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Regent Park Revitalization: Young People's Experience of Relocation From Public Housing Redevelopment



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Regent Park Revitalization: Young People's Experience of Relocation from Public Housing Redevelopment

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Redevelopment of Regent Park, Canada's oldest and largest public housing project, is an ambitious public-private partnership that is attracting world-wide attention. Built some 60 years ago on 27.9 hectares (69 acres) in the east side of downtown Toronto, the original buildings are in disrepair. Regent Park is widely stigmatized as unsafe and crime-ridden (Cheney 2005, Purdy 2005). As an example of Modernist design and Garden City planning, it is also portrayed as a critical mistake in urban planning and design. The lack of through streets are regarded by architectural critics as the source of social ills, as the streetscape serves to isolate Regent Park from the surrounding neighbourhoods. The ambitious, 12 year, \$1 billion, phased redevelopment will raze virtually all of Regent Park's structures to create a higher-density, new urbanist, mixed income, environmentally sustainable community. The relocation plan calls for successive phases of Regent Park tenants to be relocated temporarily while their homes are rebuilt. Under the plan, tenants are relocated temporarily in public housing either inside Regent Park or elsewhere within Greater Toronto. In contrast to many other public housing redevelopment initiatives, the approximately 2000 Regent Park tenant households are to have a legal right to return to their rebuilt homes.

Scope and Objectives

Little is known about tenants' reactions to being moved out of their homes. Moving is potentially a stressful experience, particularly for young people who may need to adjust to new schools and make new friendships. Regent Park has a young population, with over 40% of the residents being under age 18 (TCHC 2004). This study sought to explore the social impacts on youth of the displacement, relocation and eventual resettlement experienced in the course of the first phase of Regent Park redevelopment. Specifically, the study had the following three objectives:

1. Evaluate the relocation experiences of youth from households relocated from phase 1 of Regent Park Revitalization, according to whether they are relocated to alternative housing locations closer to or farther from their original homes;
2. Describe these young people's experiences of relocation in a CMHC research report;
3. Document these young people's experiences of relocation using a variety of multimedia techniques.

Methods

This was a qualitative study involving personal interviews with Regent Park youth from among the 380 households relocated in Phase 1 of the redevelopment. Interviews were conducted with 29 youth between the ages of 12 and 20 years from households displaced in the first phase of Regent Park redevelopment. Personal interviews were also conducted with four key informants who worked in local organizations serving the Regent Park community. Most youth interviews were done individually, however at the participants' request, two were done with pairs of youth and another interviewed three at one time. All interviews were audio recorded; a subset was

video recorded. The study also produced a video based on interview material. The video was shown to youth participants, who were invited to participate in a focus group discussion of the film's portrayal of the redevelopment experience. Recordings of all interviews and the focus group discussion were transcribed and coded and analyzed to identify key themes.

Results and conclusions

Eight key themes were identified relating to young people's responses to relocation for public housing redevelopment. These themes included: Youth's knowledge of—and participation in—the redevelopment planning process; State of repair, maintenance and safety of Regent Park; Moving and temporary location; Young people's preferences for downtown over suburban living; social mix; sense of community in Regent Park; Impacts of relocation on youth's contacts with friends and neighbours; and Youth's feelings about their right of return.

Other than informational school programs offered to younger students, most of the Regent Park youth interviewed had not been part of any formal consultations around redevelopment. Some youth did not have a realistic sense of the scope or scale of planned redevelopment. They did not report having had opportunities to influence the shape or the process of the redevelopment. Some wondered why their homes could not have been renovated and repaired, rather than being razed and rebuilt.

In many immigrant families, youth play an important role as translators and interpreters for their parents. The study concluded that in future phases of the redevelopment, the housing authority should communicate details and procedures of relocation and redevelopment to the youth, in part so they can convey this information to the adults in their households.

Youth reported that they value the strong sense of community they experienced in Regent Park. Many who have moved away still retain ties to the Regent Park communities—both informal ties of friendship and ties with more formal community services and programs. They describe Regent Park as being like a family.

Relocation—even within the borders of Regent Park—can result in disruption of youths' ties of friendship. The younger participants, in particular, reported loss of contact with friends after moving. Their loss of contact with friends after relocation was exacerbated by the fact that many of their friends had also been displaced and relocated.

Relocated youth are proficient in telecommunications technology. Many described using cell phones, instant messaging, and various online social networking sites to maintain their Regent Park contacts. Yet many miss social contacts with old friends and former neighbours.

Youth are aware of and troubled by the poor conditions and disrepair of Regent Park. Many are intimidated by the presence of homeless people and drug dealers in and around their buildings. Some think the planned social mix in the revitalized community will ensure the health of the community's physical infrastructure; others worry that the influx of new, higher-income residents will damage the strong sense of community that had characterized Regent Park.

Living downtown is important to the young people interviewed. Convenience and accessibility are high priorities for most of the youth, and are among the reasons most want to stay in or return to Regent Park.

Recommendations

Study results point to the need for more opportunities for greater involvement of youth in the plans for redevelopment. Particularly in immigrant households, the study revealed that youth may be a family's contact with the housing authority. The youth require accurate, current information; they shouldn't need to search the details of the redevelopment plan out on the Internet in order to be able to explain procedures to their parents. Schools, local community agencies, and the housing authority should ensure that young people are well informed about the overall development plans and the current status of those plans. Youth from the first phase of the redevelopment could be a valuable resource in mentoring young residents in subsequent phases of Regent Park redevelopment.

