in consultation with the General Council, shared a portion of the funds between the Presbytery (which owned a section of the building), and the Japanese congregation, and eventually used their funds to lease space in the Lansing United Church located in North York.

Amalgamation and Redundancy in the Beaches: Beach United Church and the sale of 2000 Queen St. E.

The CJUC's experience with property rationalization is certainly not an isolated

case. Many other congregations in the city, like the Bellefair and Kew Beach United Churches in the Beaches neighbourhood, have been forced to make similar decisions with their worship spaces in response to declining demands for religious services and the increasing costs associated with ministry.⁷ As *Roger*, a former member of the Kew Beach United Church (and council member of the newly amalgamated Beach United Church) explains, in 2005 both congregations experienced various levels of “declines in participant numbers, deterioration of their 100-year old buildings, annual operating deficits, and the beginnings of ‘slippage’ in various areas of ministry work”. In particular, Bellefair United, much like the CJUC, experienced increasing difficulties in providing a quality and safe environment in their worship space – a prominent structure in the neighbourhood built in 1922 (Figure 5.7). For Kew Beach United, however, building maintenance costs were significant but much less pressing than serious declines in their membership rolls, and waning support for their religious services.

Also important in this context is the changing nature of the local neighbourhood. Unlike the relatively new rounds of reinvestment in West-Central Toronto, the social character and housing form of the Beaches neighbourhood has been created largely from earlier rounds of gentrification, a process that has evolved since the late 1970’s in pace with the more celebrated upscaling of areas like Cabagatown (Don Vale) and High Park (Ley, 1996). In this case, several decades of “standard gentrification”, highlighted by the renovation and infill of older low-rise housing, has resulted in the complete or ‘near complete’ gentrification of the area (dark grey shading in Figure 5.6), leaving other outmoded property types as potential targets for residential re-development (Walks and Maaranen, 2008b, 55). The Beaches today is characterized by an enlarging group of high-income professionals, singles and small families – a consolidation of the new middle class in and around highly desirable beach amenities and relatively low density character neighbourhoods (City of Toronto, 2006).

Recognizing these changes in the neighbourhood and their various strengths and weaknesses in the changing religious market, Bellefair United and Kew Beach

⁷The former Bellefair United Church, now the Bellefair Kew Beach Residences, is located at 2000 Queen St. E. The former Kew Beach United Church, now the The Beach United Church, is located at 140 Wineva Ave.



Figure 5.7: Bellefair United Church Pre-Conversion, March 2011 (source: author's photo)

United began the lengthy process of amalgamation. In early 2007, the congregations successfully came together under the new name 'Beach United Church' and worshipped exclusively in the former Kew Beach United building, leaving the property at Queen St. E. empty of religious services. Importantly, from the beginning of this process both congregations acknowledged the pivotal role of redundant property in sustaining the newly amalgamated church. As *Roger* highlights

a significant step in our amalgamation efforts concerned decisions about property, of which we were about to 'own' two... we made it clear to deal with that issue in good time and only when it was widely agreed that a new, single congregation had solidified sufficiently to represent the future interests of this new church, as opposed to the past emotional connections to long favoured buildings.

In a rather unique position, the new Beach United congregation had time to fully consider their re-sell options since both buildings, neither listed nor designated by the City, contained substantial tenant rental income, allowing the new church to carry both properties while, as *Roger* puts it, the "people side of the op-

eration took hold”. In fact, the congregation proceeded cautiously in evaluating the rationalization process:

Our research into property issues, such as real estate appraisals, engineering studies, architectural studies and overall adaptability to an emerging new ministry vision, was conducted quietly by a small committee over a 12 month period, starting late in 2007... They reported to the Church Council in 2008 that while small details in each building suggested [selling] one over the other, different small details suggested the reverse.

For instance, the committee’s reports highlighted that while the former Bellefair building was worth more in the local market due in large part to its central location in the neighbourhood, it also held the potential for greater visibility of the new congregation in the area. Meanwhile, appraisals of the former Kew Beach property suggested that net proceeds of sale might not allow for the complete renovation of the Queen St. building, a pivotal stipulation in the new congregation’s long-term *vision*. To help resolve this dilemma, the congregation placed both properties into a tendering process, seeking closed bids by a specified deadline:

We interviewed several realtors with experience in marketing commercial properties, especially with developer involvement. Once we selected the realty team, we relied on their experience and expertise a great deal and while the congregation expressed a wide range of interest in how the sold property might be redeveloped, it was accepted that once an offer had been accepted we would lose all control over what happened to the property in the long run. In our criteria for identifying the successful bid, we did include the point that the purchaser’s stated plans should be acceptable, in our estimation, to the neighbourhood.

Following the deadline, the congregation reviewed ten bids and assessed the bidding firms. Among a handful of bids, several developers – like the winning firm, Reserve Properties Ltd. – indicated plans to renovate and re-use the existing structure. In this case, even though the property did not have any heritage restrictions, the developer’s mandate was to “maintain an historic tie to the community”

and preserve the “village feel of the neighbourhood” – elements that resonated well with the Beach United members (Hauch, 2011). Again it is important to note here that the ability to retain control over the re-development process is a relatively uncommon practice in most church rationalization cases. For many congregations that face declining revenues and limited revenue streams (not all churches have the luxury of long-term tenants), and/or for those who must sell heritage designated properties, re-sale options and control over the types of conversions thereafter are rarely possible. Beach United, however, seems to have had their ‘cake and eaten it too’. Indeed, not only had the developer met the congregation’s design expectations but they also placed the highest bid and one that was, according to *Roger*, ‘the highest by not an insignificant amount!’.⁸ Meeting their needs, the Beach United Council then forwarded their recommendation for Reserve Properties Ltd. to the congregation’s Trustees Board and the United Church Presbytery – both of whom unanimously accepted the bid.

Now in the hands of the developer, the re-development and conversion of the property is underway (Figure 5.8) and according to *Roger* the congregation has

not been disappointed by the work of the developer on this project. He [Shane Fenton, principal] listened to us as we outlined the values and concerns of the neighbourhood, and brought forward a renovation plan that met no unusual obstacles in the process of getting city approval to proceed. His project sold out quickly ... over 80% of the condo units were purchased by Beach people looking to relocate within the neighbourhood. The building, on a notable street corner of the Beach, will remain quite recognizable while presenting an upgraded appearance and new purpose.

In the end the proceeds of the sale have been instrumental in forging a new future for the congregation. Unlike the CJUC that is now leasing property, Beach United has used the financial windfall to update and reconfigure its existing property at 140 Wineva Ave. In fact, all of the proceeds of sale are funding a \$5 million dollar renovation plan for the new church which includes LEED standard energy technologies and renovated leasing and community spaces for new local tenants

⁸The actual value of the sale was not made public.



Figure 5.8: Bellefair Kew Beach Residences: Architectural Conceptualization (source: Reserve Properties Ltd.)

(Interview, *Roger*, 2012). Thus, although the process of leaving and selling the property on Queen Street has not come without its fair share of “pain and sadness”, its rationalization and re-valuation by the secular community, in this case translated into a rather significant financial resource for the church, has enabled the survival of a congregation that has been integral to the history and development of the local community.

5.2 Protecting Religious Heritage: Urban Conservation and Heritage Management in Toronto

Many other congregations throughout Toronto have shared the experiences of the CJUC and the Beach United Church. Across Christian denominations waning demand for organized religious services has resulted in countless amalgamations and a growing market of costly religious properties – assets that consistently drain the capacity for smaller congregations to remain viable. But in these vignettes, property emerged both as a burden and a solution. The resale of redundant assets to residential developers is now not only considered a common solution to a congregation’s growing financial woes but one that is also relatively lucrative especially

given the fact that alternative options like the sale for other public uses are either severely limited or simply not available. Congregations in inner city neighbourhoods can effectively promote their churches in the private real estate market as sites of centrally located property and as large lot sizes especially to builders seeking to invest in new and higher density developments. In fact, a number of redundant and rationalized worship spaces sold to new build developers have followed the fate of the Newgate Korean Presbyterian Church discussed above. Indeed, without restrictions on re-development, many historic places of faith have been lost forever to the bulldozer in order to make way for new waves of city building.

Resistance to this emerging reality only began in earnest in the last several decades. In response to the bland ‘placelessness’ of modern city building, many Torontonians coveted historic properties, like churches, for their capacity as social and economic resources. The evolution of heritage policy and the rise of a populist conservation ethic described in Chapter 3 have made it possible to protect, long-term, individual buildings and entire districts deemed as significant sites of local heritage. On the ground, heritage designations and property easements, the legal tools of heritage policy, are instrumental in slowing the complete destruction or harmful renovation of delicate properties deemed as key features of diverse urban fabric, creating at the same time a growing market of protected heritage sites for new uses like housing. But these policy tools also impact the owners of heritage assets. For faith groups heritage protection can often, on the one hand, lead to a growing inventory of state-protected assets in need of consistent but costly maintenance, while, on the other hand, create a context where re-sale options and values are potentially reduced. Such conflicts, whether real or perceived, represent a source of tension for congregations and religious institutions seeking to make ends meet.

With these ideas in mind, in this section I highlight how official heritage protection impacts the process of religious property rationalization. In particular, we hear from two key groups about the role that heritage policy plays in sustaining Toronto’s built material history and the challenges that conservation poses for the owners of a growing number of redundant worship spaces. First, I present and analyze interview data with several key informants in the heritage sector, specifically, from both the municipal (City of Toronto Heritage Preservation Services)

and provincial governments (the Ontario Heritage Trust and the Ontario Ministry of Culture). These interviews showcase a popular secular perspective that seeks to grant heritage status to religious culture in the city and retain distinct architecture as key pieces in the local urban fabric. Second, I return to the interviews with religious property managers to explore how heritage policies impact faith groups' rationalization practices. As previously mentioned, official heritage protection can be a tremendous obstacle for owners of redundant properties, an issue that main-line faith groups have consistently raised with state-level agencies responsible for managing the heritage environment.

5.2.1 Heritagizing Toronto's Worship Spaces: Practices and Perspectives of the Local Heritage Community

"Our heritage buildings, districts and landscapes create a unique sense of place and a rooted sense of local identity and continuity for Torontonians. Heritage conservation is also a wise investment for a municipality. Heritage restoration work sets off much higher job and investment economic multipliers while conservation not only makes our neighbourhoods even more attractive, it also increases their desirability and value." (City of Toronto, 2010)

In Toronto, like most other cities, heritage has become an important part of the planning process, a tool used by the municipality to build upon its social and cultural environments – that 'sense of place and rooted sense of local identity and continuity' – as well as a means to create new forms of economic investment and secure new rounds of revitalization and redevelopment. Empowered by the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA), the Toronto Heritage Preservation Services (HPS) represents the most important state-agency in protecting and promoting the city's built material heritage. As I discuss in Chapter 3, the HPS, in concert with local heritage advisory boards and non-profit heritage agencies, is the principal group responsible for advising stakeholders (i.e. City Council, the Toronto Preservation Board, property owners and the community at large) on matters relating to the OHA, and developing heritage research and preservation tools like heritage listings and designations. In this role, the HPS is the front line in implementing Toronto's heritage

strategy. Yet this is a strategy that must also fit within a pro-growth agenda that still pervades the city-making process (see Chapter 4, especially §4.2). Against these often opposing perspectives, heritage advocates and practitioners must balance a demand for architectural preservation – which some continually critique as the ‘fossilization’ or a ‘façadism’ of the city – with a form of civic growth prioritizing global-city status (Hume, 2008). *Colin*, a heritage planner with HPS, highlighted the complexities of promoting heritage preservation in Toronto:

Do you take a very strict approach [to preservation] like some places in the U.S. or Europe where it’s ‘hands-off’ and you must leave the building alone, or do you have something a little more flexible that allows the city to grow and layer itself – an approach with more façades, more urban fabric? When you look at projects like Radio City on Jarvis Street, you have towers next to heritage buildings. That’s an award winning approach for some people, while other people don’t like it as the context is awkward and jarring, for them it doesn’t do enough...what about with redundant churches, too? Should we allow these properties to be sold off and redeveloped, erasing the fabric, or do we protect their exteriors and keep a fabric that has been there for a century or more? It’s a debate that we will have and never really solve, but maybe that is the Toronto approach. We are criticized all the time for the ‘façadization’ of buildings, so do you freeze a site forever to save façades or do you let in some development?

While the ‘Toronto approach’ of attempting to balance conservation with development is still, according to one heritage policy advisor with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, “evolving”, this notion of preserving the urban fabric by protecting buildings’ exterior envelopes and façades represents a popular compromise given the city’s political climate and global aspirations (Interview, *Katrina*, 2009). Indeed, in the race to build new cosmopolitan spaces that capture the attention and dollars of baby boom professionals, and members of the new middle class, façadism is a relatively quick method of ensuring even a nominal amount of heritage conservation. “You can’t make everything into a museum”, is how one

leading heritage architect in the city describes it (Borgal in Hume, 2008). For many of the heritage planners interviewed, this reality hits home:

We have to be realistic with what we can do in Toronto given the aggressive nature of redevelopment here. We [the HPS and the heritage community] are scrambling to protect what we can, when we can, and the best way to do that at this point is to identify, list and designate as quick as possible key architecture and protect their exteriors as opposed to trying to save and fossilize an entire building. Saving even a little bit of history is better than none! (Interview, *Mary*, 2009)

With regard to the fate of redundant urban churches in particular, many interviewees explained that extending protection to these buildings, if only through preserving historical façades, is an important step in providing some level of control to the changes taking place in key neighbourhoods – a means to ensure that the social and economic values of such properties are retained for new users. Reflecting my argument in Chapter 3 concerning the complex role that material heritage can play in the urban environment, *Colin* points out the primacy of worship spaces as socio-cultural resources:

When a church goes from a public building to a private building you are keeping it at that point for its relationship with the fabric, what it represents for the community. Because the whole idea of landmarks for the community establishes collective and meaningful environments, to remove that is extremely difficult for how the community functions. These are key resources for the life of a community. And we must make sure that their place in the urban fabric is not lost... even just leaving their historical envelopes is a key part of this process.

A central point made here, and one that is made repeatedly in previous chapters, concerns the role of the state in protecting worship spaces for their social capital and economic potential in neighbourhoods. While faith groups have had to sell their costly properties in search of much needed funds, it is secular civil agencies like the HPS that are acting as curators of a post-sacred terrain. Historic churches are no longer simply places for religious communities but are also increasingly part

of a larger and evolving terrain of local urban heritage. Through specific preservation policies, the City of Toronto is effectively ‘heritagizing’ these properties – a process that changes the ways in which they are both valued and managed by local communities and their stakeholders. As *Mary*, a heritage researcher with the HPS, explains: “the end point here is that we conserve the texture of these neighbourhoods and retain some sense of what the city was”.

The recent changes in the OHA, the key legislative tool for local heritage management described in Chapter 3, was designed with this in mind. By expanding municipalities’ capacity to control and reject alteration and demolition applications of designated properties, key heritage landscapes and specific heritage buildings are now effectively preserving the historic city in ways that have been previously challenging. Following the OHA mandate of preserving vital urban fabric and retaining some historical sense of the city, a rising number of older churches in key inner city neighbourhoods have made it as ‘listings’ to the HPS heritage inventory – a review status which carries recognition for potential protection but does not provide legal restrictions to redevelopment (Figure 5.9). At present, 124 places of worship are categorized as listed in the HPS’ *Inventory of Heritage Properties* while many more are slated for investigation. But while listing a property begins the heritage process, real protection is only possible through the establishment of official designations or easements – a more secure status that is neither quick nor simple. *Sidney*, a conservation manager with the Ontario Heritage Trust, highlights that “in Ontario, designation is always a political decision”. As with any other building type, the official protection of worship spaces must follow key steps that can take months or years to complete. At the municipal level, consultations and report reviews with property owners, the public and the Toronto Preservation Board are conducted and later submitted to Community Council and then to the City for final decisions.

According to one planner with the HPS the ability of the city to protect important worship spaces is “hampered by a lack of recognition to the unique circumstances of these precious buildings” – a property type that many others view should be handled differently:

There is no policy that is different for churches than for any other

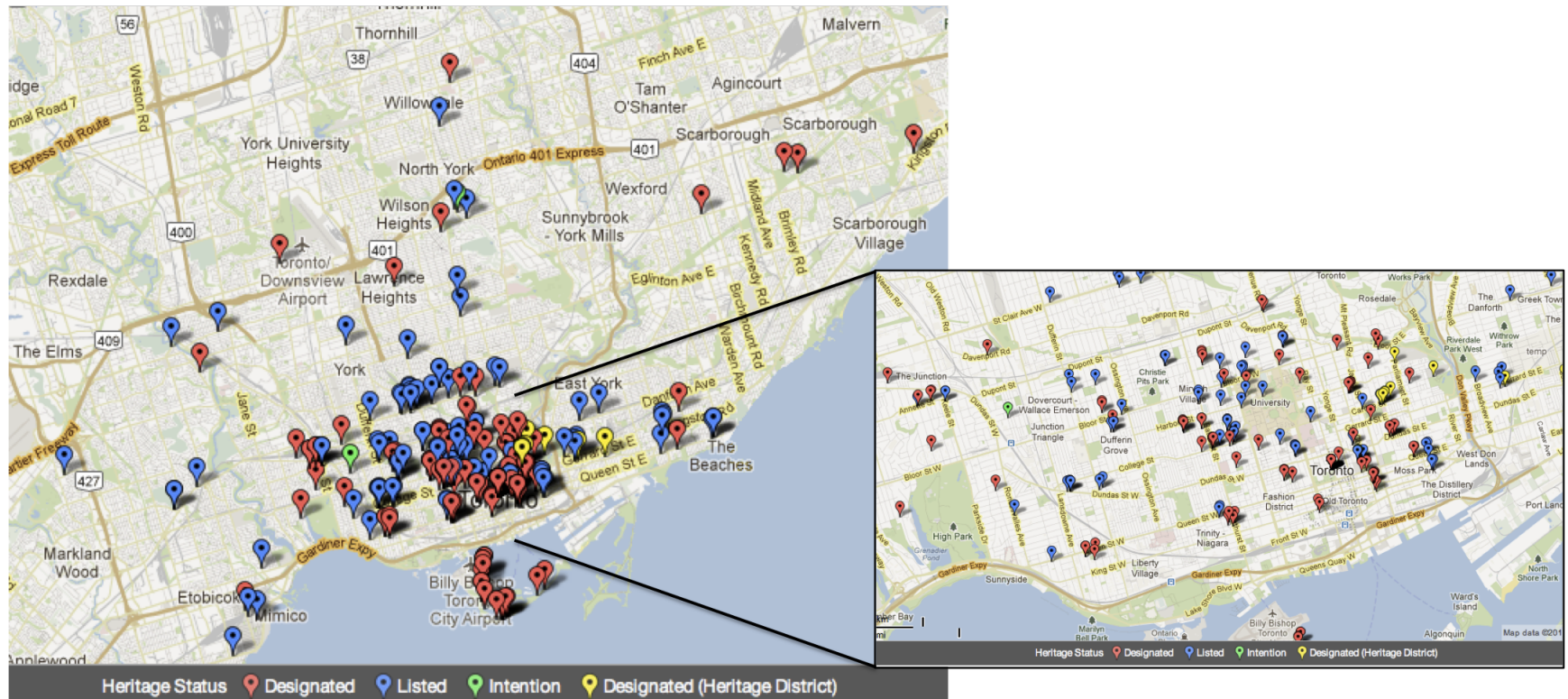


Figure 5.9: Mapping Heritage Properties: Toronto's Historic Worship Spaces as Listings, Designations, Heritage Districts and 'Intention to List' (source: Toronto Preservation Services Heritage Inventory, Google Maps; 2012)

building and they really need it because they are specific, they have their own specific problems that we need to deal with in different ways, and they are an extremely important part of our heritage infrastructure... When I was working at the Ontario Ministry of Culture, we were working on *the church problem* practically every day going back to the early 1980s. We were recognizing that churches were going to be a real problem because they require a huge amount of maintenance and congregations don't have the money to maintain them, we really needed, back then and today ever more so, some way of really protecting these places from ruin. (Interview, *Margaret*, 2009)

Besides being handled as any other historic property in the city, the 'church problem' is also compounded, as some interviewees mentioned, by the fact that heritage preservation tools do not control use and rarely retain redundant churches as public space.⁹ Indeed, the vast majority of Toronto's designated heritage churches do not retain any public function whatsoever. According to *Margaret*, a senior heritage planner with the HPS, retaining redundant worship spaces as community centres or for affordable housing, for instance, requires a public investment that is "simply not there". In fact as she explains, "governments are not buying properties, they are sellers. So unless we had some kind of stimulus program of grants or tax incentives then we just have to wait and see what the market will do and in Toronto the market is housing!" (Interview, *Margaret*, 2009). Of course, as with declining municipal budgets and shrinking political will, especially for issues like affordable housing, publicly funding capital investment programs for historic worship spaces seems unlikely. Even at the HPS, little support is given for evaluating alternatives for these places beyond proposing designations that preserve the urban fabric and emphasize residential re-use like loft conversion. Again, *Margaret* comments that

we don't have time to come up with progressive policy, we are too busy chasing our tails and doing development applications because there is so much development pressure that we don't have time to deal with [ideas] like that...We can't do proactive work, instead we are dealing

⁹In some cases heritage sites are protected by the provincial or federal governments. Under these conditions heritage sites are often more strictly protected to maintain their long term integrity.

with the most current emergencies... I think that the whole church issue should really be dealt with at the higher level, we should be seeing guidance from the Province, if somebody wants to come up with a provincial program for encouraging more public uses I think that it should be coming from there. Sure a City could come up with a program like that but right now the planners I work with are not even aware that [there are other options] than putting [market] housing in a church. They are just seeing that this is a way to keep the building and keep the exterior.

The fact that the HPS is scrambling to designate properties endangered by development and is weakened by an undervaluation of heritage at the political level (c.f. Heritage Toronto and The Toronto Historical Association, 2011, see also Chapter 3, §3.2.1) has meant a reduced capacity to work proactively in preserving worship spaces or seeking new ways to encourage conservation. One result is that the future of most heritage worship spaces in the city is in the hands of the private sector. By downloading the responsibility of maintaining historic properties to local developers the city can effectively manage heritage without paying for it. “In Toronto”, *Sidney* argues, “the only thing that can really happen for most historic churches is to rely on the private sector...and these guys overwhelmingly look to create housing, no one else has the money or the know how. At the moment this is the best way to ensure the protection of worship spaces since neither the city nor the province has the will nor the way do it. If we make sure that the developer can’t change the façade then we can rely on them to make sure that the buildings and the fabric are decently preserved”.

It seems that without the political will to explore other re-use options, most of which would be too costly for the state, private developers offer the best means for preserving historic worship spaces. Together, their willingness to take on risk (but also realize profit) and their technical ‘know how’ of renovating protected properties to meet market demands represents the most cost effective strategy for the long-term protection of the city’s historic churches. Importantly, however, this public-private heritage process leaves many questions and concerns for faith groups who, as owners of these heritage properties, consistently seek more favourable and

flexible approaches to preservation.

5.2.2 Protecting Assets: Challenges to Heritage by Local Faith Groups

The strengthening of the OHA in Bill 60 and the desperate scramble by the HPS to protect urban fabric in the face of rising development pressures, has consistently frustrated not just the city's pro-growth coalitions. For many faith groups the expansion of preservation control represents a serious concern and a distinct point of challenge moving forward in the post-secular urban context. As argued in Chapter 3, central here is the potential for these legislative mechanisms to restrict the capacity of religious institutions and their congregations to rationalize burdensome properties as they see fit. Indeed many of the interviewees from religious institutions argued against the new legislation and policies citing direct interference to their rights of property ownership and lack of transparency to the process. Having worked with Toronto's faith community in a heritage consultation role, *Sidney* sums up the situation:

[S]ome of the bigger faith groups, I call them the 'corporate faith groups' (the Anglican, the Catholic, the Presbyterian-Uniteds), get worked up by municipalities because the municipalities, through the province, have the power to affect their real estate at a very micro-level... a particular committee, a particular council or a community group can exert an impact on a church's holdings in ways they haven't been able to before and in ways that are not always apparent and that can be a scary prospect... it hasn't been an easy ride for many of these faith groups because every time they come forward with a property to do something with the municipality says, "Well we want to do something with that... We are going to stop you", instead of definitively saying "in our jurisdiction these are the six churches that we care about that you own", or, "we care about them all", or, something like that. So there is no blanket corporate relationship, it's just perpetual one-offs... kind of 'post-it-note' types of relationships. That's what drives the churches crazy because they can't manage and plan in

that environment.

At the United Church, *Matthew* explains that these ‘post-it-note relationships’ have created much distrust for the City and the Province. Heritage has become, as one interviewee put it, “a bit of a dirty word around here” (Interview, *Bernard*, 2009). Many respondents highlighted the seemingly ‘random’ and ‘reactionary’ practices of the City as a source of anxiety, an unorganized process that leaves faith groups, like the City itself, scrambling to defend their assets. *Matthew*, for instance, highlights how preservation practices undercut the capacity to manage for the future:

For example, the City slapped a heritage designation on about eight churches up at St. Claire and Yonge, called the ‘Churches on the Hill’. The real estate value a couple years ago would have been between \$50 and \$100 million. The heritage designation would cut that value by three quarters because we are talking about absolutely prime real estate. So what is the societal good there? There’s a real challenge trying to respect the historic aspect but also survive and manage our services... In Toronto, the heritage people come and do it to you (apply designations) and it can’t be good. From the lens of maximum flexibility, heritage is a bad thing full stop...What’s the right answer? The right answer in my opinion is that if someone thinks that it’s such a bloody important heritage, then someone needs to be able to [buy] us out.

Echoing my argument in Chapter 3, *Matthew*’s comment highlights the value and conflict-laden nature of heritage. By conferring religious places of worship into ‘official heritage’ status the state shifts the context of property from the hands of the church to that of the public and private sectors – an official source of social and economic value realized not just by faith groups but also by the local community. Of course, this transformation creates considerable tension especially concerning its potential impact on the resulting economic de-valuation of redundant property in the real estate market. *Derek*, a senior policy analyst with the Ontario Ministry of Culture, confirms that the economic impact of heritage designation for faith groups is almost always a ‘negative one’:

that's the essence of conservation in Ontario, that in an urban area designation will always reduce your property value, it's a guarantee, and sometimes there are incentives, but often in the '416' and certainly in the Yonge corridor and the Scarborough border, designation will almost always reduce the profitability of the church. I can't think of any examples where it won't.

Even for the Catholic Church, a remarkably robust mainline group (see Chapter 2), demands from the local development and heritage communities coupled with declining religious observance and participation are taking their toll. In recent years, the changing heritage policy environment has become a source of anxiety especially for those involved in managing Catholic properties in the inner city. *Douglas*, a senior property manager with the Archdiocese of Toronto, reported that issues of redundancy, rationalization and heritage policy, heretofore rare concerns, are now "definitely on the agenda". "I think that we are going to cross those bridges in the next five years or so", he explained (Interview, *Douglas*, 2012). Continuing, he noted that "we are going to have a number of buildings that will need to be addressed in Toronto and the current heritage legislation is going to be a problem for us since we won't be able to pay for special restorations and we could also lose out on valuable bids from the private market" (Interview, *Douglas*, 2012).

In fact much of the concern from faith groups comes from what they perceive as a lack of transparency of the heritage legislation process and poor consultation strategies by the Province. According to *Douglas*

We found out about the legislation last minute since there was no consultation whatsoever with the private sectors. There was consultation done with the heritage people and the municipalities but there was no consultation whatsoever with the institutional sector, or specifically with places of worship or developers.

Fearing the impacts of these changes, an inter-faith coalition, made up primarily of the Catholic and United Churches, officially appealed to the Province and the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, arguing that the new heritage protection would give the state virtually unlimited discretion to designate worship spaces and erode the right of faith groups to manage their assets. One recent result of their appeal

is the publication of new provincial ‘guidelines’ to heritage practices specifically designed for worship spaces (Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture, 2011). Referred to as a “Heritage Toolkit for Ontario’s Places of Worship”, this document provides some preliminary guidance for municipalities and faith groups who seek alternative measures to designations. For *Douglas* and other managers of religious properties, the Toolkit provides the first steps in bridging faith groups to the heritage community and protecting key assets from seemingly indiscriminate designation strategies. As he explains,

we’re concerned that we don’t have everything and all of our properties designated. There are certain buildings that should be protected and certain others that are not of heritage significance, so we just want to make sure that there is a way of measuring that and a way of respecting the liturgical objects and the religious operations and the independence of the church. So [with the Toolkit] we now have guidelines which could lead to a [revision] in the OHA down the road and we’ve got some sensitivity to what our concerns and issues are... those are printed on Ministry of Culture letterhead, stamped by the Ministry, and when the issues go to Council, because Council is where the ultimate power has been assigned now for heritage designation, at least there is some sensitivity and documentation to give them an understanding of where we are coming from. (Interview, *Douglas*, 2012)

While the Toolkit is by no means an official part of the OHA legislation, it does create an opening for faith groups to exert some level of control over the heritage process and gain some influence in guiding local preservation practices. “Having a real voice in this process is what we want and we need to have our property concerns heard one way or another”, argued *Matthew*. And, although the Toolkit is relatively new, the faith community is optimistic that it will lead to a measure of independence for the churches and a more organized approach to the heritage system. In terms of property, this document, as “a step in the right direction”, is also expected to leverage local religious institutions against wanton listings and designations that would severely limit their re-sale options (Interview, *Douglas*, 2012). In other words, while the province has increased the power of municipalities to

preserve more worship spaces in the city, new agreements between religious institutions and the state are leading to some re-negotiation of what constitutes ‘official’ heritage. The expectation is that the heritage process will evolve to give faith groups new opportunities to rationalize some costly properties in the real estate market as they see fit while at the same time committing to protecting the historical value of other sites deemed as significant public resources. However, with the Toolkit in place and future consultation expected between these key stockholders, the possibilities for a more flexible and transparent approach to religious heritage remain to be seen.

5.3 Conclusions

At the very heart of the church loft phenomenon exists a fundamental struggle between differing perspectives of property and heritage. What counts as heritage, and how we manage our built material heritage represent key questions for diversifying urban communities. Throughout this chapter I have presented some of the views, opinions, and practices that both state agents and faith groups share in Toronto’s ever evolving religious-heritage market. Put short, this varied account helps explain, in part, the supply-side of the church loft challenge.

Specifically, on the one hand, property rationalization, the sale and off-loading of religious properties in the private real estate market, has become a regular practice by religious institutions and local congregations and is the pivotal process that produces available redundant churches, and their land, in the central city. Confronted with the realities of a changing religious marketplace and rising costs associated with maintaining large aging properties, many worship spaces are at once both burdens and solutions for their owners. Congregations and property managers from mainline institutions consistently explain that selling properties in the open market creates important opportunities to remain viable in today’s multi-cultural and multi-religious society by providing funds to enliven their ministerial programs, develop key community outreach, and cover rising administration costs. Looked at not just as spiritual places but also as critical assets, the sale of redundant worship spaces, especially to local developers, represents for many groups a chance to renew their ‘life and mission’.

On the other hand, the rationalization of worship spaces commonly includes direct public involvement. Over the last several decades secular-civil society has become increasingly involved in protecting historic architecture in an effort to control the speed of change, to retain linkages to the past and maintain ‘some sense of what the city once was’. Heritage preservation is now a considerable planning tool used by state agents to ensure some level of continuity and legibility to the city – a socio-political process crucial to the post-modern era of city building. Like other important material heritage, Toronto’s rich array of cathedrals, churches and chapels, many of which represent the early days in this city’s establishment, are now firmly on the radar of both provincial and municipal heritage authorities. More and more local redundant worship spaces are consistently revalued and protected from the bulldozer by the secular public for their roles as social and economic resources, as spaces vital to the functioning of good communities. And, the impact of the revaluation of religious material heritage has been profound. Official efforts to list and designate redundant worship spaces, and the new legislation that has strengthened these practices, has ensured that many inner city churches remain part of the urban fabric and are therefore sold by faith groups into specific niches of the real estate market. In other words, while the rationalization practices of faith groups ensures a steady supply of redundant property and land to the local real estate market, the preservation practices of the state increasingly promote their conversion and reuse as specialized properties like lofts.

It is important to note here that this supply-side relationship is made possible by two factors: first, by the limitations that heritage conservation policies place on the redevelopment possibilities of redundant worship spaces, and second, by an increasing reliance on a narrowing private market to maintain heritage in the city. In regards to the former, designations on worship spaces, like most other historic architectures, protect key exterior façades and prohibit the re-design of building envelopes – a process that prevents demolition but promotes adaptive reuse. In regards to the latter, while the public sector enforces such architectural restrictions in the name of heritage conservation, it is rarely involved in re-developing and re-using such places for public use. One result is that private owners – faith groups – are expected to maintain the built material heritage, a fact that many not only resent but also challenge. Of course, as we have seen and as I will explain further, these

costs are routinely, if not necessarily, passed on to private urban developers seeking to make profit from the unique real estate opportunities that redundant churches represent and thus, eventually, to private resident-owners who continually demand novel living spaces in the inner city.

In the following chapter I expand on these last issues and examine another part of the supply-side context of church lofts. In this case, I focus on the role of developers and designers, key agents that not only build church lofts but also negotiate and produce the loft terrain – a complex practice that promotes such places as legitimate and desirable forms of inner city living.

Chapter 6

Developing and Designing Church Lofts in Toronto

*“A shape less recognisable each week,
A purpose more obscure. I wonder who
Will be the last, the very last, to seek
This place for what it was
. . . for whom was built
This special shell?” - Larkin, “Church Going”*

“I’m not interested in converting a church to make it look like something else. I want it to look like what it originally looked like... I see value in the original bricks and mortar, how these original buildings were configured” - Toronto Loft Developer

In one sense churches are bricks and mortar. They are constructions in space. But churches, arguably more than any other building type, carry distinctly powerful and intangible qualities. Their form and function are enduringly tied to a (his)story, a heritage, an identity, a memory - indeed, *memories*. In his poem, Philip Larkin referred to the church as a “special shell” for good reason. According to writer and historian Margaret Visser (2002, 12), every aspect of a church is a ‘language’ that

inspires reflection, it “constitutes collective memory... it reminds us of what we have known”. Larkin himself experienced the church in this way, moving at first from “bored, uninformed”, to a willful introspection of its future and its impact, if lost, on a new generation. But, even closed, abandoned, or re-used, a church still communicates; it “can go on ‘working’ even when there is no performance or crowd” (Visser, 2002, 12). In ways that are still being explored (see Clark 2007; Kong 1992; Visser 2002) churches speak to their users, visitors, and apparently, their developers.