Résumé

Introduction

Le réaménagement de Regent Park, l'ensemble de logements publics le plus ancien et le plus vaste du Canada, est une ambitieuse initiative de partenariat public-privé qui attire l'attention du monde entier. Construits il y a une soixantaine d'années sur un terrain de 27,9 hectares (69 acres) dans le secteur est du centre-ville de Toronto, les immeubles initiaux sont délabrés. Regent Park a la réputation bien établie d'être un quartier dangereux, aux prises avec de graves problèmes de criminalité (Cheney 2005, Purdy 2005). Quoiqu'étant considéré comme un bon exemple d'architecture moderne et d'aménagement en cité-jardin, il est aussi perçu comme une erreur monumentale en matière de planification et de décoration urbaines. Le manque de rues de transit est vu par les critiques d'architecture comme la source des maux sociaux du quartier, car la façon dont les rues sont aménagées contribue à son isolement des collectivités voisines. L'ambitieux réaménagement progressif d'un milliard de dollars, qui s'étalera sur 12 ans, rayera virtuellement de la carte toutes les structures de Regent Park afin de créer une collectivité écologique densifiée, de type « nouvel urbanisme » et destinée à des ménages de différents niveaux de revenu. Le plan de réinstallation prévoit d'autres phases qui nécessiteront le relogement temporaire de résidents du quartier durant la reconstruction de leur logement. Dans le cadre de ce plan, les résidents seront installés temporairement dans des ensembles de logements publics situés dans Regent Park même, ou ailleurs dans le Grand Toronto. Contrairement à beaucoup d'autres initiatives du même genre, les quelque 2 000 ménages de Regent Park auront légalement le droit de revenir dans leur logement rebâti.

Portée et objectifs

On en sait très peu sur la réaction des résidents face à ce délogement. Un déménagement est une expérience potentiellement stressante, plus particulièrement pour les jeunes qui devront peut-être s'adapter à une nouvelle école et se faire de nouveaux amis. Regent Park compte une jeune population. En effet, 40 % des résidents sont âgés de moins de 18 ans (TCHC 2004). Les auteurs de cette étude ont cherché à explorer les impacts sociaux sur les jeunes de leur délogement, de leur déménagement et de leur retour à leur logement au cours de la première phase du réaménagement de Regent Park. L'étude visait spécifiquement les trois objectifs suivants :

1. Évaluer comment les jeunes faisant partie de ménages réinstallés lors de la phase I de la revitalisation de Regent Park ont vécu leur relogement, selon qu'ils ont été relogés près de leur ancien logement, ou plus loin;
2. Décrire dans un rapport de recherche de la SCHL l'expérience de relogement vécue par ces jeunes;
3. Consigner l'expérience de relogement vécue par ces jeunes en utilisant une grande variété de techniques multimédias.

Méthode

Il s'agissait d'une étude qualitative impliquant des entrevues personnelles avec 29 jeunes, âgés de 12 à 20 ans, choisis parmi les 380 ménages ayant été relogés lors de la phase I du

réaménagement de Regent Park. Des entretiens ont en outre été réalisés auprès de quatre intervenants clés travaillant au sein d'organismes locaux œuvrant dans la collectivité de Regent Park. La plupart des entrevues menées auprès des jeunes étaient individuelles, cependant à la demande de certains participants, deux entrevues ont impliqué deux jeunes, et une autre, trois jeunes à la fois. Elles ont toutes été enregistrées en format audio, et celles d'un sous-groupe ont également été filmées. L'étude a aussi contribué à la production d'une vidéo fondée sur les données d'entrevues. Celle-ci a été présentée à des jeunes qui avaient été invités à participer à un groupe de discussion visant à évaluer la concordance du film avec l'expérience réelle de relogement. Enfin, les enregistrements des entrevues et du groupe de discussion ont été transcrits, codés et analysés afin d'en déterminer les thèmes principaux.

Résultats et conclusions

Huit thèmes ont été recensés à la suite des réactions des jeunes concernant leur réinstallation pour permettre le réaménagement de logements publics : la connaissance qu'ont les jeunes du processus de planification du réaménagement, et leur participation à ce processus; l'état, l'entretien et la sécurité de Regent Park; le déménagement et l'emplacement transitoire; la préférence des jeunes entre la vie au centre-ville et celle en banlieue; la mixité sociale; le sentiment d'appartenance à la communauté de Regent Park; l'impact du relogement sur les relations entre les jeunes et leurs amis et voisins; et le point de vue des jeunes sur leur droit légal de revenir dans leur quartier.

Les jeunes de Regent Park n'ont pris part à aucune consultation officielle concernant le réaménagement, à part les séances d'information tenues dans les écoles. Certains des jeunes interrogés n'avaient pas une perception claire de la portée du réaménagement planifié. Ils disaient ne pas avoir eu la possibilité d'influencer le processus de réaménagement ou la forme que ce dernier prendra. Certains se demandaient pourquoi leurs logements ne pouvaient pas être rénovés et réparés au lieu d'être démolis et reconstruits.