For developers of church lofts, the rehabilitation and display of the ‘special shell’ is paramount to success. The *original*, the *authentic*, the *real*; these are all values that are intentionally presented in conversions. Far from the ‘cookie cutter condos’ or ‘boxes in the sky’ that line Toronto’s central urban areas, redundant churches offer keen developers and architects opportunities to creatively connect with historic spaces, to restore distinct geometries, and to highlight, above all, uniqueness. This is, of course, not simply an initiative for the love of architectural history, but also an opportunity, if done properly, to exact a premium in the loft market – for uniqueness sells.

In the preceding chapter I outlined the local contexts that have converged to create an increasing supply of redundant churches ripe for redevelopment. As church managers and local congregations in mainline denominations increasingly rationalize properties to meet shrinking budgets and as heritage conservation policies work to protect the municipality’s shrinking supply of historic urban fabric, the options for reselling churches are limited. At the same time, however, Toronto’s condominium and loft market has continued to expand in response to increasing demands especially by urban professionals seeking to live in the downtown core. Yet, outside of an expensive but expanding supply of new luxury condominium towers and a shrinking stock of older converted industrial properties, discerning loft consumers have few choices of unique upscale properties in desirable residential locations. With an eye to this market, savvy developers have increasingly exploited redundant churches for loft conversions, creating an exclusive loft sub-market.

Far from a simple task the transformation of urban churches to loft properties is a remarkably complex process involving a combination of specialized actors

whose role is not limited to the material redevelopment process but is also tied to the symbolic re-use of the built material culture. For *niche* developers like Mitchell and Associates, and BWA Inc., both of whom in previous years cut their teeth on the residential conversion of industrial properties, the success of church lofts in the real estate market is based upon creating distinction and uniqueness, a functional and symbolic separation between the condominium-landscapes of the downtown core and the homogeneity of the suburbs. Their specialty work brings together innovative approaches to redesigning space and establishing a new sense of place, often through the re-use of heritage aesthetics and religious iconographies left over from previous use. These technical professionals recreate former sacred places with a contemporary patina, one that provides a symbolic yet secular bridge to a (religious) past and, at the same time forges recognizable loft spaces that enable the types of lifestyles and *habitus* that many middle and upper-class urban consumers desire.

With these ideas in mind, in the following chapter I discuss the various actors and processes involved in the production and design of church lofts in Toronto. I explore both the material redevelopments and the symbolic renovations that are considered necessary to convert religious properties into upscale domestic spaces. Using site observations and interviews with developers and architects of specific church conversion projects, I will first briefly discuss how these key actors approach redundant churches and the conversion process, how they negotiate the specific material features of post-religious properties, how they work with religious organizations, and how they operate within the heritage regulations imposed by the state (appendix A.3). Second, I examine several important architectural and development practices that are involved in creating church lofts. Two short case-studies, including *The Church Lofts* and *The Glebe Lofts*, highlight how residential-conversions reconfigure the *space* of the church into viable stages for loft-style living. Third, I explore how the redesign of sacred space into domestic space requires a production of a new sense of *place*. In this case, I uncover how the conversions involve an appropriation of religious symbolic elements. Specifically, I examine the concepts of iconography and aesthetics as tactics employed by developers and architects to create a distinct identity in the church loft product – an identity linked to both a sense of religious and historical authenticity, and a sense of unique but

secular quality.

6.1 Creating Houses of Luxury from Houses of Worship: Developers and Architects in the Church Loft Market

The residential redevelopment of church lofts is an exclusive practice in the city of Toronto. While a growing list of developers vie for new build condominium projects, especially along the redeveloped waterfront and in densifying neighbourhoods around key transit nodes, there is a rather shorter list of heritage developers, consultants and architects who deal directly with the adaptive re-use of institutional properties like churches. In fact, only a small number of developers are responsible for the majority of recent church loft developments in the city (see Table 4.5). Two developers in particular, namely Mitchell and Associates and BWA Inc., are accountable for five such projects, including *The Hepbourne Hall Lofts*, *The Glebe Lofts* and *The Church Lofts*. Interviews with these developers and associated architects/designers highlight how success in this particular loft market requires ample experience with heritage properties in general, but also a working knowledge of the specificities of rebuilding redundant churches. On this point, one local real estate expert maintained that “[church loft developers] generally have to be an architect or contractor that understand(s) the intricacies and cost ... It’s always more money to do one of these church conversions than it is building from scratch” (Interview, Lee, 2009). Reflecting on this, a long time Toronto architect and designer remarked rather dramatically that “lots of people are scared of church projects ... there are a lot of unknowns in the construction costs, and then there’s the zoning worry. If you fail, you’ve blown all that time” (Wagner in Gadd, 2004).

But although the costs associated with this niche market consistently ‘scare’ away a number of developers, for those currently involved, the redevelopment of complex historic properties represents more than potential profit gain alone. Indeed, considering the obstacles, remaking churches or any other outmoded property as upscale homes is part of a process which one developer described as not only a key ‘brand builder’, but more importantly, an opportunity to ‘be really creative and innovative in the urban fabric’ (Interview, Bernard Watt, 2009). In this way, perhaps more than any other building practice, converting churches requires

specific skills like an ability to deal with unique risks and costs including those which are both financial and architectural; a working knowledge of specific state regulation (including land-use zoning and heritage restrictions); an ability to build and manage relationships with religious groups, the heritage policy makers and local communities; and, perhaps most significantly, an enduring personal and professional interest in producing unique residential spaces.

The experience of Mitchell and Associates, actually a husband-and-wife development firm, illustrates many of these issues. Originally trained as architect and engineer-*cum*-urban planner, the duo started in the 1970s by renovating houses for the rental market in Toronto's Annex neighbourhood. In a short time, however, they shifted focus. According to Bob Mitchell,

by the late 1970s the Rental Housing Protection Act came and basically that meant that we got out of building in the rental market *per se* because someone was telling you how to organize your own affairs. Rental stopped making sense and we switched over into condos. And then at the same time the City of Toronto had a policy into effect to protect the existing rental housing stock, so then we thought, well what about things that aren't residential now and we started looking for anomalies in residential neighbourhoods...it could be factories, medical colleges, churches, and what I found is that you get buildings that outlive their life cycle, whether it's a factory and it's in a residential neighbourhood and transportation doesn't work for it anymore, or it's a church in a residential neighbourhood and the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood changes and the congregation that was all Ukrainian or Polish or whatever is now living in Brampton so they move the church out there or the church population ages and the congregation dies out.

Like many developers in that time, the private condominium and loft markets were increasingly lucrative options especially in the face of growing state regulation of rental properties and, perhaps more importantly, swelling demand for distinctive inner-urban space by the returning middle-class (see Chapter 4). By making the switch as quickly as they did, the Mitchells pioneered Toronto's nascent

loft market several years in advance of the loft-living craze that eventually made its way in earnest from New York by the late 1980s. In fact, by 1985, this development team had successfully adapted five heritage buildings – including an abandoned felt works (41 Shanly Street), this being the first legal residential loft project in the City of Toronto; and the Ontario Medical College for Women (281 Sumach Street), a uniquely symbolic and historically significant building. Writing in the *Globe and Mail* about the Mitchells' fourth project located in the Annex (75 Markham Street), architectural critic Adele Freedman (1985) highlighted just how rare this practice was:

To hear of another condominium building going up on Bay Street or at Harbourfront could hardly raise an eyebrow, but how about an old picture frame factory in an ethnic neighbourhood being converted into a 16 unit “New York loft-style condo” to be known as *The Oxford-on-Markham*? That’s the project Mitchell and Associates are in the midst of completing and it promises to be a honey. (It is also completely sold out.)

By the early 1990s, however, it was clear that the adaptive re-use of heritage properties as loft spaces in Toronto was no side show. With the continued expansion of the inner-urban residential market, Mitchell and Associates began considering redundant church spaces, many of which were increasingly available in the private real estate market partly because of the social and religious change described in Chapter 2 and subsequent property rationalization detailed in Chapter 5. As result, by 1991, the Mitchells had acquired several “anomalies” in desirable residential neighbourhoods. *The Hepbourne Hall Lofts*, their first church conversion, made use of the heritage designated annex (Sunday school and portion of original church structure) of the once overflowing St. Paul’s Dovercourt Presbyterian Church in West-Central Toronto. *The Hepbourne Hall Lofts* firmly established the Mitchells’ versatility in private real estate and grounded their work in a growing niche market. The project was considered to be a template for church-based adaptive use and, according to one Toronto columnist, a successful example of housing intensification (Blain, 1990). For Bob Mitchell, capitalizing on this niche is a crucial aspect of their progress:

there's a segment of the marketplace that does what I do, that is looking for existing value, places where you can do interesting things and retain value. But it's a niche. [A church conversions is] not the kind of thing you can ramp up to a certain high-level... it's very customized ... you can't come in (to a church reuse project) and say we are going to put in 200 units all the same, it doesn't work. They are all going to be different, they are all going to be idiosyncratic, and that's how it works, that's all part of the charm, that's what helps create the niche.

Following the success of *The Hepbourne Hall Lofts* and the establishment of a viable and unique niche, the Mitchells purchased and converted a portion of the St. Cyril Methodius Roman Catholic Episcopal Church, now *The Claremont Hall Lofts*, in the Trinity-Bellwoods neighbourhood. In their third church conversion, the Mitchells converted The Riverdale Presbyterian Church into the upscale *Glebe Lofts* located just south of Danforth along Pape Street, in the burgeoning *Greektown* neighbourhood.

According to Mitchell, an important first step in each process was developing and managing relationships among diverse religious groups. In this case, acquiring redundant church properties necessarily entails a willingness and flexibility to work with various religious organizations that exist within entirely different operational cultures:

Every church organization is governed differently. Presbyterians are run by the presbyteries, so every church is autonomous but they have to get the blessing from the synod ... but they make democratic decisions as a group - sell, expand, move, contract - so then I negotiated with them and these things get very protracted because, well, you're dealing with a democracy so everything has to get voted on and decided as a group, and our negotiation with the Riverdale Presbyterian Church probably went along for 6 or 7 years before we got around to doing [*the Glebe Lofts*]. Initially, we came at them with a proposal that didn't work and they decided to go another way so we forgot about them ... then the people who originally got the contract it turns out [realized] that it wasn't as easy as they thought and [The Riverdale Presbyterian

Church] came back to us and asked if we were interested and that still took a couple years to get it right and build it. But these things take a long time to gestate sometimes. But that was with the Presbyterians. We did St. Cyril and that was Roman Catholic, that was 'in and out the door'. We went in to see the archbishop, signed the papers and it was like an autocratic control - what the head of the church says everybody does. We have had discussions with Baptists and other groups like that but there are other religious orders that have their own rules on how they do things and you adapt to it. But it's a patient game.

In contrast to the industrial loft markets which characteristically involved relatively rapid transactions between similar small to medium sized manufactures with few properties, successful investment in redundant churches often requires a level of flexibility and commitment among the builder and the religious group (Zukin, 1982b). Thus navigating the operational cultures of different congregations and their various levels of hierarchical control and sustaining a working relationship among investors can be daunting. Part of playing the 'game' often requires builders to keep close contact with the religious organizations, through, for example, providing ongoing counsel and advice on properties when needed. Of course, this relationship building process is also part of an inherent value of being in a niche market. If successful, one can create a valuable reputation among the various religious organizations involved:

we have churches to do things with when the time is right and because *we get known for certain things* then people call you up and ask you to come and take a look at this, and it may not work right now or they might need to do something so that in the next five or ten years they can keep functioning and you help them and when they are ready...they remember you and you make it [lofts] happen (Interview, Bob Mitchell, 2009).

This long-term strategy of relationship building coupled with creative and adaptive architectural philosophies was a crucial part of their successful acquisition of the Riverdale Church for resale as a loft product. In their early talks with the con-

gregation, Mitchell consistently pitched a sensitive and entirely unique conversion rather than “cookie cutter” new build options. As he explains:

that’s how we got in with [The Riverdale Presbyterian Church]... we said “[creating upscale lofts in a portion of the structure] is a better thing to do then tearing it down however you decide to do [a conversion] you can generate cash out of this, and you can keep the fabric of the neighbourhood intact because it’s an important building because it’s got architectural character that you’re never going to replace if you tear it down and replace a six storey apartment block, and if you can keep it you should.

What is also apparent here is that success in this tight sub-market is dependent in part on long-term experience and one’s ability to *read* and *negotiate* rather convoluted terrains of heritage conservation, and urban-social change. Bernard Watt, architect and developer of *The Church Lofts* and *The Swanwick*, remarked that

a lot of it [redeveloping a church] involves seeing what’s there, interpreting what’s there and not just in terms of the bricks and mortar, but in terms of the underlying planning regulations as it affects that land; in terms of its position in the neighbourhood; how it interacts with other buildings in and around it; in terms of its position in the infrastructure like how it’s serviced by transportation ... so you have to ask yourself if it is in a spot where what you want to do will actually make sense ... if you make the right decisions, you make money and then you go to something else and if you don’t then you get cashed out and that’s it.

Knowledge of heritage policy and relationships with the heritage regulators (i.e. The Ontario Heritage Board (OHB), The City of Toronto Heritage Preservation Services (HPS)) are crucial. Interestingly, none of the church reuse projects that Mitchell and Associates have completed were officially designated at the beginning of development. Interviews with several heritage planners at the City of Toronto confirmed that while both the Dovercourt St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church and St. Cyril’s were converted before any comprehensive heritage protection was

in place, the Riverdale Presbyterian Church (the *Glebe Lofts*) was listed in the City inventory but was excluded from designation due, most likely, to the backlog of properties intended for protection. In fact, it was Mitchell himself who eventually pursued the designations from the City of Toronto and the OHB:

We said [to the City] we think you should list or designate this building [*The Glebe Lofts*], because from our perspective if someone is living in a designated historical building it's worth more than if they were living in a tower somewhere, so we did that. Typically though they've given enough latitude, and I'm not interested in doing a church ... to make it look like something else, I want it to look like what it originally looked like. I'm interested in the space inside the building. I have a good working relationship with the OHB and the HPS because we're not working at cross-purposes. Like them, I see value in the original bricks and mortar and how they are configured ... you can maintain the visual integrity of the building and at the same time do interesting things in spots that you don't want seen, or things that drop down into the roof structures so you can't see what's going on and do the types of things that we want to do for people at the same time retain the architectural character of the building.

But here too, heritage designations and listings create crucial barriers for others wishing to enter the niche market:

[Heritage restrictions] are great because someone can't come along and put up a sixteen story tower, and from my perspective I'm happy to see it listed or designated because what it does is it makes it more difficult for others who have other purposes in mind for the building to compete with me. It's a free market system, I'm out there and lose buildings to others who have less desirable uses but can pay more for it. (Interview, Bob Mitchell, 2009)

As mentioned in Chapters 3 and 5, across Toronto there are numerous examples of church buildings that have been destroyed to make way for new developments. For century-old buildings like St. James Bond (1066 Avenue Rd.) in Forest Hill,

a lack of heritage protection either through listing or full/partial designation meant that the United Church could sell its land at a higher value to local developers interested in building lucrative modern lofts in a key residential neighbourhood. Indeed, being unencumbered by costly heritage renovations and municipal oversight means that demand for the land by new build developers, of which there are many in the city, was sufficiently high – a situation favoured by the church (Interview, *Matthew*, 2009). But even listing and designating a church property does not indefinitely secure a building's future. In the case of St. Mary the Virgin United Church (40 Westmoreland Ave.), a municipal heritage designation in 2000 complicated renovation options on what is a delicate architectural envelope (Gadd, 2004). Although the building was originally purchased by The Lux Group Inc. for conversion to lofts months before its designation, it was clear that not long after protection the rebuilding process was much more expensive than the developer had expected. With rising costs, especially in masonry and heritage-architectural consultants, the developer went bankrupt leaving the building abandoned for over five years. Although a recent purchase by new developers is expected to save the building, the loft unit costs are expected to be much higher than market value. Like so many other church conversions in the city, the upcoming *40 Westmoreland Lofts* is to be sold as lofts at luxury prices in order to meet the redevelopment costs and profit expectations of local developers (Veillette, 2011).¹

6.2 Converting *Space*: The Material Transformations of Churches to Lofts

After a lengthy acquisition process, developers along with architects and designers must quickly turn their attention to the conversion and redevelopment process. Like industrial lofts, converting churches presents unique challenges that are typically not dealt with when involved in new construction. As one developer put it: “the building's architectural history matters” (Interview, *Richard*, 2009). For Bernard Watt, developer and architect of several churches in Toronto, converting old spaces

¹ Although the sales website for the *40 Westmoreland Lofts* is still online as of the time of writing, several informants have unofficially reported that the most recent developer has pulled out of the project. Once again, the future of the former St. Mary the Virgin may be in jeopardy especially as many local residents feel that the building is a target for vandalism.

represents a distinct set of challenges: “once you start getting into the original building and its addition, he explains, “you start uncovering and discovering things about it”. Furthermore, reflecting on the differences between his previous industrial loft projects and church conversions, Watt argues that

the history and heritage of the buildings are unique and delicate - whereas industrial properties like warehouses and factories are generally repetitive structures that are much easier to cut into subunits like condos, churches are completely different spaces to work from.

Far from any straightforward process each church conversion presents new obstacles, from one-of-a-kind building geometries, to extremely delicate heritage-designated exterior façades, to hidden artifacts embedded in church walls (Figure 5.4). One of the central redevelopment challenges therefore is the need to negotiate the spatial and structural idiosyncrasies of church properties. Having direct knowledge of the history of a building – its life before lofts – is crucial to success.

An illustration of the material and architectural transformations of several recent church loft conversions in Toronto is worth highlighting here. In each case, the focus is on re-constructing the original church ‘space’ - a complex rehabilitation of heritage pertaining especially to the exterior envelope or ‘shell’ and the need to construct functional loft spaces that cater to specific consumer needs *and* offer the aesthetic qualities that discerning consumers have come to expect in heritage-conversion projects.

6.2.1 The Church Lofts: Luxury Lofts in a United Church

One of the most elaborate and detailed church conversions in recent years is *The Church Lofts*. Purchased for an undisclosed amount by Bernard Watt of Dovenco Inc. this conversion into 28 private units highlights unique loft spaces that make direct use of the building’s heritage designated envelope, a practice that showcases of the building’s history and architecture across all of the individual units (see also Chapter 5, §5.1.1).

To make loft project viable a significant amount of physical alteration and conservation were necessary to properly convert the CJUC into an upscale residential property. As with most adaptive reuse projects, the conversion process involved a

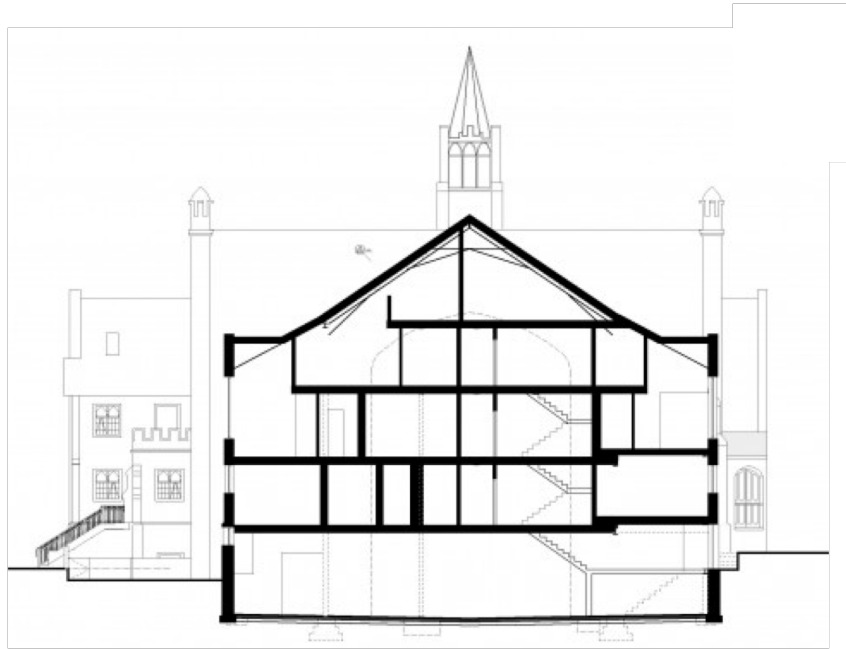


Figure 6.1: The Abbey Lofts: Architectural Schematic (cross section: East-/West looking North) (source: E.R.A Inc., 2008)

considerable demolition, restoration and creative reconfiguration. From the outset, the design of the project necessarily took its lead from the existing heritage designated exterior walls and roof. As opposed to other conversions which need to consider more complex architectural styles, this building's original square shape offered much design simplicity. In comparison to *The Abbey Lofts* (Figure 6.1), for instance, which has an intricate exterior shell, axial architectural arrangement and multiple large front atriums, all features that proved complex for renovation and rehabilitation, the design of *The Church Lofts* follows closely the more simplistic original square geometry (Interview, *Harriet*, 2009).

To make the general layout of the unique loft units the building was cut into three main floors with the basement as an underground parking facility (including three interior parking spaces with direct private access to individual units) and a multi-level atrium in the centre (Figure 6.2).

Well before construction, however, a large amount of the church interior that

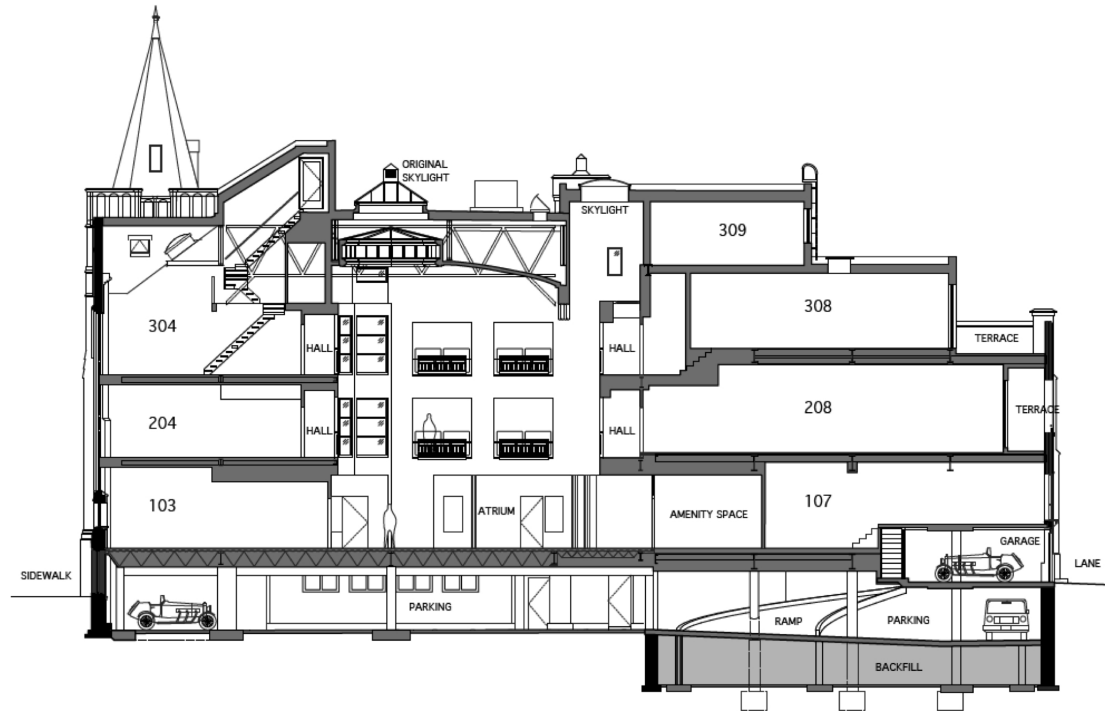


Figure 6.2: The Church Lofts: Architectural Schematic A (cross section: West/East Looking North) (source: Bernard Watt, Architect, Dovenco Inc., 2009)

was left behind was disassembled and removed. Pews both from the main sanctuary and the Moriyama Chapel, numerous stained glass windows, hanging lamps and organ pipes, among other items, were either sent to storage, sold to collectors, or, incorporated into the conversion process (Interview, *Lawrence*, 2009). Many of the remaining elements in the main sanctuary and rear annex, however, were destroyed to make way for new interior structures. Large interior features such as the main sanctuary floor, balcony and stage, and the rear annex roof were eventually demolished, leaving the building's heritage designated 'shell' - main walls, front towers and steel truss roof - intact (Figure 6.3).

A lengthy and delicate process of restoring many of the building's original



Figure 6.3: The Church Lofts: Interior Demolitions (source: Benjamin Watt-Meyer, Architect, Dovenco Inc., 2009)

heritage features followed the building's demolition. As with most church conversions, the costly off-site repair of numerous original stained glass windows was required. The large Tudor-arched windows, in particular, represented an important part of this restoration process as these features not only help to re-establish the building's imposing presence on the streetscape, but are also integral to the interior design of several of the loft units (Figure 6.4). Furthermore, several windows along the front double towers were repositioned and on the primary walls the restoration of various brickwork elements was needed. Aged and damaged brick tuck-pointing was replaced while exposed brickwork was sandblasted. And, across the entire structure, the roof membrane and shingles were replaced.

As would be expected, the renovation of the interior structure was substantial in order to create a functional residential building. In the main sanctuary large steel columns, many of which were salvaged and repurposed from the demolition process, were used for constructing new floors and walls. On the front of the building several smaller balconies were tied into the front facing suites and third-floor units were also given roof access. Renovations to the non-designated rear annex were also significant. In particular, two setback floors above the annex roof were constructed to elevate the third floor and create an additional fourth level for several two-storey features (Figure 6.5).

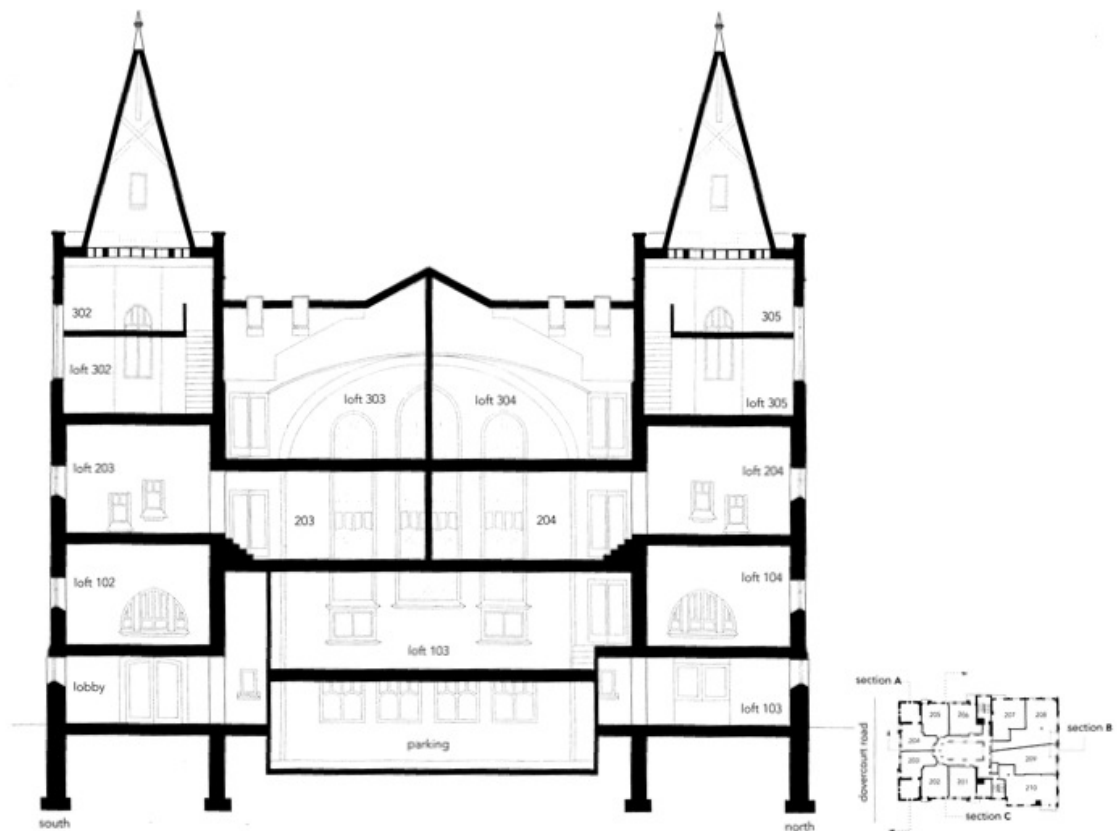


Figure 6.4: The Church Lofts: Architectural Schematic B (cross section: North/South looking West) (source: Bernard Watt, Architect, Dovenco Inc., 2009)

Each of the 28 units is of a unique design. Ranging both in one- and two-stories and in size from approximately 600 square feet to 1,500 square feet, each unit accommodates and incorporates the built enveloped and the public spaces of the structure.

It is important to note that the material redevelopment of *The Church Lofts* represents a typology of church conversion. In this case, the entire structure is re-used as a loft space – both the heritage designated church and the 1958 annex are converted to upscale private residences. By and large, most church loft conversions

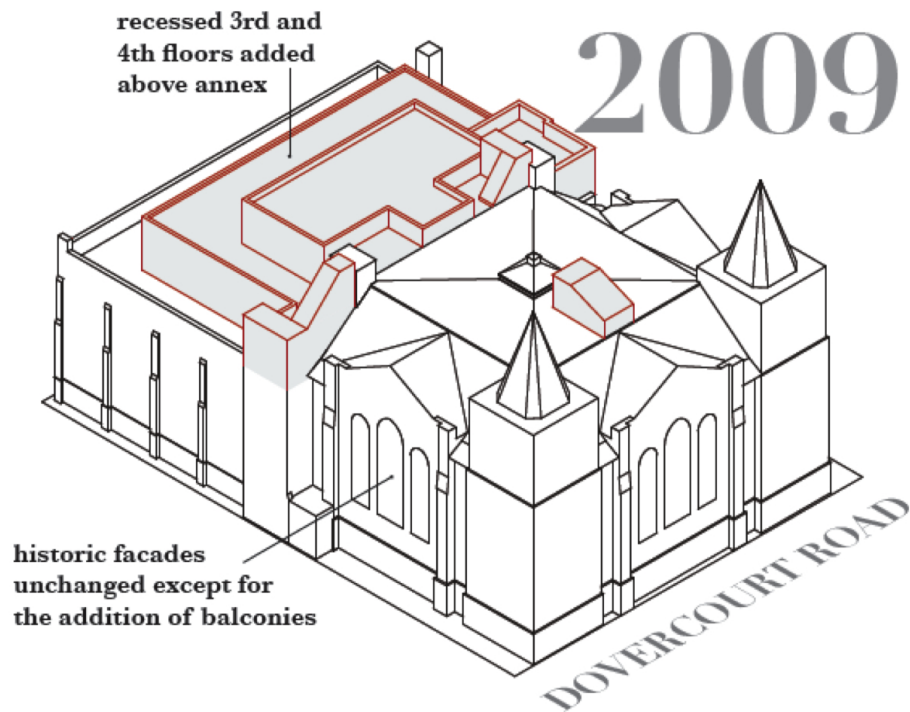


Figure 6.5: The Church Lofts: Architectural Rendering, 2009 (source: Benjamin Watt-Meyer, Dovenco Inc., 2009)

in Toronto follow this specific redevelopment pattern, especially as most churches and congregations are neither large enough nor financially secure enough to justify designs that keep a portion of the old church as a worship space. However, examples of mixed use (religious-secular) designs exist, and *Glebe Lofts*, a project by Mitchell and Associates, is perhaps the best known.

6.2.2 The Glebe Lofts: Upscale Lofts and Restored Worship Space in a Century-Old Presbyterian Church

At around the same time as congregants constructed what eventually became the CJUC along the Western edge of central Toronto in the early twentieth century, a small Presbyterian group from Toronto's Jones Avenue Mission, an inter-church



Figure 6.6: Riverdale Presbyterian Church, ca. 1907 (source: author's photo, 2009)

mission, began construction of the Riverdale Presbyterian Church along the Danforth. Beginning as the local Presbyterian Sunday School, by 1907 the first church building was constructed under the aegis of British architect Eden Smith, a prolific figure whose other works included Trinity College in Toronto (Figure 6.6). By the 1920s, the Presbyterian community was booming and Riverdale was transformed from a modest church with some 200 congregants to the centre and symbol of Presbyterian worship in Toronto.

In 1921, renowned Canadian architect John Wilson Gray designed a large Gothic-revival extension off the original church. In what appears to be his last project before his death in 1922, the new expansive building added a 1400 seat nave, administrative offices and community meeting rooms for the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

Although Riverdale Presbyterian survived some seven decades as a worship space, by the early 1990s the congregation that once numbered over a thousand members had steadily contracted to a few hundred. In response, the large extension was abandoned and left empty by the congregation for approximately five years

(Interview, Bob Mitchell, 2009). As discussed above and described in Chapter 5, after several years of dialogue with developers, the Riverdale congregation settled on Mitchell's design. Crucially, instead of following an earlier plan to demolish the structure, they decided to preserve the original church space in the north end of the property and redevelop the remaining south nave into lofts.

Taking about two and a half years to complete, the *Glebe Lofts* has 32 private units in different sizes and shapes. Taking a similar approach to their previous projects, the Mitchell's sought to redevelop the large square 1920 addition without having to deal with the more cumbersome and complex original church structure. "The Glebe worked", he explains, "because ... we had 32 units and it was a 16 foot grid so it was big enough, it was tight for parking in the garage, but it's just enough, and we were able to essentially change it into what we would like to have which is an empty box" (Interview, Bob Mitchell, 2009). Like Watt's *Church Lofts*, Mitchell necessarily followed the building's original proportions,

The first thing I look at is the distance between the footings. From this I can estimate whether or not excavation for underground parking is feasible...We used the structure of the building, we kept the structural grids up because it had these big steel trusses that held up the roof and they all stayed intact in the top floor units. We built up through the one huge room, a ring gallery like a lot of churches have ... to stabilize the building, and as the floor plates came up - they were attached to the walls and the columns - we got to a level and skipped the galleries and once we had enough horizontal membranes we went back and demolished the galleries since they had no purpose.

The private lofts range in size from 600 sq. ft. to 2000 sq ft. and all of the units feature high ceilings, multiple-level suites (some with as many as five levels), exposed original brickwork and internal beams; while the top levels also showcase exposed steel trusses (Figure 5.1). Although original sale prices ranged from \$250,000 to \$400,000, several units were reappraised for upwards of \$750,000 in 2009 (Bain, 2004; Yu, 2009).

6.3 Converting *Place*: Symbolic Renovations, Post-Secular Iconographies and Sense of Place

“The great church architecture of some of Toronto’s oldest and grandest edifices can be given new life and spirit by taking the past and sensitively transforming their glorious structures and art into exciting shelters for today’s urban dwellers” (Prospectus for Westmoreland Lofts)

Thus far I have explored the role and practices of several key developers and architects involved in the redevelopment of several premier churches in Toronto. In these cases, the conversion of ‘space’ through complex physical reconstructions of interior and exterior elements is central to creating an entirely new function for the buildings – from spaces of religious worship to spaces of private domesticity.

But these dramatic spatial reconfigurations of churches are not the only facets of change. In fact, integral to the transformation of churches to lofts is also an adaptive and appropriative re-use of the symbolic economy of church properties and their religious heritage. As the above comment from a sales brochure of the *Westmoreland Lofts* highlights, giving a church “new life and spirit” as “exciting shelters for today’s urban dwellers” requires more than simply building loft spaces, it means also “taking the past...and transforming their... art”. Here a variety of heritage aesthetic features and iconographies are re-used to create a new *sense of place* – a unique space invested with particular views of history, authenticity and identity. In this respect, the design philosophies of developers and architects incorporate unique religious icons, “their art”, as markers of quality and style that mesh with post-modern and post-secular identities of the gentrifying class. These reclaimed symbols are meant to define and fulfill relationships between consumers and the churches as loft spaces. Together, such key elements aim to re-code former religious spaces into legitimate sites for the production of upscale tastes and lifestyles, and afford new unique platforms with which to enact the specific dynamics of cultural capital.

6.3.1 Designing a Heritage Aesthetic: Re-Presenting Icons and Origins

As we have seen in previous chapters, heritage and history have remarkable commercial, social and cultural value. In early-1980s New York City, industrial lofts were elevated from a mere trend to a popular movement in part because of new appreciation of the historic value of old industrial buildings and a rising perception of their aesthetic qualities. The “giant scale” and raw unfinished elements of SoHo’s lofts were part of their draw, but so too was an emerging “sense of adventure, an artist’s ambience which still clings to living in a loft neighbourhood” (Zukin, 1982b, 67). In many ways, the loft-living aesthetic grew from what Zukin (1982b, 67) called the “modern quest for authenticity”. At once, the loft aesthetic offered middle and upper-middle class consumers a direct way of expressing their rejection of the standardization so evident in mass produced commodities of the modern age, and the means to assert their distaste of the social and cultural homogeneity persistent in the serial landscapes of the postwar suburbs. In another ways, too, these unique places are landmarks, in concrete, of an ‘enchanted’ or romanticized not-too-distant past. As anchoring points in a “world that changes moment by moment”, Zukin (1982b, 68) explains, the post-industrial lofts offered consistency and stability – a “way of coping with the continuous past”. In some ways, re-using industrial ruins, what historian Steven High (2007) calls the “post-industrial sublime”, is a process of reclaiming memory by colonizing symbolic sites of identity.

It is important to note that the early industrial lofts of SoHo, but also those in Montreal and Toronto, had established an ‘original’ loft aesthetic were of a particular type. These were, by and large, the rough, exposed, or, ‘hard’ lofts that showcase direct links to their functional past. A ‘hard’ loft, according to one Toronto realtor, is “a true loft, it’s a conversion which has a harder edge of either concrete construction, or brick and original wood posts, beams and floors...the authentic details and atmosphere are everything” (Interview, *Lee*, 2009). Exposed piping, rehabilitated industrial elevators, and wide-open undefined spaces, for instance, created new opportunities to defy many of the social and cultural conventions of modern (suburban) domesticity. Here, the mixed use – often portrayed by the classic artist-loft – of the hard loft space “overcame the separation of home and work”

inherent in suburban lifestyles, and ‘recaptured’ a lost sense of urban vitality Zukin (1982b, 68). So too the vast openness of the hard lofts contravened the sense of privacy that is fundamentally part of the suburban ideology. These lofts re-wrote the social and cultural values of domestic space. With the absence of ‘architectural barriers’ like walls, atria and corridors, the typical functional and gendered hierarchy of domestic space is entirely disrupted – creating heterogeneous spaces that do not readily define use.

Clearly, the majority of the church lofts described thus far share some of the aesthetic traditions of the hard post-industrial lofts. Most conspicuously, all of the church conversions in Toronto make use, in one way or another, of original textures in the buildings’ exteriors and their individual units. This tradition of ‘architectural exposure’, an arguably post-modern mode of uncovering function as a reflective critique of domestic space and an aesthetic of historic continuity, is commonly revealed in structural elements like wood beams, roof trusses and stone facades (Figure 6.7). The re-used roof trusses in *Carl’s* unit in *The Glebe Lofts*, described in the introductory chapter, are important structural and symbolic elements which simultaneously connect the outside and the inside, but also ‘naturally’ frame the loft’s open spaces by contributing a sense of heritage through a meaningful story-line. Developer Bob Mitchell understands perfectly well the importance of incorporating such features:

... people are interested in something if they think it’s unique, if it has its own cachet, if it has a history, and all these things exist in these old buildings, and we play on that through highlighting the individual elements.

Steel trusses and restored stone facades aside, church lofts also make extensive use of *iconography* in ways that industrial lofts simply do not. In this case, the restoration of a variety of religious symbols and icons are pivotal in establishing a specific historic sense of place – unique sentiments that speak to loft owners and visitors alike about the religious *origins* of the building and the loft spaces. Some of the most popular elements are refurbished stained glass windows and skylights (Figure 6.8). Although typically expensive to restore, these features are among the more iconic of the building’s sacred past. While in the majority of conversions



Figure 6.7: Architectural exposure in church lofts: The symbolic critique of modern domestic space (left: re-used steel trusses in the *Glebe Lofts*; right: restored stone façades in *The Abbey Lofts*) (source: author's photos, 2009)

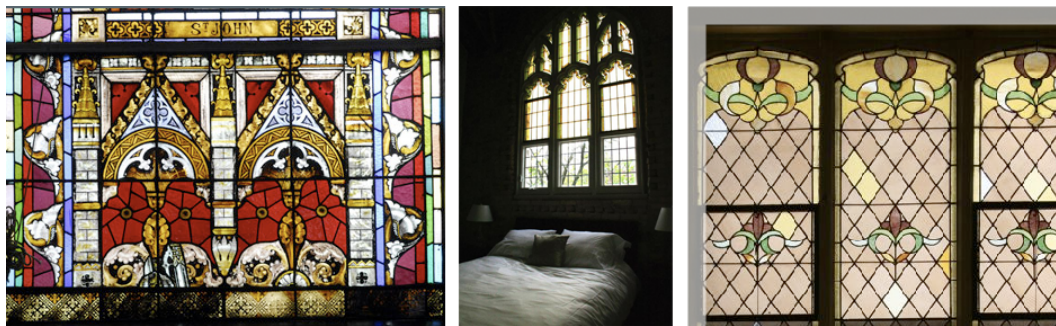


Figure 6.8: Restored stained glass windows in various church loft units (source: author's photos, 2009)

stained glass is limited to non-descript, but nevertheless 'religious' imagery, in others, like the *The Westmoreland Lofts*, many of the windows still carry detailed scenes like the crucifixion or patron saints. Besides these features, other common iconographic elements include symbolic stone-work which is restored, like windows, to its original state; recycled gothic-style light fixtures, and ash-pews re-used as windowsill caps, stairs and treads (Figure 6.9).

The symbolic economies of churches are also commonly the keystones to their re-design as lofts. Bernard Watt, for instance, describes his specific architec-



Figure 6.9: Religious iconography in church lofts (top: carved stone in *The Westmoreland Lofts* (source: author's photo, 2010); bottom: cast iron gothic-style lighting, exposed original brickwork and restored stained-glass windows in *The Church Lofts* (source: Bernard Watt, 2009))

tural philosophy for both *The Church Lofts* and *The Swanwick* as ‘contemporary-heritage’ – a design that blends the ‘new’ with the ‘old’:

What we’re trying to say with that is, the interiors will be very modern, clean, elegant, simple looking...We’re not trying to make units that look old and traditional, we’re playing on that contrast.

This is made possible primarily through the production of a material antinomy, a strategic juxtaposition and merging of historic and modern elements throughout the building. The interior elements in *The Church Lofts*, for instance, have a combination of exposed textures and religious iconographies, like those described above, with contemporary features (e.g. top-of-the-line stainless steel products, Italianate kitchens, and contemporary custom designed bathroom fixtures) that are commonly found in luxury condominium towers. In this way, the redesign of many church lofts intentionally strips back and repackages ‘original’ features to act as an aesthetic frame, a stark ‘contrast’, for the global menu of modern domestic products on offer in the interior spaces. And this, importantly, is an attempt to satisfy consumers’ multiple, simultaneous, and rather paradoxical desires for the old and the new, the traditional and the technological, the primitive and the progressive. Important, too, is the design of public space. In further contrast to the post-industrial loft aesthetic, many converted churches make explicit use of a public space outside or peripheral to the private loft units themselves. In *The Church Lofts*, but also *The Abbey Lofts* and *The Glebe Lofts*, public atriums offer relatively large public spaces in entranceways to the properties. In *The Church Lofts*, a key design element is an atrium fashioned from the former sanctuary space. Spanning the three main floors and topped by the restored Tiffany skylight, the atrium offers a functional and aesthetic backbone to the building’s interior (Figure 6.10). This open plan connects the various public spaces and corridors, projects visual access to the multiple layers of the building and offers cascading natural light into the centre space. In general, the atrium elicits a link with the historic envelope by connecting the heritage details visible on the exterior with a sense of communal space in the interior, a public space apart from the private spaces of the loft units. As Watt intended, “in some ways, this feature renews some of the public and community aspect of the old church in the new lofts”.



Figure 6.10: Unfinished atrium in the The Church Lofts (source: Benjamin Watt-Meyer, 2009)

Put together, religious iconographies and design philosophies offer powerful statements about ‘origins’. Far from the oft-critiqued ‘ahistorical’ standardized spaces and motifs of suburban and high-rise developments, re-using historic symbols constructs a sense of ‘authenticity’ and creates domestic spaces that are accented with hints of a supposedly meaningful past. But, the appropriation of religious icons and symbols speaks of a distinct history, much different than the culture and heritage of *labour* that is showcased in post-industrial lofts. Instead, converted churches make use of, or appropriate, religion as narratives not just of ‘refinement’ but also of ‘morality’. Again, although converted to residential use, the restoration of the buildings’ *special shells* and the incorporation of key designs and icons in the interior, still effectively communicates and embodies a ‘Christian’ memory and history, albeit a muted one. From the outside, for instance, it is not entirely clear that these buildings are lofts. The architectural renovations that commonly follow heritage regulations preserve, materially and visually, memories in place. Once inside these private spaces, a continuation of memory, created through an arguably ‘ecclesiastical look’, imparts a similar moral monumentalism. The “sophisticated but serious charm” of church loft interiors, as one architect put it, helps to stage a domestic space with a sense of the sublime – a knowledge and understanding of religion commodified and transferred into a cultural capital for use by the loft owner (Interview, *Lawrence*, 2009).

6.4 Conclusions

The re-development of churches to lofts is a complex process. Unlike the production of new housing spaces like those found in suburban locations or in new build condominiums of the inner city, church lofts make explicit and extensive use of existing material heritage. In many instances, the renovations of these older historic urban churches, especially their exterior envelopes, is such an intricate and expensive practice that few real estate developers dare to enter the market. In the case of Toronto, I have argued that church loft development is a distinct *niche* real estate practice, a housing market that is dominated by only a few highly specialised developers. Both Mitchell and Associates, and BWA Inc. represent two of a short list of church loft developers in this city. Through in-depth interviews with these

informants I have highlighted several fundamental aspects of the production of inner-urban church lofts.

First, although many of the practices involved in making church lofts run parallel to the redevelopment of post-industrial lofts, much of the success in this niche market involves a developer's skill to properly negotiate key relationships that are unique to the church loft context. Thus while technical expertise in the adaptation of heritage properties is certainly required when renovating church buildings, a developer's success also rests upon effectively bridging ties with religious groups. Describing their work as both material and cultural, the informants highlight the fact that church lofts carry with them a history and heritage that is unlike other redundant property. Indeed, for Bob Mitchell having cultural competency or 'capital' especially in dealing with religious groups is a key element of present and future success. In his case, approaching churches with a cultural sensitivity is an essential part of the process. But so too, knowledge of municipal heritage policy is also fundamental to keeping the project on track. For both Watt and Mitchell, knowledge of local policy and sensitivity to the material built heritage is paramount to managing this complex form of urban residential development.

Second, rewriting the symbolic heritage of redundant churches is a priority in the production of church lofts. As discussed in Chapter 4, the desirability of contemporary lofts is partially built upon an established gentrification aesthetic, an aesthetic forged from a rejection of the homogeneity and placelessness of suburbia and inner city high-rises. By polishing and restoring key symbolic features of the church loft, developers and their architects can effectively manage a building's aesthetic in such a way that it connects simultaneously with a pre-established loft 'look' (i.e. the loft design palette of exposed structural features) but also presents an entirely unique and authentic sense of place. In this case, church lofts cater to middle class desires for taste and distinction. These homes are rebuilt as unique places imbued with culture, heritage and history, and although these features are certainly in a commodified form, they are nevertheless intentionally reproduced in order to define an owner's sense of distinction through their very possession and display. In fact, in places like the *Glebe Lofts* and the *Church Lofts*, local developers have pushed the loft aesthetic forward, away from the perceived suburban and condominium-tower 'mainstream', and toward the loft habitus that has been

popularized not simply in Toronto but also around the world.

But of course the production of church lofts does not simply end with the material and symbolic renovations of a building. In fact developers, along with industry specialists like marketing and real estate consultants, often employ a variety of tactics in order to maximise the market success of their housing products. As we shall see in the next chapter, creating church lofts is as much a practice in redeveloping a distinct loft identity and brand as it is in remaking the material space of the church.

Chapter 7

Branding and Selling Churches as Lofts

“A church conversion is the holy grail of super cool condo living” -
Brad Lamb (a.k.a ‘The Condo King’), Toronto Realtor

This playful comment is not off the cuff, far from it. In fact, as one of Toronto’s leading realtors, Brad Lamb’s words are entirely strategic, deployed alongside glossy photos, architectural simulations and pithy slogans pitching church lofts not just as unique homes but also as upscale lifestyles. In many ways this is a continuation of what is now a ubiquitous process of marketing in urban real estate. It is not enough – although it is certainly a prerequisite for success – to build lofts with distinct exterior architectural designs and symbolically rich interior spaces. Since the 1980s a preoccupation with unique condominium and loft design, a clear method of differentiating a housing product in decades-long inner-city condominium booms, has been paired with extensive and nuanced branding campaigns.

Geographers, sociologists and media experts have consistently highlighted the rise of advertising and branding in the urban environment, a practice that has diffused to define virtually all forms of our everyday urban experiences (see for instance Ashworth and Voogd, 1990; Gold and Ward, 1994; Gottdiener, 2000; Leonard et al., 2004; Mommaas, 2002). More than just advertising in the classic sense, branding involves producing emotional linkages between consumers and

products and the creation of coherent product or place ‘identities’ as a means to both promote and legitimize the sale of a commodity (Evans, 2003). Slogans, like the one above, but also icons, architectural motifs, presentation centres, detailed sales brochures, web-pages and descriptive write-ups in print media such as lifestyle magazines, and newspaper housing sections, all represent strategic media to help sell lofts and condominiums as desirable commodities. Now more than ever, developers and their marketing teams use these branding mediums to promote their products to an increasingly image-conscious housing consumer, many of whom seek domestic spaces that bridge, both physically and symbolically, the multiple modalities (live, work and play) of inner-city living. And, like other types of housing on offer, church lofts are branded in order to highlight their rich cultural capital and create a sense of singularity and uniqueness in the product. Moreover, branding messages, as makers of taste, help to reflect and shape the identity and meaning of the property, catering to consumers’ increasing demands for novel ways to display, simulate and enact contemporary urban lifestyles.

But Lamb’s prepackaged maxim performs another crucial function. Aside from building desire – indeed who would not want to live in a ‘super cool condo’ – it represents part of a discourse that constructs and legitimizes the re-use of a post-sacred place, in this case, *The Church Lofts*. As we have seen in Chapter 6, extensive renovations of both the physical and symbolic aspects of redundant churches have come a long way in creating upscale domestic spaces that retain strong thematic linkages to previous functions and (hi)stories. But the re-production of heritage and authenticity through renovated spaces, iconographies and aesthetics have their limits and require balancing insofar as the property must also be a desirable place to *live*. The church loft must simultaneously have a clear heritage-identity but also fit a normative ideal of modern upscale loft living. This balance is tentative – if pushed too far in one direction the building might seem too ‘sacred’, if pushed too far in the other it is too ‘generic’, too ‘inclusive’. Through various branding tactics and media, developers can create an aesthetic distance in the loft product by reframing religious heritage, for example, as a unique commodity endowed with a sense of quality and distinction but one which also partly erases deeper religious content. Importantly, these tactics enable church lofts to exist in a liminal space, an in-between state of a sense of heritage authenticity and modern domesticity.

In this chapter, therefore, I focus on the branding and sale of church lofts in the private real estate market. Using advertising and media materials, and interviews with developers, marketing agents and real estate brokers, I explore how church lofts are branded and sold to prospective consumers. I begin with a brief explanation of the marketing process and practices employed by several developers in Toronto. By and large, developers employ various advertising media in their marketing strategies, but they also approach this niche market in ways that are different from those commonly used for larger residential projects. These specific tactics are instrumental in positioning church lofts as luxury products in the real estate market and are valuable aspects of building niche status in Toronto housing sales. Second, I explore the concept of branding and illustrate its role in re-imaging and re-presenting redundant churches as lofts in the private real estate market. I show how specific branding messages re-narrate redundant churches as viable and desirable loft spaces by communicating meanings of house and home, identity, and landscape. These branding elements help build a coherent brand which simultaneously sells new (domestic) spaces and legitimizes church lofts as acceptable secular places for modern consumption and lifestyles.

7.1 From Renovating Churches to Selling Churches: Developers as *Marketeers*

“Good design has to follow through with all aspects of the condo [or loft], from the exterior to the suite layouts and, of course, the branding and marketing” (Ayliffe in Browne, 2008)

In the last several decades, the construction of condominium and loft landscapes in most large cities has created an increasing need for developers to engage in highly nuanced marketing practices in order for their projects to be seen and heard. By some estimates, the number of condominium towers and units under construction in 2012 in the GTA places the region as the largest of its kind in North America, ahead of cities like Montreal, New York, Chicago, Vancouver and Houston (Thorpe, 2008)¹. For developers in Toronto this swelling supply means that

¹2009 estimates for new condominium-builds in the GTA were approximately 16,000 units.

consumers have an increasing menu of housing possibilities, choices that pressure developers to constantly offer new housing styles, experiences, and, importantly, ‘lifestyles’. In the private real estate industry, therefore, developers are much more than mere builders. Indeed, success in such competitive housing markets require developers to be just as skilled at selling and ‘imagineering’ their projects as they are at designing and constructing them. For the case of church lofts, however, developers must also define the new use and new meanings of post-sacred places in the local urban landscape, and marketing and branding, unlike any other practice, offers a functional and creative way to reconfigure these relationships.

Marketing and advertising of early lofts were certainly not as intensive or as extensive as they are today. In the first waves of artist-based re-colonization in cities like New York, lofts were not advertised as such. In fact, beginning in the 1960s artists found and rented these vacant spaces often from reluctant building owners (Cole, 1987). In time, the notion of lofts as viable live-work spaces spread through word of mouth and resulted in chain migration to a variety of post-industrial sites (Cole, 1987). By the late 1960s, various media including the art press (e.g. art magazines, décor shows), and later in the 1980s, popular media (newsprint, film, and television), became crucial spaces for representing post-industrial lofts as models of inner-city living and places for modern urban lifestyles (Podmore, 1998; Zukin, 1982b). These advertisements, understood in a general sense, effectively re-coded places of industry into spaces of domesticity, legitimizing them through staged imagery and aesthetics that met the taste requirements of New York’s returning middle class. Julie Podmore’s (1998) analysis of industrial lofts in Montreal similarly highlights the role of media in creating what she calls ‘concrete cartographies’ – media representations of loft landscapes that have mapped new social locations, aesthetic dispositions, and inner-city identities. But unlike these past accounts where lofts are variously depicted in the pages of style magazines and trade media, like Montreal’s *Décor*mag, today’s condominium and loft products are largely marketed in advanced media networks controlled by developers and key marketing and branding specialists.

In fact, the current real estate marketing industry is now a lucrative sector that has deep ties to realty practices, real estate development and, urban and regional planning. Moreover, some of Canada’s most successful condominium marketeers,

like Bob Rennie, Lawrence Ayliffe, and Brad Lamb have played increasingly important roles not just as industry leaders but also as ‘style makers’ and as housing experts, or ‘gurus’, as some observers call them (Browne, 2008). In the last several decades, these key players have re-written the condominium and loft marketing practice especially in Canada’s leading condominium-cities, Toronto and Vancouver. In these places, real estate marketing is now generally considered a ‘necessary part of the game’, a game which incorporates much more than advertising under any simple terms. Using glossy marketing brochures or booklets that have long been a staple in housing sales is but one of many media options at hand. When used, brochures are regularly paired with internet websites that offer a range of information from simulated floor-plans, narratives of a building’s history, unit prices, clickable neighbourhood maps, and expert photographs of architectural highlights, all framed with a digital soundtrack playing in the background. Lawrence Ayliffe (in Browne, 2008, 2011), CEO of one of North America’s largest condominium-marketing firms, *L.A. Ads*, argues that “technology has changed how we market [condominiums and lofts]”. “Compelling websites for condo projects are essential” he says (Ayliffe in Browne, 2011). And websites are not the only option. Consumers are offered the opportunity to browse through sophisticated show homes and presentation centres, some complete with 3-D video simulations and virtual reality presentations (Browne, 2011). But popular press, trade magazines and specialty books, media which previously elevated post-industrial lofts to trendy status, still play an important role in today’s real estate marketing. Despite the fact that these are, in most cases, secondary marketing sources in that they are not produced by developers and their marketing agents, such media communicate, albeit often uncritically, current styles, tastes and aesthetics of condominium and loft spaces to large audiences.

By and large, most real estate developers incorporate many if not all of these media in their marketing strategies. For example, for many large new-build towers branding campaigns and expensive presentation centres designed by experts are often deployed before the building process begins in order to maximize a project’s exposure and investment. For developers of church lofts, however, the marketing approaches vary depending on the size of the conversion and the confidence of the developer. For Toronto developer Bob Mitchell, success in the church loft

market is partly predicated on being “vertically integrated into every section [of the business]. We do the conceptualizing, the marketing, the sales, the design stuff - maybe not the nuts and bolts - but in terms of how we are setting this up, how are we organizing it”. Like other aspects of design and construction, the marketing and branding of Mitchell’s projects are largely an in-house affair; a more subtle and less expensive practice compared to other central-city condominium developments. “We do our own brochures, artwork, website”, he says, “I basically sell online ... we do a brochure, we do a web-page, we sell on our past projects. So we sell on referrals, we sell on internet stuff. I have sold 90% of this building [new build condominium in the Beaches] privately, and then toward the end you start to bring in the realtors because of diminishing returns” (Interview, Bob Mitchell, 2009). In this case, Mitchell places some of the publicity for his projects on the novelty of church lofts and their visibility as niche products in print and web-based media, and word of mouth. “We try [to] do a reverse psychology thing on marketing where ‘it’s less is more’”, he explains, “there aren’t a lot of brochures, we’re not chasing you, if you want to come by, we’re here”. Part of this strategy he says is a result of the size and cost of the conversions:

We can do this because we aren’t building 300 units, we’ve got 20 or 30 to sell. We try to be competitive in our pricing and we give the purchasers the benefit of the fact that they aren’t paying for a 5% purchase price for real estate, they are not paying for the \$500,000 show rooms so it doesn’t amortize their cost. With smaller projects it’s very difficult to do those things because, well if you spend half a million on a showroom and amortize it over 200 units a piece – well it’s something. What I often do is I take one space, finish it out of sequence and that is for the purchasers to make customizing decisions ... because by the time we get to that time in the project, it’s already about 90 to 100% sold (Interview, Bob Mitchell, 2009).

Finding ways to promote his projects without additional consulting services did, however, require much more time pitching units to prospective buyers. But, Mitchell says this formula, especially for *The Glebe Lofts*, generally results in a “quick turn around and, a more personal and effective way of communicating with

buyers of the church loft concept. For instance, Mitchell used creative solutions in promoting the units prior to construction:

I set up my sales office and showroom in the original church. I'd get people at night, and we'd go in through the small church on the north side and I'd show them panels and textures and all that, then I'd take them into the whole building and I'd throw the knife switch and the whole building would light up like a cathedral... and I'd say 'ok your space is thirty feet up in the air, and that's the bay, and the top of the Gothic arch is where your deck is going to be'. Part of the sale is being able to take them and transpose what they are thinking into a reality (Interview, Bob Mitchell, 2009).

Being the developer, the marketer, and in some cases, the realtor, Mitchell has more control over the project, an opportunity to personally cultivate the Mitchell 'brand', mediate and interpret the value and aesthetics of the church conversion directly to the consumer, and also, importantly, foster the church loft niche. In fact, in his early developments and to some degree today, Mitchell actively refrains from nuanced marketing campaigns, opting to use personal networks and word of mouth to sell his products as a means to control the exclusivity of the brand:

For years when we got into this business we were really circumspect about how we should advertise. We would put in the tiny little ad to get the interest and then we'd shut it down, it was the reverse advertising thing, word of mouth, it's like the restaurant that doesn't have a sign out front: if you don't know it's there then you don't know it's there. And we only really wanted like 12 people for our buildings, and then after that we didn't want anyone to know about it ... looking at the time when we were doing this, there wasn't that much of it going on and there was lots of possible product out there, and as soon as this got popularized then people would be doing what we were doing so then it would be harder for us to find the product for the next one.

Unlike Mitchell, Bernard Watt has consulted extensively with marketing and sales specialists for his projects and has invested much time and money in order

to get his church conversions ‘out there’. In particular, his sales and marketing team includes Brad J. Lamb Realty and The Walsh Group (a design and marketing firm), two industry leaders almost exclusively involved in Toronto’s condominium and loft markets. According to Watt, forming this team is paramount to the sales success of both *The Church Lofts* and *The Swanwick*. In this case, Watt did not ride the outcome of his projects on their niche status alone. His main intention in the consultation process was to help define the loft’s identity, build a sense of ‘lifestyle’ and ensure that the brand image effectively met the target market – areas of expertise shared by both Lamb and The Walsh Group. As he put it:

I guess we could have done most of the marketing and sales in-house, but to be honest it’s best to get plugged into the real estate players that know the ins-and-outs of the system. So it was important to get into a good real estate network... I say ‘network’ in that I wanted to get the best team, the best connections, I could to promote and sell the project. If you get the right connections like Lamb [Brad J. Lamb Realty Inc.] and you get the best advising but marketing and advertising too, then everything generally goes smoother.

In part, thanks to this established network, the popularity of the *The Church Lofts* was almost immediate. In fact, on the opening day of private sales, Watt noted that almost a third of the building’s units had offers and hundreds of potential buyers had turned up. Watt credits the marketing and branding campaign, which made extensive use of sales brochures and websites, designed and managed by The Walsh Group, several multi-media showrooms, and, local newsprint articles that promoted the project,

The marketing and branding stuff is all part of the package really. So, yes, without them [marketing consultants] we probably would still have sold out but they certainly helped to quicken the pace. And people respond to things like the brochures, and the website. The website is really helpful. People can scan their real estate options easier and make choices and see what work we have done in the past. Using the Church Lofts as a brand helps people to recognize the project, they

have a quick idea of what they're buying. Of course, they are buying lofts not a church, and this message is obviously important.

What is clear from these two different marketing practices is that while there is no one way of promoting church lofts in the private real estate market, there is a need to effectively communicate to prospective buyers the values of church conversions as urban housing. Working in the industry some 20 years ago, ex-condominium marketer and current *National Post* real estate writer, Kelvin Browne (2008) recounts that “in the old days, trying to sell [condos] just from plans was a novelty and people were often suspicious of a product they couldn't see...first you had to sell the notion of condominiums and their benefits before you could get to a specific project”. In today's condominium market, however, Browne (2008) argues that “most buyers can read plans and are able to appreciate the nuances of suite layouts...They're much more knowledgeable about architecture and understand how an outstanding building is a superior investment.” Of course, the church loft as a sub-market is perhaps not as advanced as that of the larger new build condominium market. Although consumers are generally well informed, church loft developers still need to ‘sell the notion’ of the church as loft.

In the next section I turn to discuss several specific branding discourses that are communicated in these marketing practices for several church loft projects. As we shall see, the marketing and branding of churches as lofts uses particular strategies of negotiating religious and spiritual aesthetics, identities and landscapes – powerful tools that re-imagine churches as upscale homes.

7.2 Branding and *Imagineering* Church Lofts: Re-Imaging Home, Identity and Landscape

It is worth restating that converting churches to lofts requires more than just the renovations of space described in the previous chapter. Although the material heritage conserved in church exteriors and the re-use of spiritual iconographies as symbolic elements effectively produce distinct domestic spaces and foster a meaningful sense of place, they also retain a sense of the sacred. To be sure, this is part of the cachet; living in a former sacred space is not just ‘cool’ for some, it is an interesting stage used to develop and maintain a particular urban lifestyle and to

engage the loft as *habitus* (Podmore, 1998).

But questions still remain: how do we make the cognitive leap from recognizing a church as a space of worship, to imagining a church as a place to live? Is it enough that the religious congregants have left and moved on, that the space no longer facilitates worship, prayer and other religious activities? Or, does this specifically potent religious past need to be re-invented as a legitimate and justifiable backdrop for modern domesticity?

I argue here that the religious codes and norms, signified primarily in the architectural and iconographic elements conserved in the material structures of these buildings need to be re-written and re-imaged in order for consumers and the public to take such places seriously as legitimate forms of housing, and as symbolically valuable homes that demarcate class and identity. An essential part of converting churches to lofts, therefore, requires disarming, or secularizing, religion in order for it to be successfully appropriated as an aesthetic framework and symbolic backdrop for modern but unique loft-living. As argued throughout Chapter 3 and 4, the 'sacred' is necessarily tempered, narrowed, and above all, commodified. The church loft should look like a church and convey its unique heritage, but it should certainly not *be* a church. In other words, the church loft should present and project a *spiritual past* not a *religious present*.

One of the more powerful tools used to construct a balance between these binaries of sacred and secular, church and loft, is branding. Although I have explained briefly the concept of branding above, it is worth exploring this term further with reference to church lofts. In short, branding is a distinct process of marketing designed to elicit emotional connections between consumers and commodities. Marketing churches as lofts much like marketing new build condominiums, soft drinks, or cars, for instance, involves promoting a product in the marketplace. In its most simple sense, a marketing strategy, a blend of various methods and media for companies to speak to consumers about their products, broadcasts the existence and availability of the church loft in the local real estate market all in an effort for developers to maximize returns on their investments. Importantly, however, the marketing messages themselves, the content that is communicated, are not simple or benign elements designed to just 'get the word out' (Kern, 2008). Rather, in the case of church lofts, developers make use of specific discourses, narratives and

imagery – all branding elements – to develop, legitimize and commodify redundant churches as unique spaces for upscale housing. In this way, branding serves as a means to creatively manage the multiple and often conflicting meanings and values relating to religion, the sacred, modernity and domesticity inherent in the loft product.

Although many different brand messages circulate around specific church loft projects in Toronto, we can highlight three common themes evident in the marketing practices of several more recent church conversions: i) the reinvention of the church to a ‘house’ and a ‘home’; ii) the production of identity through ‘naming’; and, iii) the re-spatialisation of church lofts in discreet ‘consumptionscapes’.

7.2.1 From Houses of God to Good Houses: Recoding the Loft Brand through ‘Condo Stories’

In Chapter 4, we explored how powerful and pervasive the concepts of house and home can be as markers of class (Jager, 1986), as expressions of personal identity (Leonard et al., 2004), as sources of ontological security (Cooper, 1976), and key elements in the production of social status and cultural distinction (Bourdieu, 1984; Hamnett, 1995). But, churches, unlike condominium towers, suburban single-family houses, and now even post-industrial lofts, do not readily fit into common or ‘normal’ expressions of housing. These are, historically and culturally speaking, houses of God not houses of modern domesticity.

As we have seen in previous chapters considerable efforts are made by the state and by architects and developers to preserve the material built form of many redundant urban churches, a process aimed at conserving the architectural fabric and the symbolic authenticity of the building. Of course, while much is preserved, explicit symbolic references to religion and Christianity, like crosses, are often removed. And, though the removal of such features certainly de-emphasises explicit religious use, conversions which seek to present continuity and authenticity by highlighting the distinct religious architecture, like Gothic-revival, still inevitably “carry the message of Christian practice in a bygone era” (Clark, 1996, 150). Furthermore, preserving religious iconographies like stained glass windows and pews as decorative accessories along the exteriors of buildings, and inside the loft themselves, continue a strong narrative of ‘church’ and of the ‘sacred’, an “identity” which

historian Jennifer Clark (1996, 150) argues “is retained even after refurbishment, renovation and multiple resale”. For many people, ranging from community members, to former congregants, to consumers, such blatant messages which preserve the symbolic content of the ‘sacred’ may be a source of concern; a point which developer Bob Mitchell recounted during the sale of the *Claremont Hall Lofts*:

There was a purchaser in the St. Cyril Church [now the *Claremont Hall Lofts*] and there was a portion of the building that had a stone cross on it, and she was Jewish, and she wasn’t so happy with having the stone shadow of the cross - and I said: ‘Well that’s part of the charm’. In the end, we toned it down, but the outline was still there.