Au sein de bon nombre de famille d'immigrants, les jeunes jouent un rôle essentiel comme traducteurs et interprètes auprès de leurs parents. L'étude a conclu que lors des prochaines phases du réaménagement, l'organisme d'habitation devrait communiquer aux jeunes les détails et les procédures entourant le relogement et le réaménagement, en partie pour que ceux-ci puissent transmettre l'information aux adultes de leur ménage.

Les jeunes ont mentionné qu'ils appréciaient le fort sentiment d'appartenance éprouvé envers la communauté de Regent Park. Bon nombre de ceux qui ont déménagé entretiennent toujours des liens avec les gens du quartier, certains sont des liens d'amitié, d'autres sont des liens établis avec les services et programmes communautaires. Ils décrivent les liens qui les unissent à la collectivité de Regent Park comme ceux d'une famille.

La réinstallation, même dans les limites de Regent Park, peut causer des perturbations quant aux liens d'amitié établis par les jeunes. Les plus jeunes participants ont plus particulièrement mentionné qu'ils avaient perdu contact avec leurs amis après le déménagement. Cette perte de contact a été en outre exacerbée par le fait qu'un grand nombre de leurs amis ont également été relogés.

Les jeunes ayant été réinstallés maîtrisent bien les technologies des télécommunications. Ils ont été nombreux à mentionner qu'ils utilisaient le cellulaire, la messagerie instantanée et d'autres moyens de réseautage social en ligne pour maintenir le contact avec les gens de Regent Park. Mais la présence de leurs amis de longue date et de leurs anciens voisins leur manque.

Les jeunes sont au courant du délabrement des logements de Regent Park, et cette situation les inquiète. Un grand nombre d'entre eux sont intimidés par la présence des sans-abri et des vendeurs de drogues dans les ensembles résidentiels et le quartier. Certains croient que la mixité sociale planifiée dans la collectivité revitalisée assurera la viabilité des infrastructures du quartier, d'autres s'inquiètent du fait que l'arrivée de nouveaux résidents à revenu élevé détériorera le fort sentiment d'appartenance propre à Regent Park. Vivre au centre-ville est important pour les jeunes ayant participé à l'étude. Le caractère pratique et l'accessibilité sont une priorité pour la plupart de ces jeunes et font partie des raisons qui les poussent à vouloir demeurer ou revenir à Regent Park.

Recommandations

À la lumière des résultats de l'étude, les auteurs suggèrent de faire participer davantage les jeunes aux plans de réaménagement. L'étude souligne que dans les familles d'immigrants, plus particulièrement, les jeunes sont parfois le point de contact entre la famille et l'organisme d'habitation. Les jeunes doivent donc recevoir des renseignements précis et actuels et ne devraient pas être obligés de chercher eux-mêmes l'information pertinente au plan de réaménagement sur le Web pour être à même d'expliquer les procédures à leurs parents. Les écoles, les organismes communautaires locaux et l'organisme d'habitation devraient faire en sorte que les jeunes soient bien informés quant à l'ensemble des plans de réaménagement et à l'état d'avancement de ces plans. Les jeunes ayant vécu la phase I du réaménagement pourraient être des atouts précieux en jouant le rôle de mentors auprès des jeunes résidents des prochaines phases du réaménagement de Regent Park.



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Introduction

In the early evening of June 10, 2008, as part of the Toronto Luminato Festival of Arts and Creativity events, there was a community preview of an exhibit of "street art" done by Regent Park youth, mentored by professional artists and photographers. One highly effective and very moving installation involved photographing residents and posting huge enlargements of their pictures on the sides of buildings slated for demolition (see Figure 1). Teams of Regent Park youth led tours in the evening to view the illuminated art work. One 15-year old youth who was co-leading my tour spoke about how—despite the negative stigma of Regent—the residents really felt it was their community, a place where they had roots and strong bonds of friendship and neighbourhood connections. She said the photographs on the buildings were meant to signify that when they broke the buildings down the residents would also be losing parts of themselves.

Regent Park, located on 27.9 hectares (69 acres) in the east side of downtown Toronto, is Canada's oldest and largest public housing project. Built some 60 years ago, its buildings are in disrepair and it is widely stigmatized as unsafe and crime-ridden (Cheny 2005, Purdy 2005). The Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) recently initiated a 12 year, phased redevelopment to rebuild Regent Park as a mixed income, New Urbanist community. In six successive phases the plan calls for the approximately 2000 low-income resident households to be displaced for two or three years and then re-housed in a rebuilt Regent Park (TCHC 2003). According to the relocation scheme, tenants are offered alternative public housing in one of three locations: 1) vacant units elsewhere in Regent Park; 2) downtown Toronto nearby Regent Park; 3) elsewhere in the Greater Toronto Area. Once the new housing is ready for occupancy, displaced tenants will have the option of moving back into the new Regent Park community. The first group of new units were available for occupancy by late spring 2009.

The first phase of the relocation involved 380 resident households located at the project's western boundary. In 2005 those Phase 1 residents received notice that they would be relocated; by 2006 they had been moved. Little is known about the tenants' reactions to being moved from their homes. Moving is potentially a stressful experience, particularly for young people who may need to adjust to new schools, make new friendships. Regent Park has a young population, with over 40% of the residents being under age 18 (TCHC 2004). Those moving from their downtown neighbourhood may miss the convenience and accessibility afforded by that urban location. Alternatively, youth and their families may welcome an opportunity to relocate to areas considered safer, more desirable than Regent Park. The move may provide new opportunities and access to new schools and other community resources and amenities.

This research addresses the general research question: What are the impacts of relocation on young people aged 12-20 years in the first phase of Regent Park revitalization?

The specific objectives of this research project were as follows:

Figure 1: Projected Photographic Portrait from Regent Park StreetScapes project at Luminato Festival, June 14, 2008



Photo credit: R.E. Johnson

1. Evaluate the relocation experiences of youth from households relocated from phase 1 of Regent Park Revitalization, according to whether they are relocated to alternative housing locations closer to or farther from their original homes;
2. Describe these young people's experiences of relocation in a CMHC research report;
3. Document these young people's experiences of relocation using a variety of multimedia techniques.

The results should be useful to the Toronto Community Housing Corporation in planning subsequent phases of the Regent Park redevelopment. In addition, the results of this study will have lessons for other projects aimed at redevelopment of aging public housing communities in other jurisdictions.

Background, context, and urban planning significance of Regent Park redevelopment

The "4 Rs" approach to redevelopment of derelict public housing stock involves: Relocating tenants temporarily, Razing the old buildings, Rebuilding higher density, mixed income developments, and then Resettling original tenants into that community. Under the US federal government's Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE) VI program, that model has been implemented in the core areas of numerous US cities, with extensive evaluation of impacts on residents and communities (Boston 2005, Clampet-Lundquist 2004, Cunningham 2004, Gibson 2007, Goetz 2005, Kleit 2005, Popkin et al 2002a and 2002b, Popkin et al. 2004). The Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC)'s revitalization of Regent Park represents Canada's first large-scale application of that "4R" model. This ambitious "mega project" represents a significant Canadian housing policy initiative; it is therefore vital to conduct independent, rigorous, disinterested research to evaluate the various impacts of the development plan. In particular, before the "4R" model is implemented in other Canadian cities and in other communities, it is important to assess the impacts of this forced relocation on the low income residents of public housing. How do families adjust to moving to new neighbourhoods? How do their children fare?

Clampet-Lundquist, a US housing scholar who investigated impacts of relocation on families in the HOPE VI program observed the need to apply qualitative research techniques to this research area, noting "Because the collective knowledge of housing mobility and neighborhood effects research rests largely on quantitative data...we tend to know quite a bit about outcomes and precious little about process. By untangling the processes surrounding the moving decision and the formation of social ties in new neighbourhoods, we can learn more about how policies may need to be adjusted to improve outcomes for relocated families" (2004, 422). The proposed study will use intensive qualitative techniques, seeking to provide the type of rich detail or "thick description" described by Geertz (1973), that can form the basis for understanding social behaviour in context. This, in turn, will address the transferability of these research findings, as noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), either to subsequent phases in Regent Park redevelopment, or to other locations. As Bryman notes, thick description enables others to make judgement about "the possible transferability of findings to other milieux" (2004, 275).

Critics of the TCHC's Regent Park revitalization initiative have alleged that it will not result in creation of new rent-geared-to income (RGI) housing units, and that it is a move toward gentrification that will disrupt the lives of displaced tenants (Douglas et al. 2002, Sewell 2005). Slater (2004, 2005) identifies the issue of displacement of original tenants through gentrification as a critical research gap, but observes the particular challenge in tracking this vulnerable and mobile population. While it is still too early to determine whether the revitalization of Regent Park will, in fact, gentrify the area, it is vitally important to track those dislocated households and determine how they fare through the process. By documenting impacts on youth in relocated households, the proposed project will address one important part of this research gap.

In examining the impacts of relocation on youth, this research utilizes the concept of social capital (Portes 1998, Putnam 2000). Bonds of social capital, in the form of relationships with friends, neighbours and relatives, have been shown to be an important source of support (Putnam 2000). Social capital is not easily transported over distances. Portes (1998), Coleman (1988a:S110), McLanahan and Sandefur (1994), and Hagan et al. (1996) all report a loss of social capital among families that move. Portes writes, "Leaving a community tends to destroy established bonds, thus depriving family and children of a major source of social capital," (1998, 11). According to Coleman, the number of times a child has changed schools because the family has moved indicates times that social relations have been broken and social capital lost (1988, S113). Social capital and neighbouring may also be influenced by the built environment. Gibson (2007), in a study of residents relocated involuntarily from a 60-year-old public housing community in Portland, Oregon, found that they particularly missed the open spaces in that project. Those spaces in that low-density modernist housing project had supported social interaction among neighbours. In interviews with youth from Regent Park's relocated households the present study documents the extent to which bonds of social capital and opportunities for social interaction have been affected by their move.

Potential Contribution to/ Significance to Housing

As noted, the revitalization of Regent Park is intended to be a six phase project to be implemented over some 12 years. This research project examined impacts of relocation of Phase 1 households over the course of a single year. The results should be useful to TCHC in planning subsequent phases of Regent Park redevelopment, and in planning redevelopment of other of their communities, such as Lawrence Heights, which has recently been initiated. In addition, the results of this study will have lessons for other projects aimed at redevelopment of aging public housing communities in other jurisdictions.