From the perspective of a loft consumer a church loft should look like a church but not be a church, it should reference its previous life as church but be a loft. Moreover, the ‘sacredness’ of the building, retained through icons and symbols, should be conveyed and imagined as aesthetics of the past, its heritage should be an accessory not ‘real’ spiritual artifacts with a religious function in the present.

In this case, marketing and branding are pivotal practices used to redirect the meanings of converted churches and reproduce these post-religious places as spaces for *legitimate* modern domestic living. That is, they are powerful ‘normative frameworks’ (Leonard et al., 2004) and sources of ‘meaning-making’, first, by presenting churches as viable and upscale *houses* in the real estate market, and second, by re-inventing post-religious spaces as spaces for *home*.

It is worth noting that the differences between concepts of house and home are deeply complex. Rather than being one-and-the-same, house and home have come to represent multi-dimensional concepts, with the former commonly, though debatably, considered as the spatial or physical structure as dwelling; while the latter is often described as a space of meaning, a place where intimacy, privacy, domesticity, and comfort are produced, enacted and displayed (Mallett, 2004, 65-66). For the most part, churches fit uneasily within these meanings of house and home. Despite retaining a familial connection, “a spiritual home with God the father and the people of God, his children”, churches used as everyday dwellings and as spaces for (secular) privacy and intimacy can appear “culturally incongruent” (Clark, 1996, 151). These in-congruencies, of churches as houses (in a physical sense) and as

homes (in a cultural sense), are thus re-written to ensure that church lofts are desirable as upscale real estate in Toronto, as we see in the following section.

While the brand messages for converted churches as legitimate forms of house and home are present in all types of marketing media, news media (in daily newspapers and weblinks) are particularly influential. Again, news media serve as indirect, but no less powerful, sources for marketing and branding real estate products. Housing and real estate sections in local and national newspapers, and specialty housing websites (e.g. Canada.com's 'househunting' webcontent), for instance, routinely showcase real estate like church lofts, often in short but descriptive promotional storylines, what one freelance writer calls "condo-stories" (Bain, 2004). With creative license, but often little critical engagement, condo-stories circulate discourses about how churches conceptually represent variations of post-industrial loft housing in the real estate market, and, how they fit into particular ideals of home, especially tied to a pre-established loft-living habitus. Together, these marketing features have a mediating role as they construct and confirm for consumers that church lofts are both a worthwhile investment not unlike post-industrial lofts, but are also viable places in which consumers can build specific lifestyles and identities.

A Church as House: Recoding the Loft Aesthetic

The New York SoHo loft of the 1980s is a brand. For most housing consumers, mentioning the term 'SoHo' would still likely bring to mind the cast-iron facades of old manufacturing buildings, open concept spaces, and interesting, concrete artist abodes – features popularized in SoHo, but reproduced in other cities around the world (Podmore, 1998; Lloyd, 2006; Shaw, 2006).

In print and web-media, many 'condo-stories' push the conceptual boundaries of lofts to include new architectural styles and spaces, like churches. The narratives in these stories tap into the established loft brand to legitimize churches as a *variation on the theme*. In this case, the physical and material dimensions, or the 'spatiality', of the church-conversion is often compared to the classic loft-brand, but also represented as unique, and therefore valuable, housing in the real estate market.

Short descriptive articles in the real estate sections of the *Globe and Mail* and

Toronto Star, for instance, highlight these strategies of re-coding the loft brand to include church conversions:

Like industrial lofts...their [church lofts] size and open design allow developers to carve out multiple level units with towering ceilings and arched windows running the height of the condominium...At Queen and Bathurst, the loft [*The Claremont Hall Lofts*] blends remnants of church life with an industrial design. The main living area maintains the original maple floors, but the kitchen and bathrooms are lined with red and black industrialized rubber flooring...(Avery, 2003)

In ways reminiscent of the old manufacturing lofts, the heritage building [*The Abbey Lofts*] maintains its stately profile but the units have open-concept layouts in principal areas, some incorporating up to 24-foot vaulted ceilings, engineered flooring, stainless steel appliances ... (Hauch, 2008)

In these passages church lofts are characterized as variants or a sub-niche of the post-industrial aesthetic. Condo-stories which represent church lofts in contrast, and perhaps more importantly, in parallel to the industrial lofts re-assure readers and consumers that these are dwellings worthy of the loft title, thus fitting within an expected housing genre and brand that is sophisticated, upscale and urban. Of course, the uniqueness of church lofts within the housing market is also a dominant narrative. In several articles for the *Globe and Mail*, real estate columnist Sydnia Yu (2007, 2008b,a, 2009) consistently highlights the singularity of church lofts as upscale housing in Toronto. “Authentic lofts”, she writes, are “unique living spaces by definition, but those in churches are even more exceptional” (Yu, 2009). In fact, Yu (2007) tells readers that purchasing a loft in a “religious landmark”, like the recently completed *Victoria Lofts*, “is a rare opportunity for people to buy a modern loft in a century-old church”. This is real estate, she explains, “that will have a lot more character than a *normal* loft” (Yu, 2007, emphasis added). Likewise, in a common ‘tongue in cheek’ comment in articles like these, Hauch (2008, emphasis added) argues that *The Abbey Lofts* is “rightly said to have assumed a *holier-than-thou* attitude, compared to other such conversions, normally located in former industrial locations”.

Importantly, at the same time as these media stories present church conversions as variants of the industrial loft aesthetic, they are also often positioned outside of the ‘normal’, standardised housing products on sale. Indeed, uniqueness here is simultaneously predicated by the pre-loaded aesthetic of the ‘loft’ as brand but also in the specific heritage of the church properties. As *Globe and Mail* columnist Simon Avery (2003) explains, “in the age of cookie cutter condos, transformed temples offer, more than anything, uniqueness... these are hot commodities”.

But the sense of uniqueness portrayed in these real estate columns is not limited to descriptions of aesthetics. In fact, many of these articles also inform readers about the types of buyers of these places: specific consumers who understand and can properly engage with the cultural values and aesthetics of the properties. For instance, real estate writer Derek Raymaker (2007) writes that

those who buy these suites are almost exclusively end-user residents
- meaning they’re not going to rent out the units to tenants. This personal commitment helps maintain a seamless aesthetic quality.

In such a case buyers bring their own refined hermeneutic to the product they purchase and thus appropriate, as well, Bourdieu’s (1984) definition of ‘distinction’.

A Church as Home: Fitting into the Loft-Living Culture

Just as important as recoding the church conversions as desirable and unique real estate in the housing market are media narratives which re-write churches as *homes*. In this case, descriptions of personalized church loft interiors, modern domestic products, and samples of interior design strategies illustrate for readers the various possibilities of creating modern homes in church conversions. By and large, writers emphasize ‘Euro’ designs and cosmopolitan or global styles. Certainly not limited to church lofts, ‘Euro’ and ‘cosmopolitan’ domestic products are a staple signifier long associated with luxury domesticity. Products and styles from Italy and the Mediterranean, but also the “clean lines and minimalist forms of Scandanavian furniture”, for instance, are now part of a formal aesthetic economy, a domestic stage which has been referenced in the loft-living culture for some time (Cañizares, 2005; Leonard et al., 2004, 103; Piveteau and Wietzel, 2004; Zukin, 1982b).

In an article entitled “Heavenly Idea for Old Church”, real estate writer Donna Nebenzahl (2010) follows a church condominium-buyer and describes the accessories that go along with creating her home:

... there were two fully enclosed bathrooms, both with original church doors, the main with another stained-glass window, and two ultra-modern Italianate full bathrooms, one with a rain shower, one a with deep tub...When it came to decorating the rooms, she chose mostly furniture with simple, modern lines to *counteract the age of the space*. She bought an antique New England sideboard and vintage carpet... and set about replicating the carvings in the sideboard in a custom-made dining table and wine cabinet fitted with antique handles. (emphasis added)

This equilibrium between the old and the new, suggested here as a means to ‘counteract the age of the space’, is an important part of domesticating the church. With a diverse array of product possibilities, the choice and placement of specifically detailed and modern ‘Euro’ commodities and the incorporation of other cultural or antique items, is a way to balance or smooth-out religious iconographies, rendering history and heritage ‘eclectic’ with commodified elements designed to create what this author calls, an “uplifting feeling” (Nebenzahl, 2010). In some instances, however, the re-writing of religious history to fit an expected sense of home-as-loft is not so subtle. Describing *The Abbey Lofts*, Valerie Hauch (2008) made it clear that

although its walls may be *steeped in prayer*, there is nothing austere in the bright Loft units which have been designed to incorporate natural light...not to worry, all units have deep soaker tubs...designer European styled cabinetry, faucets, fixtures and décor (emphasis added)

In a more detailed, and personal, condo-story, *Toronto Star* food and lifestyle critic Jennifer Bain (2004) shares interior design strategies for her unit in *The Glebe Lofts*:

The plan is to start fresh in The Glebe [sic]. We’ll take our toys, television and CDs – and give away everything else. We’ll buy real beds

instead of futons. We'll get a real kitchen table instead of a drafting table concealed by a piece of fabric. We'll chuck our mismatched dishes and allow nothing ugly into our midst...I force myself to visit EQ3, Oni One and Caban to ogle sleek but pricey stuff...I sneak into IKEA (the shame), learn I need to "think cubic" to live well in close quarters- and discover a killer couch. Actually the three-piece "Drumminge seating unit" is more like a lounge than a conventional sofa. Let this be a couch to build a new life around.

With a pinch of sarcasm, Bain's (2004) comments illustrate both a normative framework of 'home' in *The Glebe Lofts* but also, in general, the loft habitus – a shared body of dispositions that create and maintain distinction in one's struggles over status in the social space of the home (Bourdieu, 1984; Leonard et al., 2004). In particular, she speaks to the need to conform to an expected aesthetic, in this case, a pre-established condominium-loft culture defined by designer products framed in a heritage setting. It is in such terms, for instance, that housing scholars Leonard et al. (2004, 99) describe the promotion of home designs and products as more than selling mere 'objects' as it is also an important practice that "comes to signify a general social end". Homes in *The Glebe Lofts*, like those in other loft buildings, are properly staged, we learn, with 'real' domestic accessories ("real beds not futons") and by juxtaposing 'sleek' and 'cubic' furniture with the old craftsmanship of the building. Again, constructing home in the church requires rewriting the aesthetics of space. Religion and spirituality, 'steeped' into the building over years of use as a place of worship, are tempered and balanced through deliberate connections to a loft culture where re-use of space is a commodity to effectively 'build a new life around'.

7.2.2 Distinction and Privilege: Naming as Identity Construction

Print and web media are one way to inform consumers about the new values, meanings and qualities of church lofts. Other methods of brand construction involve the actions of in-house advertising and marketing consultants.

The practice of naming residential projects, from lofts to condominiums, is common across most, if not all, cities. It is scarcely possible to scan real estate

pamphlets, development websites, or even the urban landscape, without being harangued by a broad range of 'condo-nomenclature'. *London on the Esplanade*, *The Giraffe*, *D.N.A (Downtown's Next Address)*, *The Chocolate Factory* and *The Abbey Lofts* are but the tip of the iceberg in Toronto alone. At first glance these names may seem simply a token practice, a quick method for differentiating a condominium or loft as a unique *product* in a large but relatively homogenous market. This is certainly part of the story. But naming is also a key component of the overall branding practice of new residential spaces and especially of church lofts. According to one marketing agent: "The name is the starting point for the whole brand...people aren't just buying four walls. They're buying a community... a dream" (Kluggsberg in Stren, 2008). And as the starting point for the dream, names immediately transmit key "symbol[s], image[s] and meaning[s] to their audiences" (Berg and Vuolteenaho, 2009, 11). In fact, the representation and promotion of place names in church lofts are crucial discursive devices that act in multiple but controversial ways at once intended to build a rhetorical bridge between the iconography of the building and its religious-cultural heritage; to offer a platform from which new users can locate distinct socio-spatial identities; and, to broadcast and legitimize the building's new use and new users not only to prospective consumers but also to the local community.

In effect, naming is a deceptively powerful act and is a practice that is fundamentally linked to meaning- and place-making. Helpful here is the work by French philosopher and writer Michael De Certeau (1988, 108), who offers a unique perspective on naming in urban contexts. For him 'toponyms', a place name or a word coined in association with the name of a place, act as normalising strategies deployed by technical experts and the elite in order to "hierarchize and semantically order the surface of the city". Indeed place names, according to Berg and Vuolteenaho (2009, 11) are part of governing urban social space at various spatial scales in that they invest places with "variable but politically expedient meanings". At the local scale, for instance, revitalization and conversion projects necessarily employ naming to re-order and re-signify place, identity and history. Geographers Rofe and Szili (2009) highlight how the redevelopment of a post-industrial suburb in Port Adelaide, Australia has involved politically charged 'name games'. They highlight that a new place name for the redevelopment project, an issue contested

by the local community, was designed to submerge the marred images and meanings associated with its industrial past.

And yet naming need not only act as a strategy for the sanitization or re-writing of *past* meaning. New build condominiums in most large urban centres, for instance, use place name brands to simulate distant, or ‘global’, places in local spaces. Thus, Toronto’s *London on the Esplanade* speaks to consumers of London style condominium-living – a supposedly more cosmopolitan and higher-status domesticity than is normally possible in Toronto.² As Olivia Stren (2008), a freelance housing columnist for the *National Post*, puts it: “in Toronto, it seems the ultimate dream for buyers is the dream of living elsewhere. Here, developers can cash in on the city’s chronic inferiority complex, our longing to live more glamorous lives in more cinematic places”.

For church conversions, brand strategies, like naming, fall somewhere between the practices of ‘re-writing’ and ‘simulating’. The dream being sold is one that simultaneously re-writes a partial (hi)story and simulates a particular past in the present. But instead of simulating lifestyles in different global urban ‘spaces’ church lofts frame loft living in spatial-temporal references of the past. Here a distant sense of rurality, a common projection of stability and authenticity, is projected as ‘cinematic places’ for distinct identities, and the establishment of privilege and prestige.

The Church Lofts project clearly demonstrates the role and implications of the naming process, both as a spatial and a temporal device. It is important here to recall that during its time as a church, this loft property was renamed more than once since its construction in 1906 (see Chapter 5). As a space of worship it had several names intended to communicate and identify its specific position within the religious and local urban communities: in 1906 it was the Centennial Methodist Church, representing the small but growing Methodist community of West Toronto and commemorating the death of Reverend John Wesley; in 1958 it was the Centennial United Church, marking its amalgamation with the United Church of Canada; and, in 1986 it was named the Centennial Japanese United Church to officially

²London is one of many global place ‘simulations’ in Toronto’s condominium landscape. *Burano*, for instance, simulates a distinctly Italian lifestyle, while *World on Yonge* offers a globally inspired aesthetic ambiguously combining multiple European design styles.

recognize its growing Japanese congregations (Lynch, 2011).

When the building was sold to Bernard Watt of Dovenco Inc. in 2009, the property's legacy of distinct religious-historic nomenclature ended. In a short time after acquiring the building, Watt hired several real estate marketing consultants in order to begin pre-sale investments: "Afterall", Watt says, "it's best to have a name to put to the building when you're pitching it". Originally, the developer and marketing teams agreed on the "The Church", a name that, according to Watt, was "simple, to the point and clear as what we were doing - converting a church". And yet although 'The Church' brand (officially named in brochures, websites, stationary etc) was sufficient for early investors, it became a "serious sticking point" (Interview, Bernard Watt, 2009). In fact, as Watt pointed out "with all of the complexities involved in the building process I really wasn't expecting the name to be such an issue". The 'issue', in short, was that the name of the loft was "too religious... people thought we were selling units in a real church". The name related too formally and explicitly to the building's past and did little to differentiate the project as a residential product. According to Watt, "feedback from clients was really negative", as "people were confused and turned off". As result, the 'loft' qualifier was added sometime later to more clearly identify the project as a loft-type residential space and to help it fit within the context of the housing market.

Yet, the naming process does not end there. Intended as a coherent discourse, in the website and sales brochures all of the loft units are given specific distinguishing names based upon images and narratives of prominent churches in townships found throughout areas of England - from the Scottish border to the English Channel. For instance, unit 109 is named 'The Dover' in reference to The Church of St. Mary-in-Castro; unit 206 is named 'The Ovingham' in reference to the St. Mary the Virgin's Church; unit 301 is named 'The Clapham' in reference to the Church of St. Thomas of Canterbury; and so on. These place names link a diffused religious affiliation to the project in that they commodify a distant religious past and connect to a religious architectural history, a heritage of seemingly quality craftsmanship. Moreover, the choice to reference the building's older Anglo-Saxon heritage, as opposed to a more recent Japanese Canadian heritage, is telling: an authorized and romanticized image of England - its geography, its heritage, its built form - is marketable. This repackaged heritage reflects more closely the aesthetic sensibilities of the common

upscale housing buyers, those of the predominantly affluent upper and middle class Anglo groups (see Chapter 8).

In other projects, like *The Swanwick*, the naming of individual units connects less with specific religious spatial and temporal contexts and more with hints of a vague religion and spirituality. Unit names like ‘Serenity’, ‘Tranquility’, ‘Haven’ and ‘Sanctuary’, for instance, complement this church loft brand: ‘unique heritage homes in the Beach’. In this way, deeper religious content is re-written as useful secular discourses for new housing consumers to quickly recognize and play along with the re-packaged meaning of the property. Again, religion here is rendered an interesting artifact of the past and an aesthetic element distanced from the actual history of the building as a space of worship. In this case, the ‘dream to live elsewhere’ is actually a dream to live in the past, a place where history is comfort and where notions like ‘Sanctuary’ and ‘Haven’ are not just materially produced through upscale church loft spaces but also symbolically through the production, display and branding of new place meanings.

7.2.3 Centres of Consumption: Church Lofts in the Local Urban Landscape

Besides establishing new meanings and contexts of house, home and distinction that fit within a specific but recognizable gentrification aesthetic, the marketing and branding materials of many church loft conversions also project new conceptualizations of local urban landscapes. In this case, the focus is much less on re-imaging and re-narrativising the religious aesthetics and iconic qualities of the building *per se* and more concerned with creating a distinct connection between a church loft and accessible ‘consumptionscapes’ - spaces which help to construct and define particular forms of class distinction through consumption.

As explained in Chapter 4, gentrification results in part from key consumption practices that include the ownership and display of distinctive, often heritage, buildings and homes, but also from their particular location in and access to certain neighbourhoods (Bourdieu, 1984; Jager, 1986). Again, research has shown how the value of specific inner city neighbourhoods have increasingly risen as the professional middle-class seek residences close to city centres with local opportunities for distinctive consumption. Unlike neighbourhoods in the outer city or in

many suburban areas, those close to the downtown core offer a long list of desirable amenities, many of which are made available at short distances. Specifically, living close to downtown workplaces, having access to parks, green-spaces and waterfront markets and also being near leisure and cultural spaces like sports facilities, bars and restaurants, act as important (if not decisive) qualities that are increasingly factored into many consumers' housing decisions. One, perhaps obvious, result of the rising demands for central places is the dramatic increase in the land-rent prices and an eventual, although not inevitable, social and cultural upscaling of neighbourhoods close to the centre.

In tune with the rising expectations and consumption preferences of inner urban residents, property developers and marketers increasingly brand their housing projects with discourses of centrality and accessibility to specific *consumptionscapes* (Quastel et al., 2012). Although largely an academic term, the concept of the consumptionscape effectively captures how specific (primarily urban) places are overdetermined by practices and processes of consumption. To be sure, these landscapes have a definite material presence in that they are commonly produced from the assemblage of distinctive cafés, restaurants, boutiques, higher-order services and art galleries often located along high-streets or zoned retail corridors. And these places need not be located specifically in downtown areas – the centre of the centre. In fact, consumptionscapes may include smaller retail areas outside of the core but distinctive enough to draw large numbers of local consumers. In Toronto's gentrifying 'urban villages', places like Little Portugal, Greektown and Davisville, unique consumer districts are increasingly established through a process of commercial upgrading and gentrification commonly described as "boutiquification" (Hackworth and Rekers, 2005; Rankin et al., 2008; Zukin et al., 2009). Importantly, however, these consumptionscapes may not have the same visibility as the more popular consumer areas in the downtown core. In this case, many condominium and loft developers whose projects are located in urban areas peripheral to the core often promote local consumptionscapes in marketing materials, marking distinct but accessible places that fit within the lifestyle expectations of prospective buyers or, put another way, are symbolically presented as "a locus for the articulation and display of an affluent gentrification-derived identity" (Rofe, 2003). In this case, branding strategies commonly used in marketing media like

brochures and websites involve selling the local urban landscape as a consumption experience outside of but still close to home.

An important part of the brochure promotions for *The Church Lofts*, for instance, were selective marketing narratives which make explicit linkages to the new retail and food landscapes that have been increasingly established in local neighbourhoods like Little Portugal and Little Italy:

The Church [sic] is surrounded by a rich tapestry of culture, fashion, style and design... College Street and Little Italy offer a great selection of diverse restaurants, bistros, and trendy spots to enjoy... Stroll down Bloor West and experience a diverse collection of places sprinkled onto an urban landscape of modern ideas and creative energy – the downtown core is just minutes away.

These narratives are part of the larger lifestyle pitch that circulates around notions of accessibility and centrality in the local consumptionscapes. This is also an attempt to re-write the church into the local urban landscape from its original place as a centre of community. Indeed, a calculated re-deployment of ‘the centre’ as a key theme pervades marketing materials and development slogans, perennially portrayed as a ‘hub’ of quality urban life defined through such activities as shopping, viewing, playing. Thus at the same time as *The Church Lofts* sell a reserved religious heritage in the making of a residential space, they also connect to an accessible vibrancy and diversity that many consumers seek in a modern city.

But access to a new ‘centre’ is not all that is offered here. The promotional websites for both *The Church Lofts* and the *The Swanwick*, for instance, display interactive neighbourhood maps and illustrated descriptions of cosmopolitan boutiques and restaurants (Figure 7.1). These key branding features not only help new owners navigate the neighbourhood, but also effectively re-narrate the area as a space of legitimate cultural and economic ‘renaissance’. Clickable “hot spots” on these interactive maps are remarkably powerful windows on the local urban landscape for prospective consumers. They are in many ways what cultural studies scholar Timothy Gibson (2005, 266-277) has termed as “discursive viewing positions” which demarcate “boundaries of class and income” based on the expected

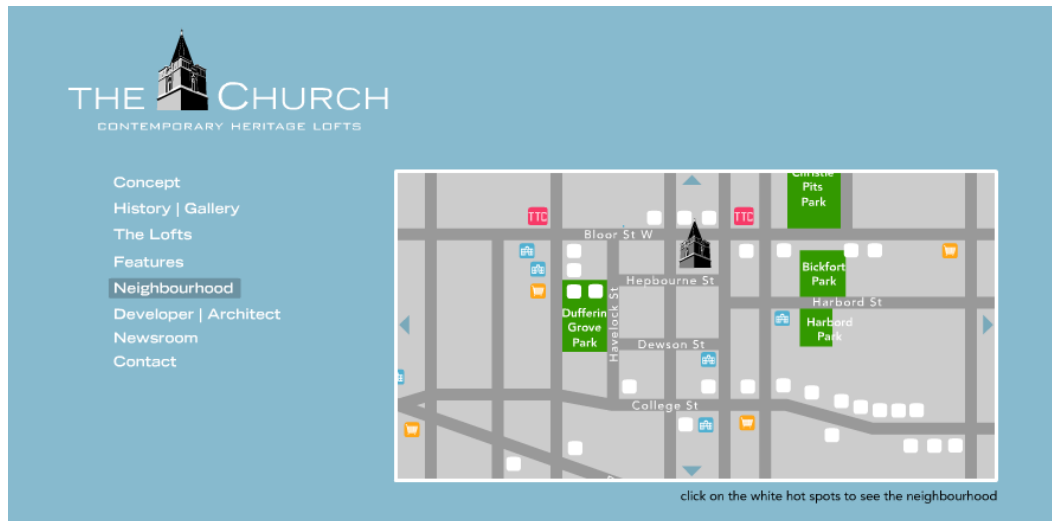


Figure 7.1: Mapping Consumption: The Church Lofts in the local consumptionscape (source: Dovenco Inc., 2009)

consumption requirements of the new middle class homeowner. So while several of these simulated points reassure buyers that urban parks, farmers' markets and Starbucks coffee are close at hand, many have also been specifically plucked from countless other possibilities in order to extend the exclusivity of the church loft brand identities (Figure 7.2). Connecting to the distinct heritage brand of *The Swanwick*, for instance, are images of the Toronto Hunt Club and one-of-a-kind boutique bakeries catering to expensive tastes (Figure 7.3). Importantly, connecting to this milieu of upscale sociability, shopping and cuisine, essential elements of maintaining a modern urban lifestyle, add additional layers of distinction and value, what Matthew Rofe (2003, 2522) calls "luxury inscription", to the church conversions through representations of stylized spaces close to the 'authentic' and 'private' spaces of the lofts units.

Like the conversions themselves, the lifestyle images and narratives embedded in marketing texts commodify inner city living as a niche market for specific class- and status-based groups. These brand strategies are subtle attempts aimed to sell not just the loft location as such but also to speak to prospective consumers about how the loft product fits within what Bourdieu (1984) refers to as both the desirable

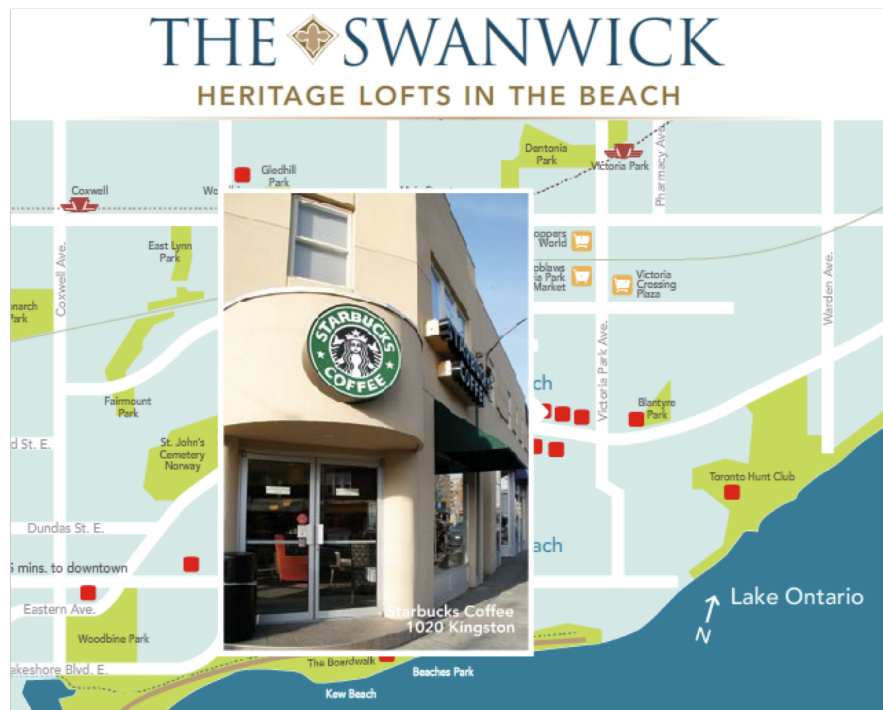


Figure 7.2: Mapping Consumption: Greenspaces, Farmer's Markets and Starbucks in the local consumptionscapes (source: Dovenco Inc., 2009)

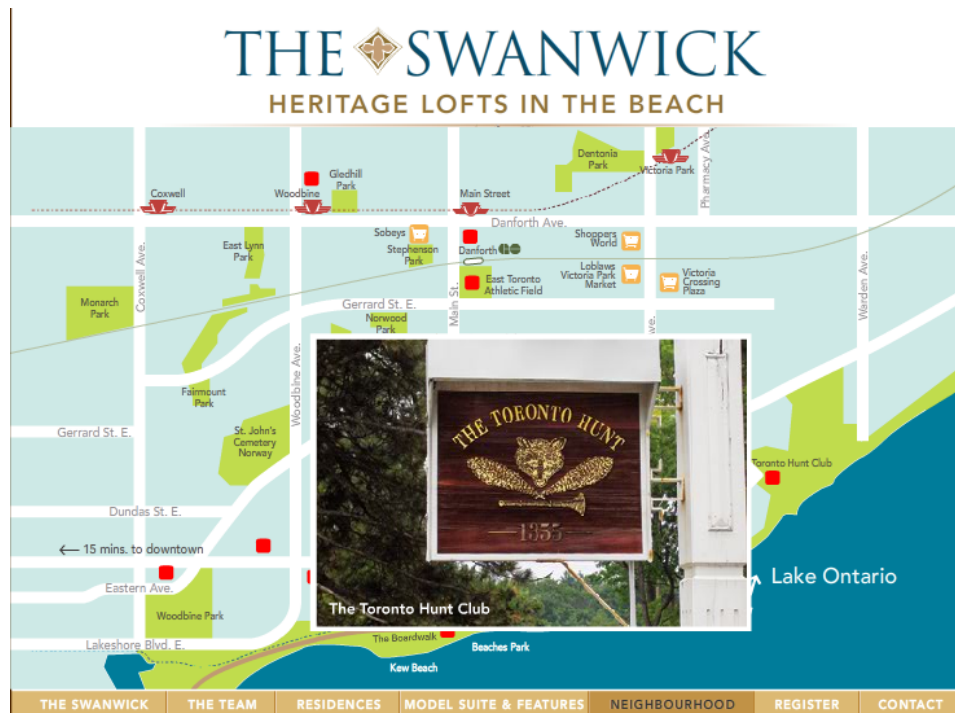


Figure 7.3: Branding The Swanwick: Projecting Class and Taste in the local consumptionscape (source: Dovenco Inc., 2009)

‘social field’ of new middle class aesthetics, and its capacity to enable a ‘cultural capital’ tied to the value of accessible consumptionscapes.

7.3 Conclusions

“...advertisements often represent a not altogether real, stylized world, but one which does reflect society’s view of how things ought to be” - Rybczynski (1987, 11)

It is of little surprise that developers of church lofts rely on marketing and branding as a means to sell their housing products. Today’s real estate market is flooded with advertisement and branding slogans selling everything from coach homes, lane-way houses and converted churches not simply as viable housing but also as worthy, upscale, homes.

In many ways, the practice of marketing church lofts is similar to those found with other forms of housing. Like many other residential developments in the inner city or in the suburbs, developers strategically market their products with a variety of media. But as we have seen in this chapter, the marketing content, or in other words, the brand messages that developers and their marketing teams deploy, are of a very special kind. In interviews with loft developers, and in analyses of marketing materials and news media, I have shown how church lofts are represented to prospective buyers in Toronto. Through tactful branding and marketing messages, marketeers work to legitimize the reuse of churches for residential spaces and link redundant churches to the pre-established loft aesthetic. In the case of the former, branding provides a powerful method of re-configuring social and cultural perceptions of churches – from places of worship to places of domesticity. Here, much of the marketing content distances church lofts from any real sense of religion, putting in its place a diluted religiosity that is consumable by loft owners. Branding thus affords another way of domesticating and secularizing churches as it smoothes out the religious history of a building and repackages it as a unique and seemingly authentic novelty.

But of course, branding also taps into and engages with the loft aesthetic. This is a crucial point. Through the branding techniques described above, church loft developers can effectively coordinate their housing products with the generalized loft aesthetic that is now globally shared. Whether it be through practices of naming, condo-stories, or promotional media, church lofts are presented as places that urban middle class consumers both recognize as distinct and representative of their shared sense of taste and lifestyle. For instance, clear references to ‘loft-living’ in marketing brochures, and lifestyle simulations in condo-stories are paired with narratives of ‘religion as heritage’ which speak of singularity and uniqueness. In such a case, these discourses reflect a particular class-based disposition, a habitus which includes particular new middle class consumers who are in the ‘know’.

Importantly then, the successful development and sale of church lofts requires more than just material rebuilding. The specific cultural, social and political histories of redundant churches force developers to creatively manage or ‘imagineer’ the identities of such places. But this only captures one side of the story and leave us with key questions concerning how such places are actually *received* by poten-

tial consumers. In the last chapter of this section, I shift the discussion to explore the demand side of the church loft market in Toronto. Through numerous interviews with loft owners, I examine the contexts of church loft consumption through a series of questions which aim to answer the following: who are church loft consumers? Why are church lofts in demand in the residential real estate market? How do consumers understand the various religio-heritage aesthetics and brands in this niche market? And, how do church loft owners use their lofts as spaces for constructing identity and distinction? As we shall see, the answers to these questions extend many of the linkages between religious change, heritage and gentrification that were explored in Part 1 of this thesis.

Chapter 8

Sleeping in Pews: Ownership and Consumption in Toronto's Church Loft Market

“Every Sunday if we listen carefully, just on the other side of that [living room] brick wall we hear an organ in the morning, which is the original Presbyterian Congregation, and in the afternoon the Korean church services. You know it’s interesting hearing that. To me it’s other-worldly. (Interview, Jennifer, 2009)

There are very few homeowners in Toronto or any where else for that matter, who routinely get front row seats for Sunday choir in their own living room. For some residents of Toronto's *Glebe Lofts*, however, this just happens to be one of the many perks of living in a converted church. Importantly, while the notions of having religious practices audible in one's living room spaces or of spiritual iconographies accenting one's bedroom walls may be 'deal-breakers' for some homebuyers, many others have considered such features as pivotal elements in creating a meaningful sense of place in their homes. But why is this the case? What is it about lofts, and specifically church lofts, that is desirable? Why are housing consumers in Toronto interested in living in a place that was once a church? Is this just a case of 'if you build it, they will come'; are consumers specifically lured by the branding

and market tactics of developer-*imagineers*; or, might these be places reclaimed by groups of religious nostalgics – people longing for a return to a spiritual past?