Methods

Introduction

This study relied on qualitative research involving in-depth personal interviews with a sample of 29 youth aged 12-20 years from households displaced from Regent Park homes for redevelopment. Interviews with four key informants from the local community provide the context for the study and serve as another source of data for understanding impacts of redevelopment on youth. Videotaping of selected youth and key informant interviews, combined

with other video clips and still photographs of Regent Park provide the basis for a video documentary, “Growing Up Regent” dealing with young people’s reactions to the redevelopment experience. An invitational community screening of a rough cut of this video documentary held on May 2, 2008 provided an opportunity for youth to review and discuss the video. That focus group discussion of the approximately half-hour video served as an additional source of data on the experience of public housing redevelopment from the perspective of young residents.

This project received research ethics review and clearance from UW Office of Research Ethics. In accordance with research ethics guidelines, all participants gave informed consent to be interviewed for the study, based on full information about the study and the interview, and assurance that participation was voluntary, and that they could decline any interview questions and discontinue their participation at any time they wished. Participants were asked if interviews could be audio-recorded and if anonymous quotes could be used in a report—all gave permission. A minority also agreed to videotaping of their interview. Local community headquarters for the project was in an office in the Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative (RPNI) building—a community centre—at 415 Gerrard Street East in Regent Park.

Youth sample recruitment

Study participants were recruited from a variety of sources including: youth household members from the 2006-2007 Regent Park wave 1 survey (Schippling 2007); “snowballs” referred by other participants; volunteers from the researchers’ July 2007 *Sunday in the Park* information table; and referrals from local agencies and organizations serving the Regent Park youth population. A number of local organizations provided considerable assistance and support in the recruitment of youth for this research. Two local youth-serving organizations in particular provided considerable assistance and support in the recruitment of youth for this research. In one case, the agency circulated a flyer about the study inviting eligible youth to participate (see Figure 2). In the other case, the researchers were invited to attend a regular weekly youth drop-in program, and were given a chance to address the youth about the study, and invite their participation.

Youth participants include young men and women of various ages between 12 and 20 years, from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds. The sample includes those from households relocated elsewhere in Regent Park, as well as those who moved elsewhere in the greater Toronto area. The youth participants included 13 males, who ranged in age from 12-20 years, and 16 females, ages 13-18 years. The median age for the young men was 16; the young women’s median age was 15 years. Like the population of Regent Park, the youth sample was ethno-culturally diverse.

Youth interviews

Semi-structured personal interviews with young participants were conducted from summer 2007 through spring 2008 by the principal investigator Laura Johnson and/or research associate Rick Schippling, accompanied by a student member of the research team. Interview duration was approximately 30 minutes. Interviews were conducted in participants’ homes, in private office space made available in local community agencies, or in the project office space in a Regent Park community centre. Participants were given an honourarium in the form of a \$25 gift

Figure 2: Flyer Inviting Youth Participation in University of Waterloo Regent Park Study

Get **Your Opinions** Out!!
 Get **Rewarded** For Speaking
 Your Mind



Looking for Youth who have been Relocated from Regent Park during "**Phase 1a**" from 2005 to 2006 and in "**Phase 1b** of households from 230 Sumach and Surrounding Townhouses".

How do you feel about a swimming pool replacing your home?

How are you adjusting to your new hood?

Happy? Pissed? Joyful? Stressed?

There are people out there who want to know!

- 30 minutes to speak your mind.
- All participating youth who qualify will receive a 25.00 gift certificate honorarium.
- Interested? Contact [xxx] by **Friday January 25, 2008**

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certificate that could be used in any retail outlet in any Cadillac Fairview shopping centre including the Eaton Centre in downtown Toronto. Most of the youth participants were interviewed individually, but there were some exceptions. In some cases parents preferred to stay nearby during the interview, two interviews were joint (one with three young men, one with two young women, and one with a male and female participant). Additionally, one participant was apprehensive about the interview situation and the potential difficulty of the questions, and requested permission to bring a friend along—although afterwards the participant said “That wasn’t so bad...”

The youth interview guide collected information on the youths’ experience and evaluation of the relocation process, their views on Regent Park and its planned redevelopment, the involvement that they and/or family members had in the redevelopment plan, and their views about the reputation, history, and heritage of their neighbourhood, and their family background and housing experience (see appendix for youth interview guide). Some of the open-ended questions were designed to encourage the young people to reflect on their subjective understandings of the Regent Park community. Examples include the following three questions: 1) Some people suggest that the redevelopment would provide an opportunity to change the name of Regent Park. Do you think that would be a good or a bad thing? 2) There is currently an effort to create a Cabbagetown-Regent Park museum on the history of the community. Do you think this is a good idea? If so, why? If not, why not? 3) Murals and other street art are considered by some to be an important part of the culture of the Regent Park community. Some suggest preserving some of these murals in the new, rebuilt community? Would that be a good idea? Is it likely to happen?

All youth participants were from Regent Park tenant households at various phases and stages of relocation for redevelopment. Some participants were interviewed before as well as after their relocation; some participants’ families were relocated several times due to changes in the phased relocation plans; other participants were interviewed just prior to their families’ relocation from buildings slated for demolition.

Key informants

A total of four key informant interviews were conducted and recorded. The key informants worked in local agencies and organizations serving the Regent Park community. Key informants were all interviewed in their respective offices/workplaces; interviews were approximately one hour in duration. All key informant interviews were conducted by the principal investigator. In addition, a larger number of informal background interviews have been conducted with community representatives and leaders. These interviews served to provide general background and orientation about the research context, and to suggest important key informants. The principal researcher has maintained ongoing contact with TCHC officials.

Recording

With participants' permission youth and key informant interviews were audio taped. Those audio tapes were transcribed. Also with permission, a subsample of youth and key informant interviews were videotaped.

Video documentary

A 27 minute video documentary, *Growing up Regent: Youth, Relocation and Regent Park*, was produced based on interview material. On May 2, 2008 a rough cut of that video was screened at a local Regent Park community centre to an invited audience of youth participants. The study participants were invited to discuss the video and the issues raised in the video. That discussion was audio taped and transcribed, and represents another source of data for this study.

Data analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed with NVivo software version 7 to identify main themes. The NVivo computer software program aids qualitative research in coding and analyzing large volumes of information. In this study, it helped in the identification and exploration of themes.

Results

Based on analysis of youth interviews, the eight key themes that emerge include young people's feelings about and experiences with: Knowledge of/participation in the planning of the redevelopment; State of repair, maintenance and safety of Regent Park; Moving and temporary relocation, including moving within and outside of Regent Park; Preferences for downtown vs. suburban living; Social mix; Sense of community in Regent Park; Keeping in Touch; and Right of return. Results for each of these themes will be discussed below.

Youth knowledge of—and participation in—the redevelopment planning process

A teacher in a local school described the significance the relocation had for his students. He described bringing his class to a public event staged to mark the ceremonial start of demolition:

Some people say, 'What's the big deal [about relocation]? You're going to get a nice, new place, you know?' No. Home is home, and [youth] view it in those sorts of terms: 'They're taking away my home!' ...I remember when they started the demolition. They had the mayor and everyone here and [it was] a big fanfare...I brought my class to witness this. [For] a lot of them...it wasn't real until they saw the wrecking ball going into the building...and then some of my students started crying. It became real to them. It's more than just a plan on a piece of paper—it's actually 'Wow, they're serious!' And so the question is: 'When are they going to do my building?'

Those planning Regent Park's redevelopment take pride in the high level of resident participation in the planning and design of the project. Results from this study suggest that pride should not extend to consultation with youth. Most of the youth interviewed in this study felt they did not take an active role in that community consultation. Conversations with the youth in this study indicate that they were invited to information sessions about the redevelopment, rather than having a voice in decision-making in planning the redevelopment. Even at the level of information, many of the youth interviewed had inadequate and incomplete information about the intended scope and essential features of the redevelopment. Some complained that they didn't have sufficient lead time for the challenges of moving. According to one 16-year-old participant "They [TCHC] don't really tell us anything until the last moment, so we don't really know what's going to come."

Most of these youth are from immigrant households. The role that the older youth, in particular, described playing was one of interpretation and translation for their parents, who in many cases lacked familiarity with English and access to the online source materials available on the Internet. This role was acknowledged by a TCHC official who worked with the redevelopment:

[Regarding] Feedback from the 14-20 group, we haven't heard their concerns about relocation...But my consultations with that group tends to be when they are speaking on behalf of their parents. They're doing some of the interpretation, translation. Just understanding some of the process pieces. When we're talking about 'lease in good standing' or not being 'in arrears'—not necessarily talking to them about their own needs, desires, or what they would hope.

The role young people play as interpreters and translators is also recognized by another key informant who observed that "children often become the linguistic or the cultural interpreters for their parents."

Still another of the key informants interviewed in this study described the role of youth in the community, "Children grow up quickly here, and they have a different level of understanding and responsibility. They have intelligent questions."

This study provides an opportunity to view the youth role as interpreter from their own perspective. One of the study participants, an 18-year-old-female describes some of the challenges of playing this interpreter role:

My dad just gave me some letters [about the redevelopment and relocation] and asked me to explain it, and I didn't really know. And the Housing [TCHC] kept mailing him packages saying: 'Here are some places you might be able to move to.'

Asked to elaborate on the role of interpreter, she described it as:

The hardest thing! Because you try to understand it and then tell it through your perspective and try to get them to understand it. [And] they're, like, debating and telling you to read it again. And I'm, like, oh my god! It's really stressful and you don't want to

do it...I've looked on the Housing website, at what was going on and I researched it [so] I could explain it to my dad properly... I Googled it and tried to understand it myself.

This glimpse into the difficulty faced by youth in serving as interpreters to communicate and explain the relocation process to their immigrant parents is an important finding from this study. It suggests ways that future phases of the relocation process can acknowledge this role, and include more direct communication with the youth.

Some of the students did recall public meetings that had been held to inform the phase 1 residents about the relocation process. One older youth interviewed recalls her decision not to attend the meeting because she strongly opposed the whole idea of the large scale relocation and didn't think she could keep her temper.