Up to this point, I have only explored the conditions of the supply and production of church lofts in Toronto's private real estate market. This discussion has left out the thoughts, opinions and interpretations of a key set of actors involved in this remarkable housing market – consumers. In this chapter, I fill the gap by exploring the ownership and consumption experiences of fifteen church loft owners in Toronto. I begin in the first section with a brief description of the interview sample. While this group of fifteen interviewees is only a small subset of a larger group, their demographic and social profiles give us a glimpse of the types of consumers involved in this local housing market.

In the second section of the chapter, I highlight three central aspects of the church loft consumption experience. First, I examine how consumers perceive the value of church lofts as niche real estate in Toronto's downtown neighbourhoods and evaluate their experiences with the branding and marketing materials produced and disseminated by local developers. It is important in this case to illustrate that church lofts are far from a short-term trend or simply part of an established practice of real estate speculation. Rather, this housing form is largely valued by specific consumers both for its rich aesthetic qualities and for its support of particular urban lifestyles. Second, I evaluate how owners position church lofts in the loft living habitus. Focussing on issues of lifestyle and the 'social location' of church lofts in the inner city, it is clear that owners use these loft spaces to distance themselves from both suburban and condominium high-rise identities. Simply put, these are housing spaces that reflect a set of values and tastes that form a particular habitus. Third, I examine the practice by which owners produce domestic space in church lofts. In this case, connecting to previous discussions concerning concepts of house and home, I explore how consumers re-configure the (post) sacred aspects of church properties into viable private domestic spaces. How consumers use, decorate and interpret their loft space provides important clues about the collective practices and judgments that constitute a loft habitus. As we shall see, the production and display of specific taste and distinction in church lofts follows clear patterns that are generally, but not always, followed by church loft owners.

8.1 Accounting for Demand: Describing the Church Loft Owner

Thus far, I have focussed exclusively on the conditions of supply and the contexts of production in the church loft market. Like a developer's branding materials or the popular loft literature, these places have been largely presented without 'people'. But of course, church lofts are not Ikea-like tableaux – spaces decorated with accents and hints of class and taste but devoid of human presence – rather, they are places which are variably consumed and (re)produced by a discerning and reflective group of owner-occupiers.

As described in the introductory chapter, throughout this thesis I make extensive use of in-depth interviews with informants connected to the church loft market. In this section, fifteen interviews were conducted with owners throughout Toronto's church loft market, ranging from long established properties like *The Hepbourne Hall* to several more recent re-developments like *The Victoria Lofts*.¹ It is important to note here that this is a relatively small interview sample, therefore, my analysis is not intended to be a complete representation of a larger group. The total population of Toronto's current church loft market ranges from 200 to 300 owners/residents, many of whom may have different perspectives on the matter. Rather, the narratives and experiences of owners interviewed for this thesis offer relational accounts against other perspectives and opinions presented in different contexts of the loft market. Furthermore, while this sample size certainly restricts broader conclusions concerning consumer experiences, the novelty and richness of the personal experiences shared in this study suggest critical avenues for further large-scale investigations.

As with previous interview data presented in this section, interviews with loft owners were in-depth but semi-structured. Following a semi-structured style was important from the outset as these interviews sought personal, or 'deep', evaluations of the various themes and topics at-hand. Respondents were routinely encouraged to explore tangents, expand on ideas and thoughts and also ask questions. Regardless of flow, all of the interviews covered the central themes and, in this way,

¹The full roster of interview locations include the following: *Hepbourne Hall Lofts*, *The Glebe Lofts*, *The Abbey Lofts*, *St. George's on Sheldrake*, *The MacPherson Church Lofts*, *The Victoria Lofts*, *The Woodlawn Lofts*, *The Church Lofts* and *The Swanwick Lofts* (see Table 4.5).

it was possible to compare and contrast the responses given. In general, these interviews explored loft ownership by asking respondents about their decisions to buy a church loft, their experiences living in a converted church, their interpretations of the cultural contexts and impacts of church loft development, and their evaluation of the various media (i.e. branding materials) and media-based representations of church lofts in the real estate market (appendix A.4). In almost every case, the interviews were conducted in the owner-tenants homes (three interviews over the phone), after which tours of the loft units and portions of the building were often conducted.

At the start of every interview, I collected a variety of background information and discussed with participants several aspects of these issues. In particular, I collected data from interviewees concerning their age, educational history, current employment, family status and size, religious affiliation, and loft tenure-ship.

The first of these data concerns age. Notably, all of the interviewees in this sample ranged in age from 48-78. In conversations with respondents about the age distributions in their church loft buildings, many reported that other owners, many of which are known in strata groups, were of roughly similar ages.

In terms of educational history, all of the respondents had at least post-secondary education (i.e. Bachelor's degree). The vast majority, however, have advanced graduate degrees (9 with Master's, 3 with PhDs). As might be expected with a contingent of highly educated respondents, the occupational profiles of the interviewees ranged considerably, including: actor/singing instructors (2), university professors and college administrators (4), engineering, finance, marketing and insurance consultants (4), photographer/graphic design (2), journalist (1), teacher (1), and church minister (1). During interviews several respondents also provided further detail of their building's employment profiles. In the *Hepbourne Hall Lofts*, for instance, one owner/strata manager described the loft building as "chock full of creative types" (Interview, *Sean*, 2009). The roster includes, among others, a famous Canadian inventor, a prominent Toronto painter, three professors from the University of Toronto and York University, two marketing VPs, two film actors, one film director, one animator and three physicians.

Most of the respondents in this sample were also married (only 1 widower, 1 single) and cohabiting in their loft units. Importantly, while several individuals

reported having children (9), only one currently lives with children in their loft. In fact, a notable number of respondents (6) reported having no children at all.

In several discussions with these interviewees, the issue of family size was directly linked to a sense of lifestyle afforded by the loft. Although I discuss the church loft lifestyle in more detail below, it is worth noting here that respondents consistently reported that church lofts were simply not family friendly places, in that layout concerns (e.g. the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, open loft spaces) and structural issues (e.g. open staircases) among other things, were not conducive to family-life. In this case, several reported that to own a church loft was actually an ‘empty nest’ decision.

Along with family status, I also collected information on religious affiliation. In this case, the majority of respondents reported either having no religious affiliation or not being involved in a religious community (10). Three individuals also reported as atheist, while only two others reported as being active in a Christian community.

The final background information collected concerns loft tenure. In this case, interviewees were asked about their loft-ownership history. Many respondents in this sample (10) had previously lived in and/or owned a post-industrial or post-institutional loft unit in Toronto. For example, one couple reported owning a loft in the Distillery District not one-year prior, while another reported owning more than one church loft (one in *The Abbey Lofts* and one in the newly completed *The Victoria Lofts*). As we shall see below, some of the decisions to live in and own a church loft are informed by previous experiences in converted spaces.

For the most part this sample reflects a ‘target market’ for church lofts, a typical contemporary loft consumer according to the newsmedia, marketing messages, and developer’s expectations. For instance, according to developer Bob Mitchell

our consumers tend to be a little older and have a higher disposable income than average, because they are buying something more expensive...[T]hese folks have professional or personal interest in design issues. We sell a lot to interior designers, artists like actors and singers, architects, journalists, graphic designers, art curators, people in finance and banking... you name it. But they are all pretty much in

creative fields... they put value on the creative act.

It is important to highlight that the vast majority of these loft-seeking ‘creative types’ are distinct from the working artists that have long been reported as the vanguard of loft living. Bob Mitchell’s clients are for the most part ‘loft dwellers’, not ‘loft-artists’, consumers who use and define lofts almost exclusively as domestic space. Julie Podmore (1998, 293) has argued that this ‘social space’ of the loft is critical in influencing how users define themselves in relation to the loft habitus, a practice that helps explain how they also use the loft in the production of identity, taste and class. Unlike the loft-artist who typically uses (post-industrial) lofts in “order to build an *occupational* membership and identity”, loft-dwellers define their position through owning and living in lofts located in distinct inner city neighbourhoods and through establishing an avant-garde domesticity in the private spaces of the loft unit (Podmore, 1998, 293). Although this interview sample is not statistically representative, we do get a sense that the types of consumers involved in the church loft market are indeed ‘loft-dwellers’. But this is also notably an older group of secular urban professionals, many of whom are empty-nesters and have experience living and owning character property in Toronto’s urban core. Based on their occupations, and, as we shall see, their proclivities for culture, heritage and architecture, this small sample is a *segment* of Toronto’s new middle class. In different ways, they also offer a contrast to what is often considered as the typical condominium-consumer: young, single, childless, first-time homebuyers (Kern, 2008, 2009b). And, while some of this difference is certainly explained by the higher unit prices in church loft conversions, there are also key social and cultural factors, like lifestyle and aesthetics, which come into play in individuals’ decisions to purchase and live in a church loft.

8.2 Defining the Church Loft Habitus: Loft Lifestyles, Urban Aesthetics and Post-Secular Consumption

Much commentary has been made of the SoHo-style loft living described and critiqued by Sharon Zukin (1982b) in the early 1980’s. Indeed, soon after *Loft Living* was published, geographers and urban scholars investigated SoHo from several different viewpoints, many of which extended Zukin’s arguments about the ‘his-

toric compromise' between culture and capital, and validated a reading of the urban landscape in an historical materialist perspective. Remarkably however, only a few studies have seriously interrogated the cultural meanings of loft living beyond SoHo or explored in any great detail the interpretations of those individuals who actively consume the loft landscapes. Mentioned in various detail throughout this thesis, recent work by Julie Podmore (1998), Wendy Shaw (2006) and, Chris Hamnett and Drew Whitelegg (2007) has offered important first-hand accounts of the 'SoHo Syndrome' elsewhere, and have evaluated in various degrees the spatial relations, aesthetic dispositions and social locations involved in the production of different loft contexts. Yet, in these studies loft living is still relegated to the post-industrial realm: re-used manufacturing spaces in Montreal's inner city, the re-invented warehousing districts of Sydney, and the new-middle class take over of post-industrial Clerkenwell, London. Remarkably, very few cultural accounts have been made of other urban and social spaces of the loft living phenomena, to say nothing of documenting the experiences of the consumers involved.

In this thesis I have argued that church conversions represent a relatively new ground of loft living – a variation on a theme. In the chapters of this section, I have presented the views and values of those individuals involved in the material and symbolic production of church lofts in the private real estate market. In these accounts, I show how key actors have invested new meaning to post-sacred buildings and have encoded re-used churches within the established loft living habitus. But the meanings and culture(s) presented by these groups is only one perspective. In fact, if cultural meaning is, as Peter Jackson (1995, 166) claims, "inherently unstable, actively forged, and continually revised by different groups of people", then it is of a critical value here to investigate how meanings of church lofts are differentially negotiated and contested by their consumers as well their producers in the local private real estate market. Indeed, we cannot take as natural that consumers unconsciously accept the representations of place and space, of urbanity, or even of heritage and religion created by the cabal of imagineers, architects and developers. By adding the voices, opinions and perspectives of church loft owners we can more closely understand how loft living involves a complex web of relationships between identity, place and media.

8.2.1 Buying-In: Investing in the Church Loft Market

“People today pay for meaning more than they pray for it” (Atkin, 2004, 95)

As with any type of housing, there are a multitude of reasons why consumers buy-in to the church loft market. Considering the role that the ownership of urban property as investment has played in Toronto’s recent growth and development, a key starting point for the consumer-side interviews concerned probing how owners view church conversions in terms of their financial and investment value. In particular, early interview questions focussed on perceptions of resale value and whether or not church lofts, as niche housing, have ‘premium’ status in the local real estate market.

Based on the interview responses, for many, owning a church loft is less about making short-term investment decisions than is about meeting lifestyle needs. This is not to say, however, that these housing consumers have entered the market blind to the present and future value of their loft properties. Indeed, this group is, by and large, extremely adept in both real estate and financial markets, a fact that has served many well during their time in Toronto.

For *Paul*, a resident of *The Macpherson Church Lofts*, purchasing a church loft was undeniably an investment decision:

I would never buy anything without thinking about it as an investment. That’s in my nature. When we bought the larger unit here, I definitely had investment in my mind. And we had a certain amount of investment already in the building and we had to fork out a whole lot of dough to get this [new] unit and redo it. And the only way that I could rationalize that was as an investment, I wanted to increase my investment in downtown real estate because I consider it, over the longer-term, as an absolutely golden place to put my money. The Toronto inner city specifically has got just a golden track in front of it....I’m a believer in downtown real estate and prime neighbourhoods.

As a semi-retired banking consultant it is no surprise that *Paul* has evaluated his church loft property in terms of its long-term value in the local real estate market.

Like him, several other respondents shared similar sentiments about the prospects of buying into downtown property as a means of securing equity in desirable neighbourhoods – the ‘golden track’ of inner city Toronto is certainly an important target for most home-buyers.

Andrew, for instance, explained that he “wouldn’t buy a home that isn’t a decent investment, or that has a heavy risk in terms of where it stood in the real estate market”. For him, purchasing a loft in Summerhill was a “great safeholder within the rest of the neighbourhood”. Along the same lines, many others highlighted that they see church conversions as holding a ‘premium’ in the market. *Isabelle*, for one, explained that the uniqueness of the *Glebe Lofts* – its offer of “spacious inner-urban living” – makes these places more “robust” as real estate properties. “We’ve watched [some] units around us sell, and I’ve been terribly impressed, I mean they’ve gone up in this period (recession)!”. According to *David*, a retired financial consultant, units in his building, *St. George’s on Shelldrake*, tend to ‘whipsaw’ in response to market changes:

These lofts have a premium in a hot market, but are a discount in a cold market. I think this is in part because they appeal to people whose incomes tend to whipsaw, so these are expensive places. Maybe not in comparison to the Four Seasons condos, but they are expensive compared to alternatives. I think that it’s justified but you’re dealing with this segment of the population, that because of the number that is involved and the market value of these places in here vary from about \$1.4 to over \$3 million, and if people are spending that kind of money they have lots of alternatives. If you’ve got that much money to spend then you can have basically anything you want. So that’s why I think that the market tends to whipsaw. It’s a fairly sophisticated group of people who buy in here and it’s people who have certain types of aesthetic sensitivities, always.

After a moment of reflection on the idea of his loft having a certain ‘premium’, *Scott* candidly explained that he has “a lot of class guilt”. While acknowledging the niche status of *The Abbey Lofts* and the relative premium that these lofts might draw as unique dwellings in High Park, he also questions the potential of reaping

financial gain in a place that was, first and foremost, a lifestyle decision:

The fact is this [loft] is in the upper end and our generation is going to catch up with us in the next years and they are going to look to get out of their 5,000 sq. ft. homes and this configuration is going to look great... placed in the market it's in the upper end and the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer - I guess we win, gee great! But to be honest we weren't after this place with that thinking.

Scott's comment reflects many of the sentiments shared by other owners: buying into a church loft was not just, if even primarily, a financial decision. Although investment returns and premiums on church lofts are certainly important to many owners, the majority have purchased into this niche market because they meet specific lifestyle requirements and fulfill a particular concept of home. Indeed, almost all shared *Andrew's* view that: "my church loft it is a home first". Even *Paul* highlighted that his first loft in the Macpherson building was purchased not out of a principal interest in real estate speculation but simply because he "was just in love with the place".

Much of the demand for church lofts in this sample group comes from various lifestyle requirements. In particular, respondents described both functional and aesthetic lifestyle features as key selling points. In terms of the latter, many respondents sought upscale heritage homes, and flexible or customizable spaces that are in close proximity to upscale neighbourhoods (see next section), while functional lifestyle features include residences that fit *life-cycle* needs, such things as homes that are generally smaller in size than single-family dwellings, but that are larger and more flexible than popular condominium options. In this regard the need to 'downsize' in response to shrinking households (i.e. 'empty nest') was commonly reported. Having only one child remaining in the home, *Carl*, for instance, explained that part of his decision to move into the *Glebe Lofts* was to gain some flexibility in terms of living conditions and maintenance costs. "My wife and I decided a long time ago that as you plot and scheme your life you say 'ok, at this stage in our lives we're going to want a house, and in another stage we want a loft'. [O]ur two kids are gone with only one left, we have a cottage on the east coast, our values are such that we can spend three months a year there since

we're not tied to the city and so then comes the question: do you want a house for someone to maintain?". With an additional \$100,000 to put into the house to bring it up the "standards" that he and his wife required, and the fact that the *Glebe Lofts* boasted condominium-fees under \$400 per month (average fees in Toronto range between \$500 to \$600 per month) the decision was, according to *Carl*, "an easy one to make". Much like *Carl*, *Sean* explained that part of the allure of *Hepbourne Hall Lofts* was the fact that the property is "well established and doesn't come with all those amenities, like a pool and games room, that we don't need and don't want". With condominium fees at about \$300 per month and a building track record of "quality craftsmanship", *Sean* explained that most owners in this property are neither put off by extra-costs for "things they can get elsewhere", nor are they "terrified of getting hit with big maintenance expenses".

Along with these issues many others considered church lofts as spaces tailor-made for single owners (some called them simply, "bachelor pads"), and, more commonly, homes designed for "older" couples without children. As one owner explained: "This is not really a family place ... it's a baby killer!". Open stair risers, floating stair cases, and large accessible windows, key aesthetic features, were often cited as examples of structural concerns that simply do not meet 'family requirements'. And more than this, the loft buildings themselves, and the marketing that helped to sell them (more on this below), does not readily meet an image desirable to younger professionals or family-conscious buyers. Regarded as upscale or 'mature' homes, these are places that *Benjamin* explained cater to "older, established, professionals". "They aren't [for] the type of people that our son would find in his condo high-rise, for instance, which is much younger and in a different stage in their life development, and who see themselves being there temporarily" he explained, "[t]here's people in this building who say 'I'll leave here feet first, I'll be carried out', because they see themselves as being here for the rest of their lives". Others too reported of long-term occupancy and low turnover rates, what *Paul* called a "commitment to place" that he sees is not typical of most condominium buildings. The notion that church loft buildings fostered a like-minded community, of "folks in the same point in their life" as one owner described it, was a consistent theme in the interviews. As we shall see in the following section, a specific sense of community is, in part, a function of these properties existing,

both physically and symbolically, apart from both the suburban and condominium high-rise lifestyles.

Buying-in to the Branding and Marketing of Church Lofts

In Chapter 7, I highlighted the various branding practices and marketing media that have been involved in selling church lofts to prospective buyers. Such tactics, I have argued, are instrumental in both re-imaging churches from places of religion to places of upscale domesticity, and in mediating the production of a church loft habitus. But while branding and marketing are clearly part of the selling practice, the impact of these tactics on consumers during the purchasing process is not as evident. How might branding and marketing encourage owners to ‘buy-in’ to the image and identity of their respective church lofts properties, and, how does their reception of such media produce a distinct church loft habitus?

In order to explore these issues, owners in the sample group were asked about their experiences with various branding and marketing media. In one form or another all of the owners had interacted with marketing materials, with the most common being websites, presentations centres and newsmedia.

By and large, most owners down played the branding and marketing messages that they experienced during their purchases. Many owners claimed, for instance, that they read the marketing websites and newspaper adds to glean what one respondent called “the usual stuff: price, square footage, and amenities”. This type of response is certainly expected since housing consumers routinely check off key information in their housing searches and are perhaps not initially receptive to the various branding messages being communicated. Interestingly, however, when asked if the marketing and branding content matters to bringing a sense of quality to the housing product all of the owners responded positively.

In this case, it seems that although for many the marketing messages may have initially been a background narrative, they remain important in both legitimizing church conversions in the loft market by way of reassuring consumers that they fit the loft model and also through establishing a measure of taste and quality that meets particular consumer expectations. Furthermore, as we have seen in the previous chapter, an important part of the branding process involves reorganizing and re-presenting meaning as a way to create emotional linkages between products and

consumers. For some, this connection can be subtle, for others, like *Scott* it can be surface level. As *Scott* explained, “buying and choosing a home is an emotional decision not a rational one”. In his case, the thought of moving out of a high-rise condominium in nearby Swansea had not crossed his mind until he came across a full page advertisement and condominium-story about the *Abbey Lofts* in the *Toronto Star*. “To be honest, we barely even had to read it”, he explained, since the development spoke to him immediately. As a church minister, *Scott* was in the peculiar position of having known the church in its previous life and having an opportunity to live between its walls. “We love it for its origins”, his wife *Eloise* added, a realization that she had when they went to the sales office fashioned from the original church manse. For them the marketing and aesthetic finish of the property contributed to a sense of nostalgia, a “romantic delusion” as *Scott* calls it, since for him it represented “a home that was never a home”, but a place, reflected in the marketing media, that nevertheless speaks of “a love for old places, heritage, and history”.

Other owners, however, were not as quick to internalize the branding messages. For instance, *Robert*, a new owner in the *Victoria Lofts*, did not initially consider the content of the marketing media but identified its importance afterwards:

At first I guess I didn't really take much notice of all that but now that I think about it, the marketing stuff, and I'm talking about the website and presentation centre, kind of reeled me in...Because it was a church and since I haven't seen many lofts like that it helped me to *picture and envision what the place could be*. The fact that they kept the exterior the way it was and played on the heritage of the place, those are the types of things that I saw when I was thinking about buying and I liked what I saw obviously or I wouldn't have bought it (emphasis added).

Although the marketing media was perhaps not originally on *Robert's* ‘radar’ it was nevertheless successful in simulating the *Victoria Lofts* as a viable and meaningful home. Being able to ‘picture and envision’ the church property outside of its original context is crucial to forging value in this housing market. Similarly, *Sandra* explained that she connected with the marketing package put forth by Bernard Watt and his team for *The Church Lofts*:

I was a bit skeptical but also intrigued. I mean not that many people get to live in an old church. Some people might think that it's kind of weird, I wasn't sure either. Well, I think that as a package the brochure, the website and the presentation centre really explained what this place means on a larger scale, like in the community, and how it fit the type of lifestyle that I wanted. It was clear that the [builder] put lots of extras into this building to give a real quality feel.

As a new resident to Toronto's inner city, *Sandra* explained that the community context, or "neighbourhood feel" and the "shopping options" close by on the Bloor-Dovercourt strip, all of which were detailed in her marketing packages assured her of meeting her urban lifestyle needs. Of course, for others the narratives of a diffused religion displayed in the various media are also important in defining the novelty of the property, a feature of *The Church Lofts* that *Marek* highlights as an important element in his experience:

Yeah, the whole religion thing, the fact that this was a church and we got to see what it was like in the past on the website and in the showroom, that was really neat. I mean how many people get to say that they sleep where an altar was or where pews used to sit...the brand that they put into this place brings that back out. I mean not to make it feel like a church of course, but to show how unique and how much history this place has, I like that.

Like *Marek*, other owners highlighted the value of seeing the church represented as a heritage space. Here too, religion and history are re-made in the branding and marketing content and often read by consumers as commodities and 'idiosyncrasies' of the loft product. As *Sandra* explained it, "the religious stuff, like the name of this place and the architectural style, that makes sense to me. We know we're not in an actual church but it adds a cachet to it and the builder made sure that we saw that". For these consumers religion is effectively reduced to an artifact and heritage an accessory. But what is also evident in these and other remarks is that branding offers a way for consumers to engage with the products, a process in which consumers are not simply dupes but are in fact agents. *Robert* highlighted this issue in discussing the role of the marketing practice in general:

Well this place is clearly not some church reincarnate no matter what any marketing materials might show you, but we get to keep a sense of the story to this place, its history and heritage. I like the idea of that and I guess that the media sure helped in building that historic feel, it keeps some of its authenticity when we sustain the image of what this place used to be.

Far from being concrete realities, the various branding and marketing tactics described in Chapter 7 are generally accepted by these owners as legitimate narratives of church loft living. In many ways these messages set the stage for consumer/owner interaction and experience with the loft space, represented first as upscale-quality housing and second as unique places with which to enact particular lifestyles. This is thus a constitutive process of the church loft habitus, a domestic space demarcated to be a refined but entirely unique aesthetic that is an alternative to other forms of housing. Taking with them the imagery, symbolism and simulations, this loft habitus is further enacted in the domestication, display and negotiation of space and location in the urban context, issues to which I now turn.

8.2.2 A Church Loft Habitus: Counterpoint to the ‘Phony’ Suburbs and the ‘Rabbit-Warren’ Condos?

In describing their reasons for buying into the church loft market many of the interviewees also focussed on the issue of location and commented at length on the value of their spaces in the ‘older’ inner city. As we have seen, the vast majority of church conversions in Toronto are located in desirable neighbourhoods outside of the new build corridors in the CBD but still at a short distance from the downtown core (see Table 4.5). Neighbourhoods like Summerhill, Trinity Bellwoods, Roncesvalles and The Beaches are firmly part of the contemporary upgrading and gentrification in Toronto (Walks and Maaranen, 2008b) (see Chapter 3). These are places that attract increasingly affluent residents with rich consumptionscapes, transit connections, and walkability – lifestyle features that are routinely factored into consumers’ housing decisions.

For *Darryl*, a semi-retired university professor, purchasing a unit *The Abbey*

Lofts was simultaneously a decision about owning a unique loft space and gaining access to the Roncesvalles neighbourhood:

We love Roncesvalles in that there's that whole sense of small stores and family businesses and fruit markets and we just walk a block and you have these great restaurants, the Old Review Theatre – which was gutted and re-done – *that's the kind of stuff that had a real gentleness to it, not a yuppy-ness in that sense*, it was that it had a sense of well, village... a lot of Polish restaurants, a sense of Polish-ness, I really like that. (emphasis added)

Like most respondents, *Darryl's* comments connect with the values of accessibility and 'village-like' living that many of these neighbourhoods afford. Interestingly, he highlights that for him the neighbourhood's value is partly associated with a 'gentle' and 'non-Yuppy' quality, features that correspond quite closely to a sense of authenticity that is also reflected in his church loft unit (more on this below). In this case, the neighbourhood's village-living and "Polish-ness" speaks to him of 'origins', what he calls "an organic feel", that simply "makes sense for our lives".

Echoing *Darryl's* comments, for *Paul*, a unit in the *MacPherson Lofts*, one of the city's most prestigious church conversions located in the heart of Rosedale, has been fundamental to building an inner city lifestyle, or what he calls a specifically 'European lifestyle':

This place can get its hooks into you ... it's partly the neighbourhood since this is the best place in Toronto if you can afford it. If you can afford it there is so much. We live our entire lives within a 20-minute walk of where I'm sitting and we like to walk. This is very much a village atmosphere here, we live a very *European lifestyle* is how I describe it. In our fancy kitchen out here we have two sub-zero refrigerators and if you open them up they are empty. Why? Because we got these great food stores right around the corner and I'm the cook and I don't buy food even a day in advance. I'll go to the butcher shop and see what looks good and catches my fancy just like if you were living in Paris or whenever, pick something up on the way home from

work and cook, not something pre-made, but I go see what looks good at the grocers and what looks good at the fish monger, so it's that kind of lifestyle. (emphasis added)

But *Paul* has not always lived the European lifestyle. In fact, the choice to move to the *MacPherson Church Lofts* was made after 20 years of living in one of Toronto's distant suburbs. "This was a radical change for us", he explained, "I got absolutely sick of the commute, sick of wasting my time. The suburbs didn't make sense to how we wanted to live or who we really were... I'd do the Go Train thing, and if you add all the hours of your life that you devote to that... to hell with this." Remarkably, an important element that finally pushed *Paul* and his spouse "firmly to the downtown side" was wine:

My wife and I like to go out and dine out on a regular basis, I'm a committed wino, so if I'm dining out then there's a bottle of wine of the table. And it's partly a reflection of the times, it's partly a reflection of maturity as well, I want to be near the best restaurants and I don't want to be driving home any distance at all if I've had half a bottle of wine or sometimes more. And on the other hand, I don't want to go out to dinner and feel like I can't [drink]... I would, and did, pay extra money to live in the middle of the city so I don't have to deal with all of that.

Distinct neighbourhoods and an individual's place within them are part of a particular loft habitus. Instead of edgy or bohemian neighbourhoods that have long been the stamp of legitimacy and authenticity for live-work lofts, and the more commodified post-industrial lofts that have followed, the location of church conversions in 'established' and upscale neighbourhoods is a key aspect of their character (c.f. Lloyd, 2006). These lofts offer specific consumers not only proximity to a global menu of restaurants and boutiques, but also represent a particular social 'milieu' which contrasts directly with 'suburban' and 'high-rise condominium' settings. As I have argued in Chapter 4, inner city living, especially in key inner city neighbourhoods, represents a socio-spatial strategy for new middle class gentrifiers. Character housing in specific neighbourhoods offers owners a way of displaying taste, but also affords a symbolic avenue with which to distinguish them-

selves from the values associated with both suburban and condominium-oriented identities. The church loft habitus is thus partly (re)produced through both the physical and social access to consumption in distinct neighbourhoods, and in the fact that such neighbourhoods become themselves symbols of class and identity distinguished by their social locations in the city.

The rejection of the suburbs, evident in *Paul* comments above, was a common theme throughout the interviews. In various degrees, every interviewee described their interests in church lofts as a response to suburbia. Reflecting both Caulfield (1989, 1994) and Ley's (1996) findings in Toronto and other Canadian metropolises, both the loft spaces and the neighbourhoods in which they are located were routinely regarded in stark opposition to a suburban identity, its lack of distinctiveness and its disconnect to spaces of upscale consumption.

Adding to his early comments, for instance, *Paul* explained further that his 'European lifestyle' is a direct rebuff of suburban living:

I don't want to shop in Loblaws ... I just want to deal with local shopkeepers and quality products, and who I know. I know every single shopkeeper in two blocks in every direction. We know each other by name. So there's a real attraction, and versus walking into Walmart in some suburb and getting the phony greeting from the guy at the door? No, I reject that. I'm rejecting the suburban approach to life totally, I don't want that. I want to be with people who know me, I know them.

For *Paul*, suburbia offers little in the way of quality consumption experiences, and this is in part a function of both what he perceives it offers by way of 'products' but also by way of its deficiencies in the *experience of consuming*. That is, for *Paul* suburbia is 'phony' or inauthentic; the inner city is genuine and knowable. Suburbs in this case are places of standardization, not only in the consumable wares found in the isles of the ubiquitous Loblaws grocery chain, but also in the contrived social exchanges in the equally ubiquitous Walmart. One's class-identity is thus made possible through the types of *exchanges* in specific social locations, a prospect that many scholars have pointed out (Bourdieu, 1984; Clarke, 2003; Featherstone, 2007; Ley, 1996; Raban, 1975). As Ley (1996, 307) asserts in his analysis of Vancouver's Granville Island, arguably the city's most popular consumptionscape,

“transaction involves more than use value consumption is a postmodern idiom of localism extolling the distinctiveness of the unique commodity, a perceived world of difference from the chain supermarket”. Correspondingly, with high levels of both economic and cultural capital, Paul can effectively enact and (re)produce an urban lifestyle that corresponds to his class position.

The role of an inner city or downtown identity is also a key aspect for *Andrew*, a resident of the *Woodlawn Lofts*. Suburban life for him is akin to being “trapped” and “locked in place” as opposed to having access to the urban diversity that is but a short distance from his Summerhill loft:

I am without any question an inner city person, I can't imagine being comfortable or enjoying living in a suburban location for a number of reasons. I can't imagine organizing my life to drive every single place that I want to go, I think as we get older that's increasingly significant and I've seen so many of my friends, well I'm almost 65 and several of my friends are retiring and I have seen so many of them come back to the city centre when they've retired to downsize to a loft in one description or another in the same area I live in and being delighted and happy with the new experience of discovering the joys of walking to a restaurant or a movie ... From a personal point of view, we have never moved out of the city. I'm a downtown person, not a suburban person.

As a ‘downtown person’, suburbia for *Andrew* is simply “unlivable”, a prospect that was and “is never” a likely option for the future. Unlike *Andrew*, however, *Benjamin* and his spouse left the suburbs for their church loft on the Danforth. This was part of a lifestyle change that was sparked by their interests in travel and heritage – an aspect that they described as simply lacking outside the city:

I think that for both of us there is a strong architectural aspect, we like beautiful buildings. I mean, why do we like spending lots of time in Venice. Why do we seek those parts of the city to spend our time in that are still reminiscent of the past of the city, which is of course what this whole Danforth [Street] is...this is a chunk of old Toronto... there

is an architectural sense that you are part of something that is not just suburban or a set of residential apartments.

The connection to Venice (Italy) is an important part of *Benjamin's* valuation of his unit in the *Glebe Lofts*. His seasonal trips to Italy are part of a long-time passion in European travel and a general, as well as previous professional, interest in architectural history. While the Danforth (a.k.a. Greektown) is certainly no Venice, the combination of heritage value in the *Glebe Lofts* and the “village-like Greek feel” of the neighbourhood, as he puts it, are key cultural and social attributes that drew *Benjamin* and his spouse to this church conversion. The experience of living in Venice effectively brought *Benjamin* and his spouse back to the city: “[we were] suddenly struck by how easy living [in a loft] was, how much work the other property was... we actually missed the city, we are actually city people, we love the city”.

But as I have argued in Chapter 4, suburbia is not the only social space that is actively rejected by individuals living in Toronto's inner city church lofts. By and large, the interviewees also remarked at length about their rejection of high-rise condominium living. In a similar vein to the sentiments shared about suburban settings, many reported a distaste for the material and cultural homogeneity of condominium-high rises, a housing form that was sometimes derogatorily referred to as “rabbit warrens”, “the square”, or “boxes-in-the sky”.

Carl, for instance, explained that his unit in the *Glebe Lofts* is the perfect setting for an urban lifestyle that he and his spouse, now unencumbered by the fact that two of three children had left the home, could finally establish:

We weren't going to buy a store front and convert it, we weren't going to move on top of a building, we weren't going to buy a small row house. We wanted out of the housing market and into the loft market because the lifestyle we wanted to create... We like the fact that we're not in a square, not in a high-rise... I don't know if it's *bragging rights* but you feel a little more connected to the building then you would if you are one of ten thousand units at Yonge and St. Claire or wherever. And we weren't sold on the idea of selling the house for the sake of moving into a square. (emphasis added)

The “square” high-rises, as *Carl* calls them, are a stifling housing form, a place untenable to the type of lifestyle and community that he and his spouse were looking for. Reflecting further on his role as the building’s strata manager, *Carl* added that life in the smaller, more manageable, church conversion, “allows the people who live there to have more pride in the building, to have more sense of wanting to maintain its integrity than just allow a high-rise to be a high-rise”. Living in a converted church offers *Carl* and others ‘bragging rights’, and these are part of an aesthetic, according to him, that are just not possible in a conventional high-rise. Maintaining the look of the building, and as a result how it reflects on its residents, is a function of its community and the willingness of residents to be part of stewarding a particular image and lifestyle. “I know that I would not be involved if I was in a high-rise”, he commented, “I like maintaining the building because it’s unique and I like involving myself with the people because I want to start pulling in the same direction you know, it’s not a question of leadership as it is a question of community spirit and community involvement”.