I think they only had one meeting...My mom and her friends went. If I went there, I would have argued so I didn't go. It's stupid! I don't know why they have to build another swimming pool here when there's already a pool. It's really hard for everybody to move. It's not only my family. Everybody!

One of the younger study participants, a 14-year-old, remembers attending several of the public meetings about the redevelopment with her mother. Her description reveals a frustration from not being able to participate in any of the decision making.

I went with my mom sometimes. They kind of answered our questions, but, like, we couldn't do anything about it. People that were moving into the houses, they don't have a choice of what kind of houses they have, the number of rooms they have.

Schools in the Regent Park community have worked to inform youth about the redevelopment, and have provided opportunities for the young people to have their questions answered and communicate their concerns. One local educator made a point of including the Regent Park redevelopment and tenant relocation in the curriculum. When an official from the housing authority was invited into the classroom to provide background and respond to questions, the students had lots to ask:

They had all kinds of questions, and really intelligent questions. There were questions about equity and how many of the units will be rent-geared-to-income...They asked a lot of questions about safety, and a lot of questions about facilities and what improvements will be made...They asked if there will be recycling. [They asked] will there be flowers? Will it be beautiful?

The young people interviewed did acknowledge receiving information about redevelopment plans through their schools; some of those school programs provided opportunities for the young people to express their fears and concerns about moving and redevelopment. A 14-year-old recalled one such session at her school,

One time people came in and asked us how we felt about it and stuff—like a survey... I don't think kids were happy about it...you would be kind of mad... knowing that you have

to move away from all your friends who you grew up with. If one of your friends had to move away and you're so used to them being around all the time. And one day they're just not there.

When some of the youth participants attended a private, invitational screening of the rough cut of the project's video "Growing up Regent" based on their interviews, the screening was followed by lively discussion of various aspects of the redevelopment. One of the participants offered the following very telling view on the general subject of youth participation—or lack thereof.

They didn't ask us. They just gave us notice. We never had a choice. They never asked us if we wanted our buildings to be broken down, if we didn't like them.

Youth who attended the screening were asked to suggest possible audiences for the video.

One said:

I'd show it to the people who are changing it [Regent Park]. They don't know how it is going to affect us. I would show it to... my friends who will have to leave.

Another suggested showing it to:

the people who are rebuilding it. Show them it isn't going to work because of the kind of people that [are in] Regent Park—compared to people who want the quiet life downtown.

The nature of youth participation in the redevelopment of Regent Park is an important one. They play key roles in their families and in the life of the community. Conversations with youth in this study suggest that they were engaged in the redevelopment process only after some key decisions were made. They were *told* rather than *asked* about issues. In their views, major decisions on the project had been made in advance. Their questions in the interviews such as 'Will there be recycling?' or 'Will there be flowers?' reflect their relatively passive roles in the planning process. Many of the youth interviewed for this study are engaged, lively, enthusiastic youth; many are leaders in the various communities of which they are part. Given the opportunity, they could likely have played an effective role in both the process and the design of the renewal of their community.

State of Repair, Upkeep and Maintenance of Regent Park, Lack of Safety

Participating youth—younger as well as older—were all acutely aware of the lack of maintenance at Regent Park. They were highly critical of what they saw as the TCHC's neglect of basic maintenance and repairs at Regent Park. Some thought the large scale demolition of their community might have been unnecessary if the buildings had been maintained regularly and properly. They knew that people living outside Regent Park considered it a slum; many said their friends and relatives were reluctant to visit. They associated the poor state of repair and lack of security with feelings of risk and danger. Many of the youth echoed the feelings of one 13-year-old participant who said that the thing she liked best about living in Regent Park were "The

number of people that I knew—to relate to and to talk to.” The things she liked least were “all the drug dealers and the crackheads.” Youth weighed the advantages of rebuilding and relocation with the costs of losing what was really their home. According to one 18-year-old: “If you move you get a cleaner house and you get a new start to your life. But you don’t want to move because you want a piece of that with you.”

Vermin and pests figured prominently in young people’s description of what they disliked about their Regent Park housing. A boy aged 14 years stated: “It was nasty—cockroaches and mice.” Another participant, aged 16, showed with his fingers, “There was a roach this big. I killed it.” Another 16 year old attributed the problem to lack of janitorial services. In her words, “A lot of problems with the buildings right now are I guess janitorial things, especially the elevators...they are really dirty. They should try to keep it clean.”

Another young man, aged 16, had only criticism for the current state of repairs: “Anything would be better. I mean like the state that it’s in right now is horrible.”

Many of the youth found the presence of drug addicts and drug dealers more troubling than the rodents and various insect infestations. A 17 year-old complained that “Crackheads and drug dealers chill in my building.”

One 15-year-old whose family had relocated outside Regent Park felt “safer in the new neighbourhood,” recalling the “homeless people in Regent Park.”

Moving and temporary relocation, including moving within and outside of Regent Park

The TCHC relocation plan, as implemented in phase 1, gave tenants choices about alternative locations. They covered the moving costs, and in general tried to offer support for what is a stressful experience. This study sought to find out how the moving and relocation affected young people in particular.