Similar sentiments were shared by *Jennifer*, a resident of *St. Georges on Shel-drake*:

I don’t want to be an ant in an ant hill I guess... My son lives in one of those huge towers down on Front Street and no I don’t want to be a part of that. Whether it’s true or not, I feel I have a little more control over my existence being in a condo of 32 units, where you know the [strata] board intimately and you all have to help. Now there are downsides, you have to pitch in a little more but I would feel fairly meaningless in a place that huge... Maybe that’s a strong word, maybe just more ‘insignificant’... There’s a sense of individuality that at least we feel that we can create here... And we know the people, I must know over half the people really well in this building. They are good friends, and that’s nice. My son says that he doesn’t even know the people in the unit next door to him.

Jennifer’s comments reflect an undesirability of condominium-living especially in the way that they are perceived to limit individuality and discourage management by a *like-minded* community. Thus while part of this critique is leveled at the scale

of the high-rise condominium buildings – indeed, many respondents mentioned a general feeling of ‘being out of scale’ – it also involves perspectives on demographic and class arrangements. The ‘ant-hill’ condominium on Front Street, she argued, was “not a suitable place for us to live, our son likes it, but it’s not for us”. Here again the church loft offered an appropriate ‘mature and upscale’ domesticity that *Jennifer* concludes is not ‘likely living in a high-rise’.

This was a particularly important issue for *Paul* and his spouse, who were seeking not just a character loft in Rosedale but also a particular community that fit their class and consumption expectations:

Most people in here don’t want all the hassles of living in a house but they don’t want a box-in-the-sky. And that’s certainly the case for me. We had an interesting experience when we were renovating this place, we went to the Minto apartments [in] Yorkville ... We had looked at all of those places and thought, you know these are kind of attractive and we could live in this neighbourhood too. But we lived there for 3 or 4 months [during renovations] and we said, “NFW!”, this is a place to walk down and walk through and come and sit at a rooftop café and have a bite and glass of wine, but to live here you have to be kidding, it’s terrible. It was all sorts of things...I don’t like the people who frequent the neighbourhood as neighbours, I like going down there and watching them, but people watching is fine but do I want those people as my neighbours? Not a chance. They are not the kind of people that I want to be around ... So the experience that we had living there just said to us absolutely no way do we want anything to do with that neighbourhood which is considered the prime condo neighbourhood in the city where all the most expensive condos are, could you get us in there, not a chance!

Importantly for *Paul* ‘prime condo-neighbourhoods’, like Yorkville, are spaces for casual consumption – rooftop cafés, people watching, promenading – not for living. And unlike his complete abandonment of the suburbs, however, inner city neighbourhoods are still part of the consumption experience. But these are places that are engaged with at a social distance, as part of an urban identity but not

part of a loft habitus which circulates on a shared sense of taste, style and class; features that are properly reflected in his Rosedale neighbourhood, in the church loft building and its residents.

8.2.3 Building Home and Consuming Space: Domesticity and Aesthetics in Church Loft Living

“[At the Abbey Lofts] we hail cabs not Hail Mary’s” (Interview, Darryl, 2009)

Throughout the interview process much of the discussion, sometimes led by me but often widely elaborated upon by the respondents themselves, dealt with exploring the aesthetic value and cultural significance of church conversions. Based on the discussion in Chapter 4, this preoccupation with the aesthetic qualities of a living space are hardly surprising. Indeed, we are reminded here that the extensive literature in gentrification often points to key cultural and social elements, like the value of symbolic domestic space as markers of class and identity. For new middle class residents, home-ownership and its *display* are part of a developed class practice. Thus discussions with interviewees concerning the nature of their homes was not just welcomed but actively encouraged, for this was one explicit way of reflecting on and demonstrating their values, tastes and identities.

It is also important to highlight that there are specific patterns to the tastes, lifestyle expectations and domestic practices among the interviewees. By and large, how these owners similarly use, decorate, and interpret their loft spaces uncovers the practices and judgments inherent in the loft habitus. In many ways, residents tend to follow an established aesthetic framework associated with post-industrial lofts. Open spaces, expansive volumes, and lots of light, for instance, were routinely reported as key aesthetic features of church conversions, features that have long been the staple aesthetic of ‘authentic’ industrial lofts. Moreover, several respondents stated early in the interviews that, like *Isabelle*, “had this been an old warehouse on the site we would have been just as happy, this just happens to be a church”. This, in part, reflects Julie Podmore’s (1998) conclusions that the loft is a ‘trans-regional cultural form’, a shared or *collective* conception and use of space by new middle class owners. In this case, loft-owners, whether they be in an

old garment factory in Vieux-Montréal, a re-used church in inner city Toronto, or a warehouse in SoHo, seek a space that is consistent with an enshrined loft style most conspicuously represented in modernist conceptions of design, like the production of multipurpose interior spaces (e.g. live-work) and the celebration of a functional aesthetic. “Authenticity in loft spaces”, according to Podmore (1998, 290), “revolves around retaining as much open space as possible while adapting the loft to new social practices”. As we shall see, the opportunity for owners to manipulate space and apply their own designs, many of which circulate in a collective field, are crucial elements to forging both a sense of personal domesticity and a legitimate connection to the loft habitus. Before we turn to that discussion, however, it is important to explore another common current that links the church loft experience, uniqueness.

For the vast majority of the resident-owners, the concept of uniqueness and novelty is a prime value associated with church conversions. As discussed in Chapter 3 and 4, this uniqueness is, in part, a function of aesthetic difference represented most explicitly in the urban context through heritage landscapes and distinct architectural forms. Owning and living in a place of heritage are perhaps some of the most explicit ways of connecting with a sense of authenticity – a key feature of post-modern urbanism and the loft aesthetic *writ large*. During many of the interviews, prolonged discussions circulated around the value of uniqueness and, in several cases, respondents qualified their earlier views that warehouses could function in the same way as churches.

For *Benjamin* and his spouse, owning a unit in *The Glebe Lofts* offered a cultural value that is generally not possible elsewhere. “The quality of the spaces [in the Glebe Lofts]”, he explained, “incorporated some sense of the history of the [building]. Very different for the multi-storey condo blocks which [my spouse and I] on the whole, actively detest really. And so we began looking at such buildings...we were looking for uniqueness. This [unit] is unique, there are no other units like this in the building.” Similar sentiments were shared by *Andrew* and *Darryl*, who at the time of the interview owned two church lofts. *Andrew* and his spouse had been looking to downsize from their single family home in the Summerhill neighbourhood and eagerly awaited an opening in the nearby Woodlawn building. After waiting for several years they eventually landed the penthouse

suite, an ornate 3,500 sq.ft. loft that boasts cathedral ceilings and skylights.² As he explains it, this loft:

...spoke to us of an interest in something that was different, something that was smaller scale, something that was architecturally unique... essentially more of a loft-style within a smaller building, preferably re-purposed because I like that concept and ... it has an element of distinctiveness to it that I appreciate living in.

Likewise for *Darryl*, the sense of individuality of his lofts, in both *The Abbey Lofts* and *The Victoria Lofts*, are important selling points:

What I like about it is that sense of history, it's novel, no one else has it. I think that a lot of people that buy into places like this are looking for something different, they're looking for something other people don't have and that would be common of the people I've talked to.

When pressed to define the source of the uniqueness, many respondents discussed the role of architecture and religion. In the case of the latter, religion was often dismissed as a distant or ambiguous history – an ‘interesting’ but relatively depthless detail. *David*, for one, explained that the religious past of the *Riverdale Presbyterian Church*, was not a significant aspect of his experience of this place as the *Glebe Lofts*. As he put it: “It’s neat to live in a church. It’s sort of a niche thing to say but the religious aspect doesn’t really mean anything”. This ambivalence toward the building’s religious past is perhaps not surprising given the largely non-religious lifestyles of the interviewees sampled. Indeed, while for many, religion was certainly part of the church loft experience, it does not feature with any cultural depth other than as a spectacle or story-line which adds a sense of novelty to the loft.

Perhaps nowhere was this point as evident than as in *Isabelle*’s unit in the *Glebe Lofts*. As atheists, *Isabelle* and her spouse have no present connection to organized religion but do have specific interests in architecture and urban heritage – features that drew them to their current space. Reflecting on her space, *Isabelle* explains

²After only two days on the open market, *Andrew* recently sold his suite for a reported \$1.2 million (Yu, 2013).

that although she comes from a Christian background, an ‘official’ religion has not played a part of her experience:

I grew up in a very Christian background ... my family is *very* religious. My mother actually thinks that maybe this will save me, living [in] a church! ... Coming from that background and being an atheist and moving into a church had no meaning to me other than it’s a good structure, and I love the notion that buildings that were created on the dollar of religious institutions, I finally get to take advantage of them, I finally get to live in a nice space because they built a nice building.

Detached from its religious origins, the commodified church is now a place that *Isabelle* can fully appreciate and ‘take advantage of’. But this shift is not just made possible by the withdrawal of the congregation and with it a sense of sacred purpose. Through material and symbolic renovations the church has also transformed into a secular commodity and a heritage ‘space’ that corresponds within an appropriate housing aesthetic. For *Isabelle* the rewriting of the post-religious space continues in her choices of interior decoration. Throughout the loft hang religious images and masks depicting Eastern deities, and in the basement, the loft houses the original church’s crypt – items that she says have no personal religious significance, but that instead play an important part in creating an interesting and “exotic feel”. “We have a Buddha and Garudah on our porch” she noted, “it’s interesting because we have the Buddha standing with his back against the church, so *apropos*. It spooks our Hindu friend just a little bit, he says, “you’ve got every symbolism in here accept Christian!” (Figure 8.1).

The crypt, in particular, plays an important role in this loft (Figure 8.2). Rather than remaining a religious symbol, *Isabelle* sees this as an interesting story-line, a special space with which to display and present the loft’s inherent uniqueness:

[W]e have this little room which is the old crypt, now that makes people really fearful. You go down the stairs and we’ve got this little old Nepalese mask with skulls and everything and let’s face it, *we camp it up*. And there are people who are affected by that, but you know there’s obviously tons of people who don’t even think about it

at all. We are aware of that and *adapt it for our own use* and we are somewhere in the middle, on one end, there's people that don't even think about it being converted and on the other hand there's the people couldn't even step through the door... Well when we use the word 'crypt' [some of our friends and visitors] assume that the spirits of those dead who were buried and had their funeral services here are still around! (emphasis added)

For *Isabelle* and her spouse, these 'spiritual' features offer an ironic but intriguing contrast within this post-sacred context. Much like the material church itself, religion is 'adapted' for their personal use and is effectively commodified through decontextualized symbols that are 'camped up' and redeployed as interesting narratives. These texts and signs therefore are key discursive elements used by these owners to inscribe new meaning of place and domesticity and connect with a decor that is not just conspicuous but also one that communicates their tastes and values. Reflecting on these matters, in the latter part of the interview, *Isabelle* amended her earlier comments about the relative insignificance of living in a re-used church over a post-industrial space: "[this building] has an intensity, it's a landmark. I talk about this building as a landmark, and I think we want to keep it as landmark building. The fact that this [was] a church, well that's important".

But of course, as *Isabelle* notes, not everyone responds to the symbolic and aesthetic aspects of these places in the same ways. *Jennifer*, a self-declared atheist, highlighted this point:

There would be a large number of people that would be creeped out to live in a deconsecrated church, just like I could never live in a slaughterhouse or prison. There's too much bad energy and it would make me uncomfortable, and I bet there is a lot of people that would feel that way about a church... I think of a parallel to Alcatraz, kind of creepy. I can imagine that churches affect other people that way. With my history you might think that I would be one of those. I come from bible thumpers on both sides, and I didn't believe as a kid but I had all the practice of it. I think of my grandfather, he would roll over in his grave to imagine that I was living in a church.



Figure 8.1: Symbols in Domestic Space: Deities in a Church Loft (source: author's photo, 2009)

Although *Jennifer* is not ‘one of those’ who reads the re-used church negatively, her knowledge and experience with Christianity has certainly framed her experience and left some questions about the morality of the practice. In this case her comments point out how re-used churches carry with them residual religious value, so that far from simply becoming just another building, church lofts play off of their unique cultural meanings. For *Scott* and *Eloise* the religious past of *The Abbey Lofts* was a central feature in their decision to purchase a loft in this

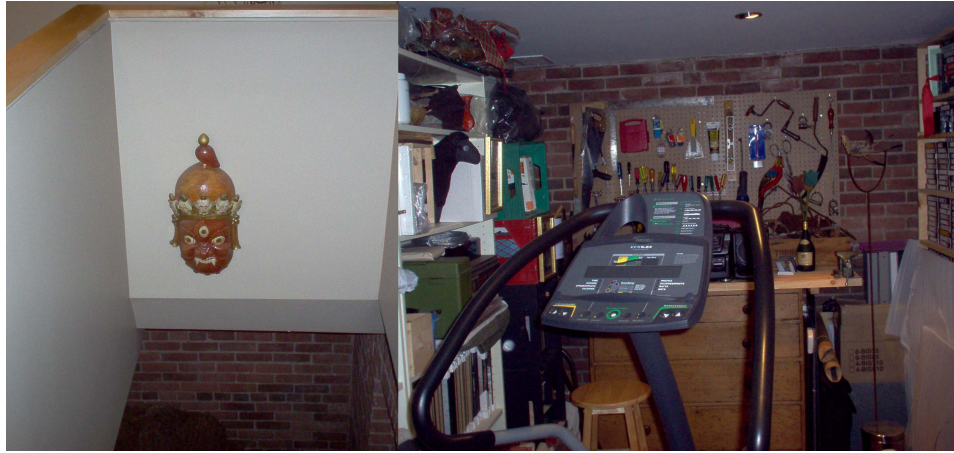


Figure 8.2: ‘Interesting Story Lines’: The Glebe Lofts Crypt (source: author’s photo, 2009)

building. The fact that the building was and, in some ways, still is a church was of critical importance for *Eloise* and her husband, a United Church minister. Purchasing and living in a post-sacred space is for them both an ‘homage’ of sorts, a logical continuation of their lives connected to values of the Protestant church, but also an ideal setting for establishing home. “It doesn’t disturb us to live here at all”, she explained, “it’s because this is, for me at least, one of the most welcoming places you can be, in a church.”

Customizing Space

Housing developers have long offered customization options for their clients. For the most part, builders provide a range of selection on items like home décor (e.g. kitchen shelves and counters) and appliances. In most suburban developments, for instance, customization choices are often limited as a result of design restrictions that enable more large-scale but cost-effective construction. An important part of the appeal of post-industrial lofts, especially in the early industrial conversions and the increasingly rare raw or ‘blank’ warehousing spaces that followed, was their wide capacity for personal customization and adaptation of internal spaces for multiple, often domestic, uses. In her own loft spaces, interior designer and loft specialist Felicia Molnar (2001, 11) describes that she “always endeavours to

explore the needs of public and personal life to yield the possibility of new, untried domestic arrangements”. “The specific alterations and interpretations of wide-open loft spaces”, she argues, “can produce some interesting spatial and familial arrangements and relationships that are not readily accommodated in conventional residential architecture” (Molnar, 2001, 11). Importantly, being able to design and coordinate domestic space and having an opportunity to put one’s ‘stamp on a place’, are key ways for loft consumers to effectively encode meaning into their homes.

In contemporary lofts and condominium buildings, often larger projects coordinated by a single developer, the spatial layout of living units are generally predetermined, leaving decoration as the best means for personalization. In large part, Toronto’s church lofts fall somewhere between the raw customizable spaces of the classic industrial loft and the pre-designed condominium high-rises, a distinction made in previous chapters and described as ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ respectively. For many of the church loft owners interviewed, the opportunity to manage the layout and the design of their unit were key selling points. In both *The Abbey Lofts* and *The Hepbourne Hall Lofts*, for instance, customization was a central facet of the loft product and key design philosophies of both builders, Mauro Galati (*The Abbey Lofts*) and Bob Mitchell (*The Hepbourne Hall Lofts*). Throughout construction phases, these builders coordinated extensively with owners and negotiated layout possibilities and arrangements for specific add-ons. *Sean*, an owner-tenant in the *Hepbourne Hall Lofts*, reported how the opportunity for a personal touch was one way to make sure of the layout uniqueness of the loft:

We like to customize - every unit was customizable. You came in and you sat with [the developer] and decided on the open space concept. And so part of the selling feature was to come and sit with him and his architect and literally napkin sketch your place with you... So there are many different places in here. The smallest unit is 575 sq. ft. and the biggest is 2,200 sq. ft. Everyone is radically different and this was important to us.

In this case, *Sean* and the builder worked together to coordinate wall placement (which affects room sizes and function) and kitchen layouts. As a result, *Sean* had

effectively co-designed his space to produce a loft that both fits his needs and was ‘one of a kind’. But, even after the initial construction of these ‘personal spaces’, the flexibility to transform the lofts into something new still existed. In fact, *Sean* explained that several new owners have dramatically re-designed their loft units since purchasing:

We now have some lofts combined into bigger spaces, so we have fewer owners since they’ve been bought out and expanded. The [owners] downstairs fluffed up their unit, one was an architecture student and made this his hobby, and he [originally] bought it for \$280k but sold it for \$330K a year later.

For *Darryl*, a resident-owner in *The Abbey Lofts*, complete choice of layout and design was a main condition for his purchase in this church conversion. In this case, *Darryl* was specifically seeking a ‘raw’ space akin to early industrial lofts. As an amateur or “arm chair” architect, *Darryl* designed much of his multi-level 3,000 sq. ft. loft space:

I bought in there because I really like architecture and design, it was really different, it was a space that I thought could do some really fun design stuff. I like being creative and had [the developer] not let me do what I wanted to do, I never would have bought. It was really important to be able to do what we did... [We put] a personal touch to everything. We paid about \$970K and all [the developer] did was the drywall, the plumbing and the basic wiring and we did everything else. We put in our own floors, kitchen, toilets, everything. In ours, that was the deal. I said I’d take it, but don’t do anything. I don’t want your cabinets, appliances, I don’t want your lighting, I don’t want anything....So we put at least another \$350K into it, so we’ve got about \$1.3 million into it I’d say.

Rejecting the builder’s original design layouts and interior items gave *Darryl* the opportunity to add both financial and cultural ‘value’ to his space. His personal renovations and add-ons were all “high-end stuff”, features like: a “\$40k granite floor” in the lobby, one of a kind cabinetry, steel staircases to multiple levels,

and ‘top-of-the-line’ stainless steel appliances. And, although *Darryl*’s blank-slate experience is relatively unique (many owners did not exercise a similar exclusive and hands-on approach), the general flexibility of a church conversion like *The Abbey Lofts* gives consumers new opportunities for design that are simply not possible in “conventional residential architectures”, places like high-rises and suburban homes. This is a point elaborated further by *Darryl*:

I think people had more say in this one than any other condo-development I’ve been in ... when you have three floors you’ve got room for creativity, you can do that stuff. And when you have a great big complex that goes up 20-30 floors, that plumbing stack has to go in the same place all the way down, so you don’t have the flexibility. But a building like this, because of the angles they can pretty much design them anyway they want. They could move stuff here and there, it’s only 3 floors so it’s not a big deal and they got 10-30 ft ceiling so they had lots of room to run pipes and stuff. I think if you wanted to be fairly creative you can. Now some people did a lot of work afterwards, there is another one in there that is half the size of ours, but it’s also really high-end... And this why I wouldn’t want to be in a condo-tower [you would have had] nowhere near [the opportunities] that I had in this one. [In condo-towers] they would still give you choice, but they would restrict you, say your kitchen relegated to specific places. Generally, in places like that you bought what they had, pipes would flow where they flow!

The practice of customization is thus an important part of connecting to loft living and is also a way for owners to carve their place in the loft habitus. On the one hand, the production of flexible custom spaces, as opposed to fully predetermined homes, link church lofts to the ‘authentic’ loft aesthetic – an avant-garde style where space is easily renovated and adapted to one’s own preferences. On the other hand, exacting control over the design and layout of a residential space also affords an owner an opportunity to create both a sense of exclusivity of their domestic space, and, effectively link this aesthetic practice to the established loft habitus. In this case, one’s design choices communicate not only proficiency in creative pursuits but more importantly demonstrate knowledge and understanding

of the loft aesthetic itself. Personalized add-ons like granite flooring and design decisions like open-concept kitchens are key symbolic features of taste and distinction, elements that certainly make a home ‘one of a kind’ but also forge a link to a loft culture shared and understood by others.

It is worth noting again that this loft habitus is defined primarily through a symbolic aesthetic and not just a functional one. That is, Toronto’s reused churches are a part of an advanced commodified form of loft living, an aesthetic claimed by the new middle class primarily for exclusive living spaces, not live-work spaces that are more commonly found in fringe warehouses around ‘edgier’ neighbourhoods (Bain, 2006). Put another way, this is a habitus that privileges an *aesthetic* value removed from the functional attributes commonly associated with the classic live-work loft. Indeed, according to many interviewees, few residents in Toronto’s church loft market actively use their lofts as live-work spaces since these spaces are considered first and foremost as ‘homes’. This point was made clear by *Sybil*, an owner-resident in *The Hepbourne Hall Lofts*. For *Sybil*, a professional actor and singing instructor, the live-work loft has long been a successful approach for her lifestyle needs and this was the expected use for her new unit when she bought it in the mid-1990s:

[w]e had an old loft at King and Bathurst that we lived and worked in, and then they opened a disco and booze can underneath us and we just couldn’t deal with it anymore. So [that’s why we decided] to buy here because we thought we would do a live-work thing and then we realized soon after we got this place that we couldn’t... we literally bought it for the live-work option, open span interior space, and the fact that it had a cute outside, I thought originally that it was an old warehouse with nice brick... We thought we were moving into a place like we lived in all of all lives, in a funky live-work place...but it turned out to be an upscale loft. We got our first worry when [the developer] said “now is it granite or marble that you want on the fireplace?” [covers face with hands] it turned into a kind of *soft-loft* ... when we moved in we found out who lived here: Peter Gzowski [former CBC Radio Host], the VP of the Royal Bank of Canada, one of the leading

physicians in Canada; so I looked around and you know I was like ‘Oh my god!’ ... it’s not the type [of place] where we would want to have 20 young acting students screaming and yelling in a space like this. So [my spouse] and I thought we made the worst mistake of our lives because we weren’t going to be able to live and work in the space, but we [decided] we would rent a space for the actors and keep this space to live in and use it for the admin and writing and producing stuff that we still do. It was funny because we moved in ... thinking that we would run the school from here! (emphasis added)

Sybil’s fitting comments are indicative of the church loft market in general. Unlike much of Toronto’s post-industrial conversions, church lofts have largely bypassed the artist vanguard long associated with the ‘original’ and ‘raw’ loft spaces that fostered the live-work status. With higher prices and premiums and an emerging demographic of not just artists – or in many cases, established professional artists in latter stages of their careers – but also professional new middle class residents, church lofts function almost entirely as upscale homes. And even though *Hepbourne Hall*, for instance, was sold on a design philosophy of flexible and customizable spaces, for *Sybil*, it was nevertheless a ‘soft-loft’ based in part by the types of people her neighbours were. As such, the social space of this church loft is simply incompatible with the live-work lifestyle. Thus, although many church lofts have the ‘original’ loft attributes of volume, character, open space and customizability, their socio-cultural position has been largely based on (re)producing domestic spaces associated with new middle class lifestyles and tastes.

Portraits of Heritage and Conflicts of Representation

The socio-politics of aesthetics are not merely limited to the private space of loft units. In fact, in church conversions, communal spaces (e.g. atria, lobbies, and hallways), often extend aesthetic frames, codes and values into public settings. The majority of the church lofts detailed in this thesis contain some form of communal space, and some buildings, like *The Church Lofts*, *The Glebe Lofts* and *The Abbey Lofts*, define much of their interior ‘sense of space’ from rather elaborate public-private features like the atria – symbolic spaces designed to charm visitors but



Figure 8.3: Historical Photos in The Glebe Lofts: Images of the Danforth and the Riverdale Presbyterian Church, circa 1907 (source: author's photo, 2009)

also continue a distinct aesthetic achieved in the outside or façade (see Chapter 6). These spaces are also commonly the foci for resident-led decor projects, most commonly through the staging of artwork. However, with multiple stakeholders involved in their coordination, conflicts can arise.

In several interviews in different church loft buildings, respondents reported ongoing discord resulting from the placement of specific artwork, like photos and paintings, depicting both the past and present forms of loft buildings.

In the case of *The Abbey Lofts*, two different installations have sparked heated debate among residents. The first incident happened soon after the building was completed when several residents hung images depicting the property during its time as a worship space. In this case, pictures of the original neighbourhood, the main sanctuary, altar spaces and pews, for instance, were hung as 'reminders of the past', a practice repeated in many other church conversions (Figure 8.3). Interestingly, these historical depictions were of some concern to certain residents. *Darryl*, for instance, explained that:

we [were] looking at putting up art in the building and there [were] some people that wanted images of the church... why are we putting up paintings and pictures of a church, this isn't a church anymore. They didn't buy in here to remind them it's a church, well this is a condo-development and it's been decommissioned and then [their] response [was] that 'well this is a church'. And so you've got these more Christian based ideas, there's a couple in there that love the idea that it was and is a church and they want lots of pictures up there of the history of the church... And other people want abstract art and structural pieces and so you've got this tension.

Part of this tension derives from the differing views of what *The Abbey Lofts* is. For *Darryl*, the building's past religious use is of little meaning, it corresponds not to a specific 'Christian idea' of the past, but of a more secular perspective of the church as a 'contemporary heritage' landscape - a distinct symbolic framework incorporated into a post-modern and eclectic 'sense of place' and a pre-established perspective of 'loft'.

Seeing this issue differently, *Darryl's* neighbour *Eloise*, argued that

[we had] beautiful sepia photos up [in the lobby] for a while with rows and rows of pews before they were torn out ... and several people in this building objected to that, saying that they didn't want to be reminded about what this building really was. I don't know how they get in the front door!

In this sense, *Eloise* argued that the majority of residents are relatively detached from the *actual* historical significance of the building, for it is an imagined past that is routinely celebrated. Indeed, the common perspective, in her view, re-writes religious history as 'character' and 'uniqueness', what another resident simply calls 'resonance'. Thus, explicit narratives of the past religious functions of the building, represented in the sepia photos, potentially disrupt some residents' view of the building and their place in it. As opposed to a space of disarmed commodified religion or distant but unique heritage, such images may confer a sense of religious history and place which is 'too religious', a projection which is simply

not compatible with either a secular upscale domesticity or an established view of loft living. As a practicing Methodist, *Eloise* explained that she is as comfortable in a converted church as she is in an active sanctuary – two spaces that for her are not at odds:

for us... it was familiar, and then we're comfortable in a church in the way that our neighbours might [not be]. There are [some] in the building who don't want anything that makes this place to look anything more like a church. I just have to laugh, not to [their] face, but do they come home with their eyes closed? Because this is really a church and now that the heritage board is involved it is all about the presence on the street looking the way it did or the way it ought to I guess. So there is no mistaking that this is a church. Inside it is stained glass windows and all of that, so we relish all of that...

More recently, conflicts of representation have flared around a new art installation in the central lobby. Taking over from the sepia photos is a large portrait of *The Abbey Lofts*, a pen and ink art piece commissioned to a local Toronto artist, David Crighton (Figure 8.4). While certainly not an explicit reference to a religious history in the same way as the sepia photos, this painting has still brought to the fore questions about how residents perceive the building, and how the building itself represents certain social and cultural meanings. According to *Darryl*

[t]he majority of the people in the building don't like the painting, people would have loved to have [one of the] paintings of Roncesvalles ... '[H]ow many people have a self portrait ... hanging up in their house'? I don't know anybody, right, so why would we want a self portrait of a church? I live in the damn place, why do I need a painting of a place I live in? Why not get a painting of a community that has a sense of place? So there was a lot of controversy around that.

As a public space, the lobby and atrium – and the decor that is a part of them – are collective representations of the owners, representations that reflect a sense of place, history and class that are intentionally read by visitors and the owners themselves. These are discrete social spaces of the loft habitus, especially as they form



Figure 8.4: A Portrait of The Abbey Lofts (source with permission: David Crighton, <http://www.davidcrighton.com/historic/theAbbey.html>)

a snapshot of the ‘supposed’ collective disposition and taste of the loft inhabitants. And it is in these public spaces and in the photos and paintings that don their walls, that clashes of perspective are possible. Thus, while church lofts have reached, or are at least reaching, an established aesthetic in the real estate market, a collective consensus of how the aesthetic plays out in the public-private spaces of the individual properties is not necessarily obvious. Indeed, for some the portrait successfully reflects their sense of place in *The Abbey Lofts*, and confirms the religious past as part of the social and cultural value of the building. For others, the import is not the details of the past, but instead that the building is part of a heritage aesthetic *writ large*, that it is distinguishable by its diffused religiosity and that it is located in a distinct community, in this case Roncesvalles, which has a ‘defined’ sense of place.

8.3 Conclusions

Not long after *Darryl* and I met to discuss his experiences and opinions in the church loft market, he moved from his expansive home in *The Abbey Lofts* to a smaller but no less ornate space in the *Victoria Lofts*. Since he was retiring from his position in one of Toronto's universities, and looking to spend several months out of the year traveling, *Darryl* and his spouse wanted to downsize and simplify their housing situation. After all, they did have 3,000 sq. ft. with three balconies and five levels to worry about. Importantly, rather than seeking any other type of home, *Darryl* bought in to one of Toronto's newest conversions. According to him the move was "simple enough... we just love living in places like this, we love the historical aspect of it". And leaving the Roncesvalles/High Park neighbourhood for the up and coming Junction was no real loss, "we really love the Junction", *Darryl* explained, "it's even one scale down from Roncesvalles, it's not as yuppy, it's even more organic!".

In this chapter we have heard from the owners of Toronto's inner city church lofts. Throughout these interviews much has been revealed about what these places mean to their owners and how these spaces contribute to forming identity, class and domesticity. Far from being temporary and speculative real estate, the owner-tenants in this sample, many of whom are older empty-nest couples, are clearly interested in building long-term roots. As one owner put it, "our sense of nomadic itinerancy is relieved by this acquisition of a thing which speaks of rootedness, even though it might be considered a false or constructed rootedness, it's still what is operating for us."

But of course, *where* these owners are establishing roots is also a key aspect of their interest in this niche market. While certainly part of an investment practice of building equity in some of Toronto's most stable and prestigious neighbourhoods, church loft owners are also deeply involved in producing and mapping their identities and their class positions through the ownership and display of distinct homes. As we have seen, church lofts represent a relatively new terrain with which new middle class owners can distinguish themselves as these are inherently unique expressions of 'home-house-loft' which speak of cultural and social authenticity, of refined taste, and of like-minded community. What is more, heritage and religion,

the material and symbolic currency of church conversions, are routinely appropriated and secularized in the re-configuration, interior design and general display of church lofts. Whereas heritage often finds links to the imagery and 'aura' of a post-industrial predecessor, religion acts as a symbolic break, creating a sense of uniqueness and authenticity that is rare in the housing market. Indeed, through the interaction with diffused religious imageries set within a heritage context, owners can effectively construct mature and upscale living spaces and define distinctive inner city lifestyles – socio-spatial practices which intentionally draw boundaries and distance from both suburban and condominium identities.

Importantly then, the consumption practices and cultural perceptions of church loft owners in Toronto are key features in the re-production of a church loft habitus. In these spaces, owners, as individuals and as a collective, are linking to and in turn producing a shared body of dispositions informed, in part, by the popular interpretations of the post-industrial loft aesthetic but also through the embodiment of branding and marketing content and the interactions of social groups within and among church lofts. Unlike the post-industrial lofts, however, these spaces are defined as niche central city housing which fit a particular upscale and mature housing consumer, one which is beyond the functional lifestyle of the artist and outside of the 'temporary' uncultivated lifeworlds of younger urban generations.

Part III

Conclusions

Chapter 9

The Fate and Future of Built Religious Heritage in the Contemporary City

“Churches are closing. In mass. Throughout the West, especially in the Northern Hemisphere (for the time being?), temples of historic religious traditions are no longer used. They are abandoned, converted to other purposes, or demolished. And there is no indication, as some ecclesiastic authorities openly admit, that the trend will be reversed ... there is indeed a shortage of human and physical resources that is jeopardizing an ecclesial heritage which, in many cases, is part of the national heritage. One needs feel no religious sentiment to feel an attachment to ‘one’s’ church.” (Morisset et al., 2006a, 19).

On a warm morning in 2009, I headed out along College Street in Toronto, the city’s vibrant Little Italy, to get a glimpse, and some photos, of a Seventh-Day Adventist church recently purchased by a local developer for a new life as a loft building (Figure 9.1). Places like this, I was quickly finding out, were popping up all over the central city. This particular building is a remarkable structure: A conspicuous red brick church with multiple steeples, ornate arches, iconic street-facing windows, and an adjoining Sunday School annex. Originally built in 1889



Figure 9.1: The former Portuguese 7th Adventist Church in Toronto’s Little Italy under construction for exclusive lofts (source: author’s photo, 2009)

as the College Street Baptist Church, and later serving a Portuguese Adventist congregation until its closure in 2008, this worship space has long been a landmark and community centre in the local neighbourhood.

When I arrived construction scaffolding had enveloped the building and major renovation work had begun on the front and side windows – huge stained-glass features that once wrapped the gigantic nave in colourful light. Workers were coming out of the front door hauling pieces of the altar, vestry and other original interior elements once cherished but which now served no purpose. Before I could snap off a picture of the scene, a man, as if materializing from thin air, leans over to me and barks: “Here we go again!”. Caught off guard, he captures the image before I do on his camera, an arguably more professional version of my own. “We can’t seem to keep these places going, can we?” grumbles the photographer under his breath. Unprompted but certainly encouraged by the interest visible on my face, he explains that he has lived in Little Italy for “countless” years, experiencing, with

some distress, the physical and cultural changes in the neighbourhood.

“I’m not a religious man”, he said, “but I have to admit, I’m concerned about projects like these. I mean I guess it’s good that we find a use that keeps them intact but who owns this now? Who owns this heritage, our heritage?” Sharing my knowledge about the project, I explain that the church will become an exclusive, fully private, four-unit loft – a multi-million dollar listing boasting ornate living spaces of over 8,000 square feet. Containing his irritation, the man replies, “Just what I thought, more money moving in. Do these new owners even know anything about the heritage they’re buying, do they care about these places or are they after the next cool thing?” Smirking, I ask, “Do you want the short answer or do you want the long answer?”

This dissertation has sought to provide the ‘long answer’ to these and other questions concerning the church loft market. From the outset I have aimed to add depth and texture to a rarely discussed phenomenon that has long been a reality in the modern city. In many ways I have connected to and enlivened one poet’s keen observations that are now some six decades old. Philip Larkin’s (1955) “Church Going”, a complex poem of (re)discovery, memory and identity, presents a motif for this thesis – an examination of the practices, processes and impacts of religious, cultural and urban change.

On a personal level I originally approached this research much like Larkin did when he stumbled upon a vacant church in the English countryside: mildly “confused”, “slightly uncomfortable”, but with an “awkward reverence”. Having no religious attachment myself, exploring the fate of churches in the city, what Larkin calls “serious homes on serious earth”, was certainly unfamiliar territory. In a short time, however, I discovered that having a concern for the challenges and prospects of worship spaces does not demand that we share similar religious sentiments, but rather that we care about the complex role that such places can play in creating better cities. Indeed, the decline of worship spaces, either as living churches or reinvented purely as public places, means much for the future integrity of our cities since their value is much broader than their religious functions alone (Morisset et al., 2006a). Scholars of religion and the city alike have consistently argued that churches, at local or national scales, enable social linkages to the city by creating not only spaces of community interaction and involvement, but also places for

the delivery of important cultural and social services (Bruce, 2002b; Ley, 2008; Matarasso, 1995; Putnam and Campbell, 2010; Tranvouez, 2006). In some cases, churches are the only public spaces available, functioning as crucial sites for citizens to develop and enact their political and social lives. These are sites that simultaneously build collective identity and establish *fabric* in urban landscapes, along the countryside, and in local neighbourhoods. As items of material culture, churches are often edifices that carve meaning into urban places through the embodiment and representation of history and heritage, elements habitually subsumed in the process of modernization.

But of course, beyond their social and cultural functions, worship spaces of 'historical value' also represent sites of economic opportunity in the city. In the most recent phase of post-modern city building, culture and heritage have become leading tools of an urban *renaissance* – an agenda seeking to remake, revitalize, and perhaps most important in the present Canadian urban context, strengthen the once repudiated inner city. In this way, the preservation of religious architecture, along with other iconic historic properties, increasingly features in municipal strategies seeking “economic innovation...image enhancement and social cohesion” (McCarthy, 2006, 243). For better or worse, protecting such structures, as opposed to demolishing them for modern buildings, affords new and *diverse* investment opportunities – development catalysts that not only secure tourist dollars but also entice new residents seeking ‘interesting’ and ‘attractive’ places to live, work and play. Acknowledging the ongoing social and economic values attached to worship spaces, throughout this dissertation I have examined why and how such places have been appropriated as distinct forms of private real estate in the inner city. I have argued here that merging contexts of religious, cultural, and urban-economic change have resulted in a remarkable transformation of urban churches into domestic sites for the production of class and identity, spaces of secular consumption, and secularized artifacts of urban history. As a result, ‘church lofts’, a relatively new articulation of the loft living phenomenon, represent a novel urban terrain evoking a process that exposes how changing spiritual practices, new conceptions of heritage, and re-valuations of urban space as social and economic capital, re-configure relationships between various communities in the city.

I have presented this argument through three distinct but overlapping theoret-

ical and empirical approaches. First, I highlighted that with the emergence of the post-secular city, a contemporary condition whereby secular and religious cultures *continue to exist and interact*, changing demands for worship spaces impart new arrangements of spiritual practice. While a number of Canadians ‘drop out’ of organized religion, others are forging new beliefs and practices that no longer have connections to specific, often traditional, spaces of worship. Importantly, this contemporary manifestation of religiosity, what some have called ‘believing without belonging’, represents a pivotal process influencing the property decisions of many mainstream religious institutions. Without sustained levels of demand for conventional sanctuaries, institutions like the United, Presbyterian, Anglican, and Roman Catholic churches have had to reevaluate and rationalize expensive properties. In interviews with property managers and congregants of various faith groups, these realities were brought to the fore. They consistently reported that urban churches in the City of Toronto are increasingly difficult to maintain especially during recent transitions in religious observance and practice. For the United Church in particular, a once thriving denomination throughout Ontario and most of Canada, many worship spaces have become distinct financial burdens, assets that are seriously disrupting the livelihood of local congregations. For this, and other faith groups, property rationalization, the sale of churches in the private real estate market, represents the most viable method for sustaining congregations that are still intact. In this sense, religious properties are not just burdens but are also critical economic solutions.

But while for many faith groups the economic rationalization of churches may represent a necessary survival practice, for other communities the future prospects of such properties are often viewed much differently. In this case, I have examined, second, how systems of ownership and rationalization, although related to the current context of religious change, are also influenced by contemporary conceptions and practices of heritage. As described above, historic churches are routinely envisioned by secular society to have both socio-cultural and economic roles to play in the post-modern city. Saving churches slated for demolition or wide scale redevelopment through heritage policy tools offer a direct means of protecting the public interests in place-making – a means not only to retain urban fabric or a sense of place and history in local neighbourhoods, but also to encourage their conversion

for new uses like housing. Interviews with policy makers uncovered the state-level approach to redundant urban churches in Toronto. These informants highlighted that at the municipal level heritage conservation is largely reactionary, a scramble-like practice of listing and designating properties in the face of growing city-wide pressures for new growth and development that caters to more global aspirations. Against some critiques of ‘fossilization’, over the past decade the Toronto Preservation Services under the aegis of the Ontario Heritage Act, has increasingly identified the city’s ‘at risk’ churches as sites of heritage significance, spaces in central neighbourhoods that act not only as diverse urban fabric but also as potential tools in urban revitalization. But much tension and conflict have resulted in recent years as faith groups mount challenges to the conservation aspirations of the Province and the City. As faith groups seek to offload properties in the private market, they are met with preservation restrictions that increase the cost associated with property maintenance and limit resale options. Of course, with the rise of this preservation ethic, worship spaces are now becoming desirable sites for a secular public especially attracted to their potential as unique loft products – a market that materialized, in earnest, during the transition to a post-industrial city.

The third, and last, approach explored the role of urban-economic upheavals related to the post-industrial city and their relationships to both neighbourhood change and the rise of the loft living phenomenon. Central to this discussion is the concept of gentrification, an evolving process that is no simple ‘back-to-the-city’ trend. In Toronto, as in other major Canadian cities, gentrification has expanded with the ascension of the new middle class and the prioritization of inner urban revitalization, key processes that bring, on the one hand, substantial reinvestment through housing renovation, dense ‘condo-ization’, retail upgrading, and the renewal of countless outmoded industrial properties. These now common terrains, I argue, are matched with new forms of redevelopment. The seemingly incessant energies of gentrification’s main players, those “flamboyant developers, speculative investors, habitual-habitus homebuyers and entrepreneurial policy elites” (Wyly and Hammel, 2008, 2646), have breached new ground in the remaking of redundant properties abandoned by their former institutions. Thus while the dramatic shifts in religious practice and the emerging heritage policy programs described above laid the foundations for an increasing supply of surplus worship spaces es-

pecially in desirable central city neighbourhoods, the inclusion of churches in the loft niche market, that 'SoHo Syndrome' (Podmore, 1998), is also made possible by the socio-cultural and lifestyle demands of the new middle class groups vying not just for space in the inner city, but more importantly, for the opportunity to own distinct, unique, one-of-a-kind places.

Redundant worship spaces reflect quite clearly many of the symbolic and ideological values inherent in the loft living habitus. These spaces offer a sense of authenticity, history and identity in similar ways to the reclaimed factories and warehouses endemic to the deindustrialized-*cum*-creative city. In interviews with developers, architects and marketers, it is clear that church lofts are materially and symbolically transformed to meet an expected loft aesthetic: heritage accents, novel floor plans, and unique public spaces. 'Icons' and 'origins', key elements in the commodification of heritage and highlighted throughout the renovated buildings, impart distinction on their owners, a means of separating them from other sub-class groups living in 'mundane' and 'placeless' high-rise condominiums and suburban tracts. As Michael Jager (1986, 81) has argued, this is, fundamentally, a middle-class appropriation of the *past*: "a return to an historical purity and authenticity ... a successful triumphant possession" of history and heritage as new distinctive standards indicate the class "candidature of the new middle-classes and define their social ascendancy". But here too, the remaking of churches for lofts often acquires a novel accent, for these are places which mobilize relatively unique (hi)stories of religion, spirituality, and the sacred. Interviews with church loft owners revealed how important such unique housing is in displaying taste and forging distinct (sub)class identities, an identity politics that follows closely the findings of Pierre Bourdieu (1984). Tamed in the remodelling of space but also in the consumption practices, condo-stories, branding identities, and domestic decoration of these redundant worship spaces, church loft owners make use of religion as a strategic accessory – a disarmed, secularized iconography which links owners to new stores of cultural capital. The production and display of 'other-worldly' loft spaces in the inner city by these owners confirms a further refinement of the gentrification aesthetic. Church lofts represent new focal points, or socio-spatial referents, of (sub)class and (sub)cultural differentiation. They offer the opportunity for specific 'knowledgeable' consumers, in this case a largely older, secular,

empty nest resident, to possess and exhibit rare and novel urban terrain, a place and space at a physical and social distance from others in the city and suburbs. As one resident-owner explained in a moment of unparalleled self-critique:

we are all bricoleurs [here], we select from the culture and the heritage what we [want] and we construe it and construct a thing that is no more true but that is nevertheless unique and important to us.... this is postmodernist, it is also privatized consumerist crap in which a few of us get to create our own environment and the rest can live in those boxes downtown.

It is important to underline, however, that the Toronto case study presented throughout this thesis is only one context for evaluating the church loft phenomenon. The re-use of redundant worship spaces in this city has largely taken a route toward privatization, a pathway that is neither inevitable nor conflict free. Indeed, the combined factors of local faith groups' financial needs in a changing religious marketplace, the City's treatment and protection of many churches as heritage properties like any other, and the demands for novel housing in the city centre have helped to forge a context where redundant worship spaces are increasingly appropriated and maintained by private consumers alone, a practice that opens the door to fundamental questions concerning acceptability and accessibility. That is, while the re-use of churches for upscale living in the inner city offers one method of sustaining the urban fabric, retaining heritage landscapes and promoting post-modern city living, it does little by way of creating more comprehensive means of raising the social and civic capital of these important properties for local communities *writ large*. Toronto's church lofts, I argue, help produce urban space for progressively more affluent users and represent a process that systematically ignores the potential for creating more diverse and equitable spaces in a city that desperately needs them (Hackworth, 2002).¹ Whose heritage, whose religion, whose city is represented

¹It is important to highlight again recent research by David Hulchanski (2010) which presents dramatic shifts in Toronto's socio-economic landscape over the last 35 years with growing income polarisation and social inequality. Housing affordability issues, declining access to critical health services, and ethnic divisions are effecting more and more communities. The loss of public spaces like redundant urban churches, places that have the potential to act as sites for public engagement, is just another outcome of current urban politics and development that eschew the needs of diverse local communities.

and experienced in these church lofts? In Toronto such questions are answered quite clearly: by those who can afford them.

It is worth then briefly exploring other '*altared places*' to glean some of the possible alternative fates and futures of redundant urban churches. In the following section, I highlight two urban contexts in which redundant worship spaces are given different treatment by various stakeholders. Unlike Toronto, these cases demonstrate the wide range of options available given the proper commitment and motivation toward building meaningful public spaces in the city.

9.1 Learning From Other Markets

As mentioned throughout this work redundant and re-used churches are not limited to the City of Toronto alone. The processes of change described in the first section of the thesis have dramatically influenced the character and practice of religious, heritage and urban cultures throughout the world. And while these features certainly have a global scope, they also have very specific and often divergent local articulations. As a result, the unique practices, perspectives and historical trajectories of local faith groups, government authorities, developers and resident-owners, have produced unique responses to the rise of surplus worship spaces. In some cities local preservation has long been shadowed by oppressive development regimes seeking to build and rebuild urban areas to meet growth targets. In these cases, historic churches no longer in use are routinely destroyed to 'make room' in the city. In other cities, historic worship spaces are routinely saved and protected in the production of vast tourist landscapes, leaving many to openly critique a wanton inflexibility and fossilization of the urban environment (Noppen, 2006). Others, however, have sought to strike a balance between the pressures for urban growth, the values of preservation and the needs of local communities.

While we could point to many examples around the world of unique and progressive efforts in the adaptive reuse of post-institutional properties like churches, two specific contexts are worthy of brief comparison here. In particular, Montréal and London represent places that are simultaneously 'close to home' and 'at a distance', both physically and ideologically, to the Toronto case study presented in this thesis. In each case, a prolonged experience with religious, heritage and urban

change has proven crucial in promoting creative systems of ownership and viable solutions for an increasing number of valuable redundant worship spaces.

In the case of the former, the adaptive reuse of urban churches represents distinctly political and deeply social acts tied to the religious transformations that have gripped the province since the Quiet Revolution. Remarkably, and in contrast to Toronto, developers and owners of redundant urban churches in Montréal, worship spaces that originated from the widespread Catholic faith present throughout the province, have attempted to find different options besides those in the loft market, opting for retaining religious uses or creative secular re-uses like mixed conversions or public housing. Connected to this, there is considerable praise – from those in heritage policy circles at least – of state-led initiatives that consistently manage and protect the re-use of built heritage. Montréal, in partnership with the Province du Québec and local advocacy groups, is increasingly looked upon as the standard in Canadian urban heritage conservation, an example of proactive management that seeks to include multiple communities in the planning and re-development of significant public spaces.

In the case of London, a geographically distant urban context but one that shares a close religious tradition with Anglo-Canada, the church loft phenomenon is in its twilight years. Although currently a handful of redundant churches are being redeveloped as upscale residential lofts, especially in elite neighbourhoods like Notting Hill and Battersea, by and large, this process was in full swing during the housing booms of the early 1990s. Swept up in the frenzy, countless abandoned and sold churches, most of which are former properties of the Church of England (CofE), were converted to homes, pubs and retail outlets catering to London's rapidly growing population of new middle class residents. Since that time, the CofE, in concert with the national government, numerous heritage trust organizations and other charitable groups, has been remarkably proactive in protecting the nation's vast religious built heritage through comprehensive public-private programs designed to maintain their diverse civic and religious uses.

9.1.1 Montréal: Catholic Conversions and Public Interventions

There is perhaps nowhere else in Canada that exhibits such a profound re-negotiation of religious and secular values as the Province du Québec. Québec's deep and long standing Catholic faith, and its remarkable transformation since the mid-twentieth century, have played a profound role in developing a community whose social and physical structures remain unique throughout the country. So too, Québec's response to religious change and recent demographic transitions especially evident in its key cities of Montréal and Québec City, has largely diverged from its provincial and urban neighbours. In this respect the church loft market, its evolution and management, has taken very different pathways compared to those in Ontario and Toronto.

First and foremost, it is essential to highlight that the secularization of Québécois society, expressed quite clearly in the Quiet Revolution and the Second Vatican Council, resulted in remarkably abrupt, but no less welcomed, transformations in the social, political and religious lives of its citizens. As journalist Ron Graham (1990, 117) points out, "the secularization that had taken place in Europe over a hundred years happened in Québec in about five years". By the early 1960s, a majority of Québeckers had supported a new secular self-definition to replace a singular Catholic identity. Moreover, the Quiet Revolution also brought a wave of secularization that reconfigured the control and administration of a wide "network of social institutions" previously operated by the Catholic Church (Baum, 2006, 154) (see also Chapter 2, §2.1). And while the complexities of this important socio-religious event are not the focus here, it is instructive to note the influence that such a transition has played in the religiosity of the province.

Most important was that the move toward cultural and political modernity inherent in the 1960s dramatically reconfigured religious observance and the spiritual commitments of many people living in Québec. By the end of that decade "an increasing number of Catholics", writes Canadian historian Gregory Baum (2006, 150), were growing "indifferent to their faith and disassociated themselves from their parishes". And as Peter Beyer (1997) has pointed out, the impact of these transitions was most marked by rapid declines in regular attendance (i.e. attendance reported during a 7-day period). He shows that Québeckers went from 88%

regular attendance in 1965 to about 29% in 1990 (Beyer, 1997, 282). Monthly attendance rates also demonstrated the drop: by 1985, about 39% claimed they were attending services at least once a month, down from 42% in 1975; by 1995 the figure had dropped to 32%, and to 22% in 2005 (Bibby, 2007, 6). Furthermore, as Reginald Bibby (2007, 8) points out,

Québec's current weekly attendance level of 15% is well below the levels found in Catholic settings such as Ireland, Italy, and Poland (over 30%), along with Greece, and Spain (over 20%)... [and] now close to that of France (just under 10%).

Of course, attendance data do not complete the picture of religiosity. Indeed, we must note, as Bibby (2007, 8) does, that the vast majority of Québeckers still continue to see themselves as Roman Catholic. Recent statistics show that with regular attendance around 20%, about 83% of the population still identifies with 'Catholicism'. As I have shown in Chapter 2, Montréal's affiliation rates, for instance, have dipped only slightly in the Catholic group from 1981 (80%) to 2001 (74%) (Figure 2.7). The point, in short, is that the contemporary religious picture in Québec is complex and continues to represent a population that is at once resoundingly Catholic but reserved in their *commitment* to public participation – what Raymond Lemieux (1989) calls a “popular Catholicism” or a “Catholicism without a Church” (Bibby, 2007, 8). In Montréal one response to these changes is that the Catholic diocese has closed about 90 parishes since the late 1990s, with the majority of such closures coming in the last 10 years. As in Ontario, Québec is becoming a post-secular society where religious values continue alongside new arrangements of practice and observance, a process that I have likened to Grace Davie's (1994) concept of “believing without belonging”.

As complex as religion is, the transformation of the urban landscape in Montréal over the past decades has been just as remarkable. Like Toronto, the emergence of the new middle class and significant patterns of gentrification, both of which targeted portions of the urban core, have played substantial roles in taking this city into the post-industrial era. From the early 1970s to the mid-1990s, many working class districts like Centre-Sud and St. Henri, and diverse neighbourhoods like Mile End and St. Louis were sites of considerable and on-going revitalization. Their

renaissance as upscale urban spaces was made possible through a blend of municipal housing renovation grants, mixed-use zoning strategies along de-industrialized waterfront areas and high streets designed to support young-adult lifestyles, and the beautification of commercial arteries in key neighbourhoods intended to entice higher-order consumption in retail and other consumer services (for a more detailed discussion of Montréal's evolving urban landscape see for instance: Germain and Rose, 2000; Ley, 1996; Rose, 2004).

The 'villages within a city' initiatives promoted by the state and other, more recent, private redevelopment efforts have been successful in promoting and sustaining a new social profile of the inner city (Germain and Rose, 2000). Here again, evidence suggests that along with the emergence of Montréal's post-industrial workforce (Table 4.3), that is, a rise of advanced tertiary and quaternary jobs, comes a strong "residential presence of 'knowledgeable workers' in the surrounding residential areas" – a process which has consistently redefined and 'upgraded' the social, cultural and economic character of key urban neighbourhoods (Germain and Rose, 2000, 198). The changing religious values described above, for instance, largely accompanied the live-work-play lifestyles of the incoming new middle class. As Ley and Martin (1993, 224) show, patterns of neighbourhood upgrading in Montréal have distinct relationships with religious affiliations: "In Montréal ... Catholic adherence is a leading predictor of unbelief in the city", they argue. Indeed, a "robust" inverse relationship ($r=-0.65$) exists between religious belief and the predominantly Catholic populations of the inner city (Table 4.4) (Ley and Martin, 1993). Accelerated by the decentralization of families and churches to the suburbs, Montréal's once religious urban core shows signs of thinning out.

On the ground these socio-cultural changes have materialized in diverse and upscale housing markets (for renters and owners) catering to emerging tastes for modern urban living. Alongside the re-colonization of working class housing and the redevelopment of brownfield sites for new-build condominium towers (Rose, 2010), are post-industrial loft spaces. Preceding Toronto, by the early 1980s, these new housing forms successfully converted formerly devalorized and redundant warehousing sites connected to a past in the garment and light manufacturing industries, places "scattered throughout the former worker's parish of the inner city" (Podmore, 1998, 284), adding to the reinvestment and embourgeoisement of the

area. By the 1990s, loft living was firmly established in other districts of Vieux-Montréal, leading, in years to come, to an expressive and speculative market for the city's emerging population of young 'knowledge' and 'creative' workers (Germain and Rose, 2000; Podmore, 1998).

It would seem then that this trajectory of religious and urban change would lend itself handily to an eventual re-valorization of many other types of redundant properties in the city centre as new forms of housing. To be sure, in some ways they have. The reuse of post-institutional spaces like closed schools, for instance, has added affordable housing to some needy neighbourhoods.² Likewise a number of redundant urban worship spaces abandoned and sold in the wake of the Quiet Revolution and the contemporary restructuring of the central city have been bought by private developers for conversion into high-end condominiums and lofts. Converted convents like the mother house of Les Soeurs de Marie-Réparatrice, now the 34-unit *Couvent Outremont*, or the residential redevelopment of surplus Catholic cathedrals like Saint Paul-de-la-Croix, recently re-branded as *Piazza de la Crocé*, stand as prime examples of the possibilities for private and exclusive adaptive reuse (Martin, 2008, 5; Noppen, 2006).

While these conversions certainly stand out, it is more important to highlight here that such options are increasingly viewed as but one avenue of approach. Indeed, in the last several decades as numerous religious properties have been demolished to make way for more profitable uses on central urban land (see for instance the fate of the Saint-Isidore convent, in Martin, 2004) or remade for private users, a considerable number of state, civil, religious and non-governmental groups have rallied to control and re-direct their conservation through a diversity of public re-uses.

It is instructive to note that part of this motivation comes from the distinct historical position of Catholicism in Québec. Regardless of the widespread rejection of the Roman Catholic Church as a dominant force in Québec's social and political

²Catholic retrenchment in school management and the suburbanization of young families between the 1960s and 1990s led many inner city schools to close. Many of these surplus facilities were purchased by the municipality for new uses like housing. As Tania Martin (2008, 30) reports, in Montréal "half of [the] superfluous school buildings ... were converted into housing by the City of Montréal in concert with the Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ) and the Corporation d'hébergement du Québec (CHQ), being the primary buyer."

affairs, the role of churches, chapels and convents as a form of material history and as monuments in the urban fabric remain as key elements in achieving “pride of place” in countless local neighbourhoods and as sites which embody remarkably potent ethnic and national identities. The popular Franco-Canadian axiom: “Nos églises sont nos châteaux/ Our churches are our castles”, a relatively recent creation, is a telling discourse of a larger civic wish to redefine, retain, and promote redundant churches as ‘national’ *public* spaces (Morisset, 2006, 293). This contrasts with other provinces, like Ontario, “in a huge way”, as one interviewee dealing with Ontario’s heritage policy put it. “We have a society in Ontario that defines itself differently” he said, “it doesn’t define itself by... religion or of not being religious. Québec still defines itself with reference to Catholicism, whether that means being Catholic or not being Catholic... [In Ontario] we have such a wider definition. So that influences priorities and this is definitely visible” (Interview, *Derek*, 2009). Indeed, unlike Ontario, the conversion of churches for non-public uses, for instance, has drawn considerable scorn from local communities and heritage advocates. According to Luc Noppen, professor of Urban Heritage at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQUAM),

[lofts], in particular, are considered the worst to be done to a church because it is considered a huge privatisation of the public space. People are constantly fighting this... they say “we lost our church for luxury condos!”, and this is very bad [from the point of view] of most Québeckers since they believe that churches should remain as public space and should be devoted to a community use (Interview, 2009).

This popular sentiment is also backed, in part, by a list of specialty groups involved both in promoting the unique heritage value of local churches and producing policy programs specifically targeted to protecting redundant worship spaces often through new public uses. In regard to the first of these, a wealth of groups located in Montréal and others working on behalf of the province have been instrumental in forging a public presence and engagement concerning the fate of religious heritage. For instance, citizen groups and local heritage advocates, often in concert with Heritage Montréal, the city’s main heritage advocacy organization, have increasingly held public conferences and symposia as research and

promotional venues for raising local awareness of endangered religious properties (Martin, 2004). Other non-state actors, like Le Mission Patrimoine Religieux, a consortium of religious communities, is instrumental in supporting the long-term sustainability of religious heritage through endowments and funding that target the city's numerous redundant Catholic convents (Martin, 2004).

Since the 1990s, several state-level actors have also successfully raised religious heritage in the public eye and re-drawn the heritage policy landscape. Provincial and regional groups like La Fondation du Patrimoine Religieux de Québec and Le Comité de concertation sur le patrimoine religieux du Québec have, according to Tania Martin (2004, 49), held popular conferences in Montréal to “examine the problem of religious heritage”, and more importantly, “implemented policies, written guidelines, classified the heritage value of houses of worship, and established aid programs promoting the preservation of religious heritage”. In fact, since the mid-1990s, the Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine du Québec (MCCCFQ), the provincial agency charged with heritage policy delivery, has developed several financial programs specific to places of worship. In an earlier program, the MCCCFQ distributed funding to cover a number of parishes' building maintenance costs, and helped launch a province-wide inventory, not unlike the inventory recently developed by the Ontario Heritage Trust (Chapter 3), designed as a comprehensive resource to help local and regional governments make informed decisions about heritage policies, give communities a source of information on the history and condition of local spaces of worship, and, interface with the academic community. More recently, the MCCCFQ has designed a specific program called ‘La Programme de soutien au recyclage des édifices religieux patrimoniaux’ (Support Program for Recycling Religious Heritage), which provides funding to public groups for the conversion of redundant places of worship (Martin, 2008).

The results of these active groups are remarkably diverse. Montréal's redundant church market – an expanding real estate terrain and persistent ‘heritage problem’ – now involves a variety of re-use options, many of which are fought over to remain as public or quasi-public spaces. For instance, mixed-use options, those incorporating both public and private functions, are growing in popularity since they retain a community use while accessing funds generated by private leases.

Sainte-Brigide de Kildare Church (circa 1880) is one such example. In this case, the church was recently sold and is now a joint project headed by local academics, architects and a private development firm. With some state funding, the current plans seek to divide the nave space for 'lower cost' housing, community services, retail space and a new smaller worship space for the diminished but still existing congregation (Heritage Montréal, 2012).

More popular still are redundant properties retained for comprehensive community use. Considerable public funds, achieved often through mixed portfolios of provincial and municipal support, have, in this case, given rise to numerous examples throughout the city: the 2002 conversion of the Saint-Césaire convent into a music and art therapy centre (Martin, 2004; Simard, 2002); the multi-use St. James United Church catering to an active congregation, the Montréal City Mission which runs programs for immigrants and refugees, and a local concert space; the former Erskine and American Church now the Bourgie Concert Hall and Museum; and, the 2003 conversion of the chapel at Montréal's College Jean-de-Brébeuf into a theology library and multi-use community space (Michaud, 2006).

Lastly, efforts to retain the public functions of redundant worship spaces have also resulted in projects dedicated to the production of affordable housing. That is, Montréal's numerous redundant convents, more than its churches, represent viable options for non-market housing catering to the city's lower income communities (Beaulieu, 1980). For example, the recent listing of the Carmelites Convent, a one hundred and fifteen year old cloister with a popular monastic garden, in the private real estate market is currently being eyed by the municipality, with the help of the province, as a potential site for affordable apartments and an official public garden. Importantly, however, the recent interest by the City came from pressure by citizen groups, heritage advocates, and the media in response to bids by a local developer to build lofts spaces in the heritage property. Nevertheless, the state has shown signs of openness in the affordable housing issue and continues to review these and other options as public-recycling of religious spaces (see for instance Drouin, 2005; Martin, 2008).³

³The adaptive reuse of several historic convents in Québec City, like the Couvent Soeurs du Bon-Pasteur (a building converted into 7 cooperative style housing units), stand as exemplars for future re-use projects in other cities.

9.1.2 London, U.K.: Faith and Property in Conversion

As a premier global city, London is a place of constant change. For many decades it has evolved to become a dominant space of culture, economy and politics not just throughout the United Kingdom but internationally too. Since the late 1970s, however, alongside this dynamism is a marked decline in traditional forms of religious worship. The main religious group, the Anglicans, and its managing institution, the Church of England (CofE), have diminished over the years in membership and affiliate numbers, and have become, as some argue, casualties of the modern secular state (Brown, 2009; Bruce, 2002a, 2001).

As the largest land owner in the country, the CofE has had to contend with dramatic changes in the demand for religious services, skyrocketing costs associated with property maintenance and development, and the emergence of complex heritage policies designed to protect vast historic landscapes, many of which are sited in key urban locations (Hamnett, 1987). Crispin Truman (2006, 210), Chief Executive of the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT), notes that “with more than 16,000 Anglican parishes, and over 11,000 of which are highly important architecturally and listed as Grade 1 or 2 by the State ... we face a major challenge to secure their future”. The fate of many English worship spaces, especially the growing numbers of those deemed surplus in London, often sit in a precarious position between sites of significant historic value and represent obstacles to continued urban growth. For this reason the re-use of redundant urban churches in London, perhaps more than anywhere else, is remarkably complex and diverse. In recent years, various communities concerned with the fate of these properties have explored unique ways to ensure their survival and wider uses by local communities who depend upon them.

As with the other cases described above, it is worth briefly describing the contexts of religious and urban change that have shaped London’s stock of surplus worship spaces. In regards to the former, religion in England and London has changed profoundly in the post-war period. On this point, numerous scholars of religion (see for instance: Brierley 2000; Bruce 2002a; Davie 1994; Jenkins 2007) have compiled and analyzed key statistics which consistently show a remarkable change in Britons’ religious values: sharply declining participation and membership in organized Christian (especially Anglican) worship, along with growth in

a diversity of ‘other’ immigrant churches. Church membership statistics for the United Kingdom, for instance, show that while 27% of the population were members of a church in 1900, that number consistently dropped over the century, from 21% in 1940, to 10% in 2000 (Brierley, 1999). For England alone, Bruce (2001, 197) shows that while membership stood at 26% in 1900, by 1940 and 2000 the declining numbers consistently mirrored the UK statistic. Against these numbers, however, some other recent statistics, including those produced from the European Social Survey (ESS) and independent survey analyses like the Tearfund Report (Ashworth and Farthing, 2007), show a potential for Christian resilience in Britain. For instance, some estimates show that Britain is still a predominantly Christian country: about 7 in 10 consider themselves to be ‘Christian’, while more than 2 in 3 (67%) of people in Britain today believe in God while 1 in 4 (26%) believe in a personal God (Ashworth and Farthing, 2007).

Of course, the more effective and useful measure, especially in regards to this thesis, is attendance rates that gauge levels of participation in and general demands for religious services and worship spaces. Again, statistics are showing general declines in ‘belonging’ throughout the UK, with England leading the way. About a third of UK adults (33% or 16 million people) are categorized as ‘de-churched’ (i.e. former churchgoers who may return) and a further third (about 16.2 million people) are considered non-churched (i.e. have never been to church) (Ashworth and Farthing, 2007). In England, yearly attendance rates show participation declines of several of the country’s mainline groups like the Anglicans, Roman Catholics and the Methodists (Table 9.1).

While these numbers highlight that a large number of UK adults are ‘secular’ and have no connection with a church some observers caution that this apparent ‘secularization’ of UK and England overshadows some transitions in cities. For instance, Ashworth and Farthing (2007) point to London’s complex religious mosaic – a multi-cultural city with more people of other faiths (20%) than anywhere else in the UK. “Unique amongst the English regions”, they argue, “London is not the heartless capital it is sometimes portrayed as being. It has the highest proportion of regular churchgoers (22%) of any English province, and second only to Northern Ireland, UK-wide” (Ashworth and Farthing, 2007, 11).

Here again the picture of religious change, long dominated by the seculariza-

Table 9.1: Yearly Church Attendance in England 1980-2005: Select Religious Groups (source: Brierley 2006)

Denomination	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Anglican	1,370,400	1,264,600	1,259,800	1,126,700	963,300	870,600
Baptist	286,900	274,000	271,600	275,800	270,900	254,800
Roman Catholic	2,064,000	1,851,500	1,571,300	1,360,500	1,090,400	893,100
Methodist	606,400	560,500	506,400	433,100	372,600	289,400
Pentecostal	221,000	225,800	235,900	228,600	233,300	287,600

tion thesis, is far from complete as postsecular London is a city in which religious and secular values consistently collide. But the landscape of traditional worship has still shifted and has left a growing number of mainline churches in search of a new future, especially as pressures from development rise in response to the demands of the global city. In the past decade, for instance, more than 260 CofE churches have been removed from regular worship schedules (45 in London) (Church of England, 2011; Cooper, 2004). Full closures, however, are also evident in recent years: in 2008, 29 churches closed (6 in London) and in 2009 19 church closed (4 in London) while recent forecasts for all denominations' houses of worship show a predicted decline from 48,500 to 39,200 by 2030 across the country (Church of England, 2011; Miller and Wynne-Jones, 2008).

Religion, of course, is not the only thing different about post-war London. Dramatic transformations in land-use along with changing social, cultural and economic values over the last several decades has made this a unique world city, rivalled by few as a distinct command-and-control centre in an expanding global-urban network. Like most major cities of the West, by the mid-1960s London began shedding its industrial and manufacturing economies for the emerging finance, insurance and real estate (F.I.R.E) sectors along with other 'creative' knowledge work. As Chris Hamnett (2003a, 2404) explains it, "manufacturing industry and employment have been reduced to a vestigial remnant of their former importance" as jobs in finance and business services, and cultural industries, for instance, represent the lion's share of employment growth in the last 40 or so years. The socio-economic profile of inner city London, the space-economy of the city's traditional industrial activity, reflects this pronounced shift from manufacturing to advanced service industries (Hamnett, 2003a; Hutton, 2008) (Table 9.2, Table 9.3). Moreover, as Thomas Hutton (2008, 104) highlights, the employment profile at the upper end of the occupational hierarchy (i.e. managers and senior officials, professionals, and technical workers), represents a growing group and "comprises much of the new middle class".

Besides being linked to troubling trends of polarization and social inequality, a theme that Hamnett (2003b) explores in his book *The Unequal City: London in the Global Area*, this distinct 'professionalization' of London's inner city populations has led to a diverse economy of new industries and economic clusters that has also

Table 9.2: Employment by Industry, for Inner London and Greater London and Great Britain, 2008 (Hutton 2008, 104)

	Inner London (employee jobs)	Inner London (%)	London (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total Employee Jobs	2,381,400	-	-	-
<i>Full-Time</i>	1,826,000	76.7	74.0	67.9
<i>Part-Time</i>	555,400	23.3	26.0	32.1
Employee Jobs By Industry				
Manufacturing	100,300	4.2	5.0	11.1
Construction	44,000	1.8	3.0	4.6
Services	2,231,200	93.7	91.7	82.9
<i>Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants</i>	452,400	19.0	21.7	24.1
<i>Transport and Communications</i>	151,700	6.4	7.7	6.0
<i>Finance, IT, other business activities</i>	940,900	39.5	32.7	20.7
<i>Public admin, Education, and Health</i>	508,000	21.3	23.0	26.9
<i>Other Service</i>	178,200	7.5	6.6	5.2
Tourism-Related	218,300	9.2	8.4	8.1

Table 9.3: Change in London's Jobs by Sector, 1971-2001 (Hutton 2008, 81)

	1971 (%)	1981 (%)	1991 (%)	2001 (%)
Manufacturing	22.5	16.2	9.3	6.6
Other Production (including construction)	7.6	7.0	6.3	5.1
Distribution and Hotels	19.7	20.7	20.5	21.0
Transport and Communications	10.9	10.1	8.6	8.0
Financial and Business Services	15.9	19.1	27.2	33.1
Non-Market and Personal Services	23.1	26.6	27.8	26.2
<i>UK Shares</i>				
Manufacturing	30.5	23.6	17.4	13.7
Other Production (including construction)	12.9	12.0	10.7	8.6
Distribution and Hotels	19.4	21.4	22.5	23.2
Transport and Communications	6.9	6.4	5.9	6.2
Financial and Business Services	9.0	11.3	15.6	19.3
Non-Market and Personal Services	20.3	24.4	27.1	28.5

imposed novel pressures for globally-inspired urban development projects and new consumption patterns and preferences. On this point, many urban scholars, including Ruth Glass, the so-called pioneer of gentrification research (Chapter 4), have explored the connections between the socio-economic changes in London, the new morphologies of local neighbourhoods, and the character and nature of inner urban housing (see for instance: Butler and Robson 2001; Davidson and Wylie 2012; Hamnett 2003b; Lees 2006). Earlier research, for instance, shows inner urban neighbourhoods like Islington, Camden, Hackney, Lambeth, and Hammersmith as key incipient terrains of London's gentrification, places that since the early 1960s have seen traditional forms of upgrading through middle-class renovations of older Georgian, Victorian, and the less aged, Edwardian, working class homes (Hamnett and Williams, 1980).

By the late 1970s loft living had arrived in London, mimicking, as this global story goes, New York's SoHo style. Specifically, loft conversions got their start along portions of London's de-industrialized riverside. London's Docklands, for instance, was quickly converted from warehousing districts to sites for up-and-coming "prestige apartments" (Hamnett and Whitelegg, 2007, 110). More recently, neighbourhoods like Brixton, Wandsworth, Hoxton/Shoreditch, and Clerkenwell, have been swept up in new rounds of reinvestment, residential redevelopment and lower-income displacement. In varying degrees, conventional patterns of gentrification mix with 'new build' condominium towers (Davidson and Lees, 2010), and brownfield re-developments (i.e. post-industrial/post-institutional re-uses).

In Clerkenwell, Hamnett and Whitelegg (2007) highlight the emergence of a post-industrial loft market in the late 1990s, a process that has taken a much different pathway than those in other London neighbourhoods or in New York's de-industrialized districts. In this neighbourhood, the development of loft spaces did not evolve from the artist community, those live-work lofts, but rather unfolded from the transformation of the secondary office market, a direct result of London's growing business sectors. The subsequent decline of demand for office-space in the early 1990s, brought on by recession, pushed investors in search for new investment options. Following the Docklands' success and heeding forecasts for growth in London's financial and creative services sector, a clear indicator of a coming expansion of the professional new middle class and a re-valorization of

unique housing markets, developers applied a ‘residential solution’, in the form of lofts, to Clerkenwell’s transition (Hamnett and Whitelegg, 2007). This distinct pathway shows again the variability in the housing market and the different mechanisms through which loft conversions may operate. Rather than being solely tied to the ‘artistic mode of production’ (Zukin, 1982b), contemporary lofts represent spaces where new forms of cultural and economic re-valorization readily occur.

Unlike the large-scale post-industrial loft development in Clerkenwell, London’s church loft market represents a real estate niche that has developed in response to the declines in religious participation and the subsequent rationalization of religious properties in the post-war period. In fact, many conversions of chapels and churches in the City for private housing were completed in the 1980s and early 1990s, a period of considerable rationalization by the CofE and other religious institutions - a period described by some as ‘managed decline’ (Interview, *Diane*, 2009). Between 1985 and 1995, for instance, 14 CofE worship spaces in London were converted for housing while an additional five properties were destroyed for new build residential spaces (Church of England, 2011). The St. James the Great Church in Bethnal Green and the All Saints Church in Upper Holloway, for instance, represent two examples of residential conversions in this period (Figure 9.2).

It is important to note, however, that up to the mid 1980s church conversions were largely ‘one off’ projects designed more as ‘flats’ than the lofts detailed throughout this thesis. At that time housing developers sought to capitalize on the functional aspects (i.e. maximizing the compartmentalization of apartment-style suites) of redundant properties released piecemeal from faith groups. A coherent approach to church loft production, one that follows the pronounced loft-style refined in other post-industrial spaces, was not readily evident until faith groups began to sell an increasing number of worship spaces to meet consistent forecasts of participation and membership decline. By the mid 1990s to the present, church conversions are considered as more exclusive housing, especially as faith groups (along with public institutions) focus on other re-use options (more on this below) for the growing number of surplus properties and as local developers create more luxury spaces from a limited number of inner urban churches being offered in the private market. This is not to say that loft conversions are no longer part of Lon-



A: St. James the Great Flats, converted in 1987



B: The All Saints Flats in Upper Holloway, converted in 1995

Figure 9.2: Early Church Lofts in London: Converted Churches as Flats in London (Church Loft Developments, 1985-1995) (source: author's photo, 2009)

don's real estate environment. Recent developments like the Notting Hill Lofts in London's elite Notting Hill neighbourhood and the Honour Oak Lofts in East Dulwich, for instance, point to an ongoing role of redundant urban churches in the upscale housing market (Figure 9.3). Both projects, developed by London's premier church loft contractor, The Manhattan Loft Corporation, make extensive use of the historic value of the properties and reflect closely the conversion of highly symbolic heritage and religious iconographies discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

Notwithstanding these and other examples of private conversions, there is a tradition and interest in conserving religious worship spaces in England and London for non-private uses, many of which retain some form of religious activity. The most recent redundancy report by the CofE, for instance, shows a wide range of re-uses for London's growing surplus churches from the 1970s to the present (Church of England, 2011).⁴ In fact, while over a tenth (36) of these buildings are

⁴The Church of England (2011) report shows the following reuses for London's redundant places of worship (total of 184 properties or portions of properties): Parochial/Ecclesiastical or New Places of Worship (also involves reuse by other religious groups) = 79; Residential = 24; Demolished for 'other uses' = 24; Community (i.e. local community use; museums; monument; sports facilities; education; music; arts and crafts) = 32; Housing Associations = 12; Office/Shopping = 9; Storage



A: The Notting Hill Lofts, Notting Hill, pre-construction, 2009



B: The Honour Oak Lofts, East Dulwich, under construction, 2009

Figure 9.3: Recent Church Lofts in London (source: author's photo, 2009)

now used for housing, in one form or another, well over a third (79) are re-used by religious groups (mostly Christian congregations), while another handful (32) have been converted to a diverse range of community spaces. Several examples of community oriented re-uses are noteworthy: In 2002, the St. Matthias Church, the oldest building in the Docklands, was converted to a multi-use community facility as conference and charity space; in 2003, the St. Ethelburga in Bishopsgate, being partially destroyed during a 1993 IRA bombing, was reconstructed to house both an existing Anglican congregation and the Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, an organization and conference space working for inter-faith and community peace.

These and other examples point to ongoing efforts by public institutions, charity organizations and faith groups to “integrate the assessment of historical, architectural and archeological significance [of worship spaces] with actual planning and management” (Cherry, 2006, 402). According to one interviewee in the heritage sector, this approach has evolved through fostering partnerships with multiple stakeholders with the specific intent to find appropriate community uses:

=2; Light Industrial = 2.

What has changed over the years is that we [English Heritage and the heritage community] are focused on making more use of the buildings for the community so they are not just places of worship but that they are places of worship, mission, *and*, that they are open to the community... all of that is really about trying to stop the supply of redundant places of worship... the idea is to have them open everyday, for prayer, for toddlers, as a shop... on the one hand we must support all of that so that the building is in use everyday, there are more people who can spot problems with the buildings, there is a broader base of support for the building, it is not just the people who turn up on Sunday that are interested in making this building go, it's much wider than that. (Interview, *Martin*, 2009)

To be sure, there are many actors involved in caring for and promoting the sensitive re-use of England's historic worship spaces. The most important of these are: English Heritage (EH), the government's regulatory body for heritage; the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT), originally called the Redundant Churches Fund, a charity jointly funded by the Church Commissioners and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), whose duty is to care for Anglican churches of significant 'merit' that are no longer used for regular worship; the aforementioned Church of England, which, along with being the largest owner of historic properties in the nation, manages the Specialist Church Buildings Division and the Closed Churches Division, both providing support and management to dioceses in caring for living and redundant properties; and, several community sector groups like the Historic Churches Conservation Trust (HTCT), the Historic Chapels Trust (HCT), and the Friends of the Friendless Church (FFC), all of which contribute funds and stewardship to local historic churches (Truman, 2006, 213).

Although the full gamut of heritage policies and programs implemented by this diverse group will not be reproduced here (see for instance: Cherry 2006; Cooper 2004; Truman 2006), it is worth highlighting a few significant conservation tools that have proved successful in keeping many historic churches in the hands of religious and community groups.

The first significant conservation tool is the recent Heritage Protection Reform,

a unified heritage consent system redesigned by consultation between the government and local planning authorities (The Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2007). A key element of the Reform program is the Heritage Partnership Agreements in which multiple stakeholders (i.e. property owners, English Heritage (EH), local governments, and community groups) develop consensus on the significance of historic sites, assess their vulnerability or fragility, and identify categories of agreed change that can take place (Cherry, 2006, 404). This proactive program provides higher quality strategic management; that is, long term care and control of sites that contain different types of assets (e.g. heritage districts) or property portfolios made up of numerous buildings of a similar type (i.e. worship spaces owned by large faith groups) (Cherry, 2006, 404). One result of this reform system is that the significance and management of redundant worship spaces are decentralized, capturing a diversity of views and values instead of those at the state level alone. In this case, the values shared by stakeholders of worship spaces are taken into account and public funding is encouraged, through groups like the Heritage Lottery Fund, for projects that cater to wider community use. As Martin Cherry (2006, 405) notes, “while the expert view [those of heritage planners and state regulators] remains important, it no longer enjoys a monopoly of power” - a prospect that can motivate local communities, religious or not, to remain invested in the fate of their aging religious properties.

Second, recent programs designed and managed by EH, most notably the ‘Inspired! Campaign’ and the ‘Taking Stock Program’, have broadened the capacity for worship spaces to remain either in the hands of religious groups, a prospect described as “the best possible outcome for any historic worship space” (Interview, *Martin*, 2009), or re-used by the community at large. Launched in 2006, the ‘Inspired! Campaign’ lobbied the British Government for more support for historic places of worship and the shrinking numbers of religious, community- and voluntary-groups who manage and maintain these properties. Working alongside faith groups, EH successfully received budget increases (of over £1.5m per year) to create both the ‘Support-Officers Program’ which provides expert advice (i.e. financial, engineering, maintenance and repair) for congregations to care for their properties long-term and new funding grants (generated from EH and the Heritage Lottery Fund) for maintenance projects on deteriorating worship spaces (Interview,

Martin, 2009). As mentioned in previous chapters, the maintenance requirements especially for older religious properties often cripple many congregations' sustainability. Providing even nominal funds or expert advice on maintenance and repair can thus go some distance in supporting the viability of these groups long term and keep historic worship spaces in the public realm.

In a different direction, EH's 'Taking Stock Program' is a series of comprehensive inventory surveys of Roman Catholic parishes in key cities like London. This project was started in response to recent Pastoral Reviews that have resulted in local dioceses rationalizing properties with little regard for heritage value. As a proactive program, 'Taking Stock' evaluates and lists local worship spaces according to their potential for protection. "What the [Roman Catholic] church gets is prior warning of what might be listed because their horror is deciding to close a church not listed with the intention of demolishing and selling the site, then we come in at the last minute and 'spot-list' it and that's their property deal gone bust. So this way they get an early indication of what is listable and what isn't", explains *Martin*, a Places of Faith Advisor with EH.

Third, the rise of redundant worship spaces for community re-use is also championed by the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT), the national charity that preserves and protects historic churches at risk. While caring for over 340 buildings across the country (many of which are of significant national historic value), the CCT is also a leading organization in forging innovative community use and local management of surplus worship spaces. In particular, the implementation of their 'Regeneration Task Forces', local and regional teams developed from partnerships with community champions, local business, Friends groups, and entrepreneurs, have resulted in numerous 'community hubs' which "bring new lives and futures to key buildings that otherwise would be without any real future" (Interview, *Mark*, 2009). Examples like the joint CCT-Art Shape (an arts charity) project in St. Nicholas Church in Gloucester that will re-use the church as an 'arts access resource centre' helps "ensure that churches find a new relevance in the minds of local people, as they begin to contribute to wider aims of regeneration and community revival" (Truman, 2006, 220). In London, recent efforts have even resulted in reviving St. Luke's Church (Kentish Town) for regular worship and community events after 20 years of redundancy (Amara, 2012). Projects like these dovetail

with campaigns by faith groups hoping to rejuvenate and promote the public benefits of church programs and their buildings. The CofE's 'Building Faith in Our Future' campaign is just one example of recent public relations efforts by faith groups that bring to focus wider public involvement and better public funding for local surplus worship spaces (Cherry, 2006; The Church of England, 2004).

Fourth, and last, historic worship spaces in England and London are well served by the non-profit or voluntary sector. Indeed, a rather unique and productive list of charity groups like the Historic Churches Trust (HCT) and the Friends of the Friendless Church (FFC), among others, offer additional support specifically targeting the maintenance and re-use of local worship spaces, those that are often less 'significant' and/or were of non-Anglican origins. For instance, the HCT, a national charity funded by various public sources, owns and operates chapels like London's St. George's German Lutheran Church and The Dissenters' Chapel (in Bethnal Green), chiefly as community spaces and local public resources. In such cases, the HCT covers large capital costs (i.e. maintenance, repair, upgrades) while local community volunteers manage and organize the day-to-day activities, such things as concerts, exhibits, talks, lectures and the occasional worship services (Interview, *Diane*, 2009). Preservation through community use is, as director *Diane* explains, the HCT's main objective:

We pioneered the trend toward community activities back in the 1990s, because we said 'look we are not going to go in for conversions, we are going to regenerate our buildings by adding up sympathetic new secular uses and not attempting missions and worship as the central focus'... there was great enthusiasm to this as a new way forward as it is not as interventionist as most conversion schemes, like flats and lofts, can be.

Similar philosophies pervade the other charitable organizations. Together, this sector now owns and operates hundreds of redundant worship spaces for a widening range of community uses, a practice that *George*, director of the FFC, says has "saved so many important churches from the horrible fate of being flogged off as flats, something that many see simply as a betrayal".

9.2 Thinking Forward: Opportunities in Toronto's Church Loft Market

The examples of Montréal and London point to a range of possible uses for the growing numbers of redundant worship spaces in other cities. While many of the re-use projects highlighted above may have their own unique backgrounds influenced by local processes of religious change, heritage policy and the transforming urban landscape, they nevertheless offer a glimpse of how different systems of ownership supported by multiple stakeholders can create a public future for redundant worship spaces.

In the case of Montréal and the Province du Québec, the role and significance of religious heritage still plays a meaningful part in building local and national identity. A centralized system of support, both culturally and economically, is combined with growing involvement at the local levels to produce opportunities for redundant worship spaces outside of purely private use. Likewise, in London, where religious spaces may not reflect a similar nationalist tone, they nevertheless represent key sites of history and identity at the same time as they operate as crucial spaces in sustaining the character and quality of the urban environment. Like Québec, England has increasingly raised a sense of public value for redundant churches and chapels even as participation and membership in mainline institutions continues to ebb and flow.

This is not to deny nor demonize, but rather *problematize*, the fact that a growing number of surplus religious properties fall into the hands of loft developers. Like Toronto, Montréal and London continue to experience the social and economic realities of the postsecular and post-industrial period, where, among other things, inner urban areas are being revalued and reinvested by surging populations of the new middle class. Many post-institutional properties, like their post-industrial counterparts before them, are now commonly considered as 'fair game' in a globalizing menu of creative and unique housing markets. But, remarkably, these cities have carved new pathways for many redundant churches by re-prioritizing such places as sites of perpetual public value where diverse communities may benefit. As these examples show, while *sensitive* church loft conversions have a role to play in retaining some of our redundant worship spaces, the loft liv-

ing practice is not the only way forward.

Returning to the Toronto case, if we agree that redundant worship spaces have something to offer besides a purely materialist presence, then how might closed churches be transformed largely from a phenomenon of private re-valorization to one of wider public reinvestment? What other opportunities exist for these significant urban structures beyond their re-creation and promotion as exclusive terrains of gentrification? While these broad questions represent other avenues for future research, it is worth concluding this thesis with some general remarks.

First, while we need to acknowledge that there is no single ‘silver bullet’ solution to the present and future challenges of historic urban worship spaces, this does not mean that there are no real solutions available. In fact, as was made clear, a common theme that emerged from interviews with heritage groups and charity organizations was the need to engage various local communities in decision-making processes. “Many of our successes”, explained *Stanley*, a regeneration manager with the CCT, “come from local, community-based solutions”. For the CCT, EH and the other charity groups, a key starting point is recognizing two important facts: that “people value church buildings” and that “sustainable healthy communities need places to meet” (Truman, 2006, 219; Interview, *Mark*, 2009). These points affirm that there remains a significant public value to worship spaces in their use as living churches or as architectural heritage. The CofE’s Opinion Research Bureau, for instance, highlights the wider significance of their buildings by local communities as having persistent residual value: three-quarters (75%) of respondents in one poll agreed churches should also be used for activities other than worship and two-thirds (68%) said they should be social meeting places (The Church of England, 2003). In terms of redundant churches, conservation practices can thus focus on fostering extended uses (i.e. expanding networks of people involved in supporting a building; promoting grants for specific activities; encouraging direct sources of income) and mixed uses (especially those that retain some sanctuary space) that incorporate community voices in management and planning (Truman, 2006, 218). “We must get the community going, if they are involved and if they get creative about the potential uses then these projects tend to last and are successful for everyone”, argued *Mark*, a director with the CCT.

The recent case of Toronto’s Deer Park United Church (see Chapters 2 and 5)

highlights the resistance raised when various communities are neither comprehensively consulted nor involved in wider decision-making practices. Certainly while reaching consensus remains a complex challenge considering all of the stakeholders involved, assessing and engaging local needs can go a long way to making re-uses, of all kinds, not only more acceptable but also more successful since the local community can take an active or leading role in the management and implementation of such projects.

Second, while the 'local' remains a key scale of approach, the future of redundant worship spaces, especially those considered of distinct value for local communities, is inherently connected with levels of interest and involvement of the state, at multiple levels. Perhaps most important here are the funding roles of the provinces and municipalities that work to support existing or new faith groups, or local secular communities. In England and Québec, the value of historic worship spaces and the funding available are routinely viewed as distinct from other forms of heritage, a practice that differentiates between the unique heritage and community roles that these buildings play. Incorporating, in the case of England, federal and county funding in grant schemes managed by EH have reduced redundancies by leaving many buildings in the hands of faith groups. Similarly, in Québec multiple funding bodies have 'saved' worship spaces for vital community functions. Ontario and the rest of Canada, however, are far behind. As *Sidney*, a conservation manager with the Ontario Heritage Trust, explained

We (Canada) are sort of the Wild West when it comes to heritage management. [Besides Québec] Canada is dead last in the G8 when it comes to investment, commitment, regulatory incentives...We are pretty much a developing country when it comes to cultural heritage. Even in Scotland, if you are in a listed building and you're planning conversion work you get up to 40% guaranteed funding from the state, you can assume it. Here that hasn't happened in eons, and even when it has happened it's very slim amounts of money. Québec gives out more money in an average year than Ontario's given out in the history of the province in terms of heritage, so we have a sliver of their funds in terms of the public. I deal with it all the time with property owners

who are just beside themselves asking “why doesn’t the province give more money?”

While this remains a complex political-economic issue, it is clear that local communities – on the front lines, where the cold calculus of capital flows collide with the histories of culture, spirituality, and the rhythms of neighbourhood congregational life – must be proactive in protecting spaces that are both *sacred* and *public*. In order for local communities to assert more control over the fate of urban public space and heritage landscapes funding levels for historic properties must be raised. Continued funding can promote, as mentioned above, general awareness of the issues at hand. The prioritization of information gathering and dissemination through the creation of detailed inventory programs lets invested communities keep stock of built heritage while enabling secular and faith-based groups information sharing on such things as historical and economic values, and re-use options. Moreover, these systems also offer new avenues for building dialogue between religious and secular groups. Indeed, while the recent OHT inventory and the Provincial Toolkit have bridged some of this information gap, continual efforts and funding are necessary to bring transparency and innovation to policy structures and programs that affect all stakeholders. Faith and community groups need to know where they stand in relation to heritage policy and need a voice in the decision making process.

Clearly there leaves much to be done concerning many of the issues brought forth in this thesis. Moving forward, future research is desperately needed to fill the gaps in our knowledge and protection of both religious and non-religious heritage spaces not just within our largest cities but also across other locations that are rapidly changing. For instance, similar research in contexts beyond the city are of growing importance. In fact a number of vulnerable worship spaces are located in many of the nation’s ‘exurban’ areas - peripheral zones outside of more dense urban or suburban development. In such areas, a continued loss of congregational membership and support often associated with rural to urban migration, combines with redevelopment pressures from an expanding group of mobile and secular middle and upper class retirees and country-side seekers (Reimer, 2005; Walker, 2000). These conditions often make redundant historic churches prime sites for demoli-

tion, or increasingly, a rural version of gentrification described above. Perhaps much more than their urban counterparts, our rural historic places of faith often represent the last real public spaces for many dwindling communities. It is crucial therefore that we commit new research efforts that properly identify, evaluate, and, if necessary, protect at-risk properties.

In the end, my intervention in this thesis has been one of exploration, interpretation and analysis, an attempt at illuminating not only how we re-conceptualize and re-use our built religious heritage, but also how these practices impact our diverse communities. It is clear that in the coming years, mainline religious groups will continue to feel the pressures of religious, heritage and urban change. This is inevitable in the postsecular and post-industrial city. How we manage this change means much for the future of our cities and their religious and cultural heritage. Church loft living signals a particular revalorization of our heritage in ways that we may come to lament.

Although the privatization of key heritage properties through loft conversions effectively funds the historic urban fabric, it does little to open up possibilities for wider public engagement. While these gentrified spaces offer their owners unique, interesting story-lines and represent investments and enactments of economic and cultural capital, what do they do for the rest of us?

“And what remains when disbelief has gone? asks Larkin (1955), “Grass, weedy pavement, brambles, buttress, sky... / A shape less recognisable each week, / A purpose more obscure?”

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Appendix A

Interview Schedules

Table A.1: Church Administrators and Property Managers

Pseudonym	Interview Date	Denomination	Role	Location
<i>Canada</i>				
Matthew	February 2009	United Church of Canada - General Council	Economic & Property Advisor	Toronto
Catherine	February 2009	United Church of Canada - General Council	Community Advisor	Toronto
Bernard	February 2009; May 2012	United Church of Canada - Toronto Conference	Pastor and Researcher	Toronto
Kevin	March 2009 & June 2012	Presbyterian Church of Canada	Property Manager	Toronto
Albert	March 2010	United Church of Canada - Toronto Conference	Executive Secretary	Toronto
Stephen	April 2012	Centennial Japanese United Church	Church Trustee and Special Task Group Chair	Toronto
Roger	April 2012	The Beach United Church	Church Trustee	Toronto
Douglas	June 2012	Roman Catholic Church of Canada - Archdiocese	Property Manager	Toronto
<i>England</i>				
Kyle	May 2009	Church of England - Closed Churches Division	Property Manager	London
Floyd	May 2009	Church of England - Closed Churches Division	Program Coordinator	London
Lance	May 2009	Church of England - Closed Churches Division	Program Coordinator	London
Patrick	June 2009	The Methodist Church	Property Manager	Manchester

Table A.2: Heritage and City Planners

Pseudonym	Interview Date	Role and Organization	Location
<i>Heritage Planners (Toronto)</i>			
Colin	February 2009	Heritage Planner, City of Toronto	Toronto
Mary	February 2009	Heritage Planner, City of Toronto	Toronto
Margaret	February 2009	Heritage Planner, City of Toronto	Toronto
<i>Heritage Policy Makers (Toronto)</i>			
Nicole	February 2009	Project Manager, Heritage Canada Foundation	Ottawa
Derek	March 2009	Senior Policy Analyst, Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture	Toronto
Sidney	March 2009	Project Manager, Ontario Heritage Trust	Toronto
Bill	March 2009	Board Member, Ontario Heritage Board	Toronto
Katrina	March 2009	Policy Analyst, Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture	Toronto
<i>Heritage Policy Makers (London)</i>			
Martin	May 2009	Places of Worship Policy Advisor, English Heritage	London
Mark	May 2009	Locum Director, The Churches Conservation Trust	London
Stanley	May 2009	Regeneration Taskforce Manager, The Churches Conservation Trust	London
Diane	May 2009	Director, Historic Chapels Trust	London
George	June 2009	Chairman, Friends For the Friendless Church	London

Table A.3: Church Loft Architects, Developers and Realtors

Pseudonym	Interview Date	Type of Firm	Role in Firm
<i>Architects</i>			
Renee	March 2009	Mid-Sized, Toronto based, Heritage Consultant/Heritage Architect	Heritage Architect
Daniel	March 2009	Large, International, Canadian-based, Architectural Consultant	Senior Architect
Maurice	April 2009	Small, Toronto based, Heritage Consultant/Heritage Architect	Principal Architect
Thomas	April 2009	Small, Toronto based, Heritage Consultant/Heritage Architect	Principal Architect
Lawrence	May 2009	Small, Toronto based, Architect and Urban Development	Junior Architect
Edgar	July 2009	Small, London based, Architect and Urban Development	Principal Architect
<i>Developers</i>			
Bob Mitchell	May 2009	Small, Toronto-based, Urban-Heritage Development, Loft/Condo focused	Owner/Architect
Richard	May 2009	Small, Ontario-based, Urban-Affordable Development	Owner
Bernard Watt	May 2009	Small, Toronto-based, Urban-Heritage Development, Loft/Condo focused	Owner/Architect
<i>Realtors</i>			
Trevor	February 2009	Large, International, Canada-based	Loft/Condo Specialist
Lee	March 2009	Small, Toronto-based	Loft/Condo Specialist

Table A.4: Church Loft Owners in the City of Toronto

Pseudonym	Age	Education	Occupation	Marital-Family Status	Religious Affiliation	Loft Ownership
Sean	56	Master's	Actor	Married - No Children	Atheist	2nd time
Marek	49	Master's	Photographer	Single - No Children	No affiliation	1st time
Sybil	53	Master's	Acting/Singing Instructor	Married - No Children	Christian Non-Practicing	2nd time
Carl	48	Master's	Journalist	Married - Three Children	No Affiliation	1st time
Jennifer	49	Master's	Marketing Consultant	Married - Two Children	No Affiliation	1st time
Benjamin	68	Ph.D	University Professor	Married - Two Children	Atheist	2nd time
Sandra	52	Bachelor's	Graphic Designer	Married - 2 Children	No Affiliation	1st time
Isabelle	64	Ph.D	University Professor	Married - Two Children	Atheist	2nd time
Scott	58	Master's	Church Pastor	Married - Two Children	Christian	2nd time
Eloise	55	Bachelor's	Teacher	Married - Two Children	Christian	2nd time
David	78	Bachelor's	(Retired) Engineering Consultant	Widower - 3 Children	Christian Non-Practicing	2nd time
Paul	62	Master's	Finance Consultant	Married - No Children	Christian Non-Practicing	2nd time
Robert	65	Master's	Insurance Broker	Married - 1 Child	Christian Non-Practicing	2nd time
Darryl	52	Ph.D	University Professor	Married - No Children	No Affiliation	3rd time (owns 2 church lofts)
Andrew	64	Master's	College Administrator	Married - No Children	No Affiliation	1st time

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Developers and Architects

- History of the firm: when and how did you get started in development?; what projects have you worked on? how many church conversion projects have you worked?
- Ownership: what is the ownership structure of this firm?; number of employees?; consulting relationships?
- Development and Design: what are your general development and design philosophies and influences?; why the interest in church conversions?
- How did you gain ownership of the church facility? If any, what obstacles were present in obtaining ownership? If applicable, what were your relationships like with the congregation or religious organization that sold the property?
- Development: What particular or unique strategies are involved with re-developing a church structure to residential space? What (unique) obstacles or limitations are present in the development of a church structure?; what special qualities does a church facility bring to the development process?
- Design: How do you approach the design of a church facility, do you approach it differently than with a new project? What design principals do

you use in this project?; What types of new/existing materials do you use in church projects?; How do you decide what original design elements to keep and discard?

- Marketing: How do you approach the marketing/branding of church conversions? What specific marketing and sales messages do you promote in project like this?; Who is your target market, and why?; What types of marketing media do you use to sell the development, do they differ in message or content?; How do you decide on the brand of the project: name, slogans, icons? What specific design elements do you promote in the marketing materials?
- What (heritage conservation or planning) obstacles, limitations or conditions are present in the development of a project like this?; How do you adjust or accommodate you design/development strategies for the specific requirements of the planning and heritage authorities?

Church Loft Owners

- Education, age, employment, places lived, single/married, family size, ethnic background
- Would you categorize yourself as religious?; If so, what religious affiliation(s) do you have?; If not, do you categorize yourself as agnostic, atheist, secular, or other?; If you changed your religious affiliation(s) (i.e. converted from one religious affiliation to another, or to 'no religion), why?
- How did you find out about this particular church conversion? Did you receive and/or look through the promotional materials provided by the developer? If so, what elements of the media were the most important to you?;
- Does the 'brand identity matter and make sense to you?; How do you feel about the icons, slogans and naming of the property?
- Why did you decide to purchase this loft/condominium? (location, design, size, aesthetics, price, etc)
- How did you find out about this particular church conversion? Did you receive and/or look through the promotional materials provided by the developer? If so, what elements of the media were the most important to you?;
- What does the religious heritage value and aesthetic mean to you?;
- How important is it to you that the property has a heritage designation?
- How have you added/complimented to the (interior/exterior) design of the space?
- How do you feel about living in a place that was once a church?
- How do you feel about other types of church conversions (i.e. to bars, restaurants, retail, community centres, etc)

Planners and Heritage Policy Makers

- What is the history of heritage policy in the planning of the city?; What is the role of a planner or heritage manager with respect to urban heritage conservation?; What is the role of planners and heritage managers in regulating heritage re-development?
- What are the intentions and goals of urban heritage designation?; What are the specific policies pertaining to church conversions for housing and retail re-uses?; How have these policies helped/hindered the conversion of churches to new uses? What value does re-use play in broader mandates for urban cultural conservation and sustainable urban development strategies? How is the policy of church conversions influenced by the ownership practices of church managers/commissioners?
- What role do planners/heritage managers have to play in the cultural-religious experience of cities? What value does heritage conservation policy play in conserving the cultural and religious landscapes of neighborhoods, communities? What obstacles and limitations do planners and heritage managers face when making and implementing urban heritage conservation (especially in regards to church conversions)?

Religious/Church Commissioners, Managers, Administration

- What is the history of the 'redundant churches in question?; How has the changing conditions of local and national religiosity effected your religious organizations state of ownership?; What is the property-ownership strategy for your religious organization?
- How and why are churches designated as 'redundant? What are the range of options for dealing with churches that have been designated as 'redundant?; How are these options weighed and what particular circumstances lend specific buildings to re-sale in the private real-estate market?
- What controls (if any) does your religious organization have over the future conversions and re-use of redundant churches? (i.e. what controls exist over re-design of the church building); How are these controls decided upon and operationalized?; What controls (if any) does your religious organization have over the use of religious symbolism or artifacts left in the redundant church facility? How are these controls decided upon and operationalized?
- What impacts and consequences do you see to the state of local/national religiosity from church redundancies and conversions to new uses such as up-scale residential spaces? How do you feel about the use of religious brands in the production and sale of church conversions to residential space?
- What connections and relationships does your religious organization have with the real-estate industry/community? Does your organization have any relationships with specific real-estate developers/planners and heritage managers? How might these relationships enhance your control over the types of conversions and re-uses? How does planning and heritage policy impact (help/hinder) the general sustainability of inner-city churches and religious practices?