Young people expressed a number of concerns about their families’ experiences moving to temporary relocations. One study participant whose family had been moved twice (phase 1B) said emphatically: “It was so hard.” The family of another participant, aged 13, had been relocated to a building outside Regent Park, but still in that downtown vicinity. The participant, who had lived in Regent Park for half of her life at the time of moving, expressed a strong preference for that previous Regent Park dwelling—both as a physical and a social environment: “The building was better than this. It was bigger, more space...It was better than this because there are hobos everywhere in this building. [In my old house] the apartment was a lot bigger. And the people were nicer...I liked everything about it.” About the new location, she said simply: “I don’t like it here.” Another youth balanced the longer term gain with the hardship of moving, saying: “The idea [of redevelopment] seems nice, but the moving doesn’t.” A 14-year-old young woman offered some general advice to the housing authority, TCHC for tenant relocation in future phases of the redevelopment: “Don’t move them very far from their original area.”

Conversations with the young participants indicated that proximity to children's schools was a main factor in their parents' preferences for alternative housing during relocation. Particularly for children below high school, many parents preferred to have children continue in their same schools. Changing schools in the middle of the school year can be difficult for youth. One 14-year-old described it: "It just wasn't as comfortable when you go to school—you're like a stranger."

Young people's preferences for downtown over suburban living

Located as it is in a downtown Toronto neighbourhood, Regent Park has a very urban ambiance. A number of the youth volunteered views on the relative advantages and disadvantages of downtown living. Because of being able to travel on their own, either by transit or just by walking, living downtown gave them an element of freedom and independence that the suburbs could not match. The Regent Park community boasts a number of youth-oriented services, and the study participants valued having those near-by. Local shops and the Eaton Centre shopping mall were also cited as benefits of living downtown. The vitality of urban life, according to these young people, was valued over whatever quiet and safety a more suburban environment might offer.

One 15-year-old whose family had relocated to a more suburban location recalled living downtown in Regent Park: "You can walk everywhere, you can go wherever you want. It's good." She described the initial challenges of adjusting to the lower volume of the suburban environment: "It's really quiet here. At the beginning it was hard because it was so quiet, but then we got used to it." While generally satisfied with the new, suburban neighbourhood, she admits she sometimes misses Regent Park: "Because, like here you can't just walk everywhere you want to go. Like, it's kind of a little bit far so you have to take a bus or something. But there [in Regent Park] you can just walk down Parliament Street and there are so many stores...I kind of miss that."

Another youth in a household relocated to the suburbs explained ironically why she felt the new neighbourhood was safer: "It's actually really safe because nobody really goes out. ...All I do is stay at home and do homework. I don't go out, like, to community centres...Nobody goes out at all. ...It's really quiet. Just cars passing by..." Another participant, echoing these sentiments said simply: "I like the downtown life. The suburbs are empty." That participant reported returning regularly to the former Regent Park neighbourhood to participate in programs there and visit with old friends.

A 16-year-old explained her family's choice to stay in Regent Park "...we wanted to stay here because it's downtown and everything is close by outside...It was more like accessibility. It's close to the streetcars, the transportation, the stores. That's, like, most important." In the long term she is optimistic about the liveliness of the revitalized Regent Park community: "It's going to be more busy. It's going to be like in the middle of downtown, and more life."

Another youth of similar age whose family had also been relocated within Regent Park also felt that the downtown location best met his own needs, and hoped to remain there after all the redevelopment. He offered: "I like to stay close by. Like, I don't want to go anywhere far, like

Mississauga or somewhere down in Scarborough. I want to stay somewhere close by...It's just a really great community, so there's no point in moving from something you like..."

Another 16-year-old youth whose family had moved to Regent Park from a suburban location only a few years previously, was able to compare urban and suburban lifestyles, and knew he preferred the former because: "everything's close. There's school, there's stores, close to downtown...Anywhere close to here is fine—I don't want to move to a different area."

The idea of downtown as the place of action, where things happen is also expressed by another 16-year-old participant, also a fan of urban amenities: "I like everything there... It's convenient. I need to go and get something—it's right there. Plus I'm close to downtown so there are a lot of things happening."

A somewhat older participant, aged 19 years, also valued the transportation convenience of Regent Park's downtown location, along with convenient sports facilities. His enthusiastic description idealizes the natural features of the urban setting: "I like the location. The streetcar stops right there...everything is pretty close. The field is right there...the gym...the pool is right there...Everything is there. Sunlight, it's like breezy sometimes...Overall, I like it...Everything is close, the Eaton Centre, groceries, and everything...I love to live here, as a matter of fact."

A 14-year-old participant recalled that her parents had seriously considered relocating to a suburban location when they were presented with the requirement of relocating for the phase 1 redevelopment. She was pleased that they decided to stay in Regent Park:

They thought about [moving away]. They did because we know a lot of people around...Scarborough kind of areas, so just thinking about it, they had a choice...But afterwards my mom and dad decided to stay here because...there's a lot of stuff around here and there's a lot of opportunities...grocery stores...Pathways [youth tutoring program] community centres and a lot of stuff to do around here. We know a lot of people here in Regent Park too.

She added that from her perspective, staying was the right decision:

Some of my friends are down there [in Scarborough] and they do sleepovers...Their neighbourhoods are very quiet and, I don't know, there's not much to do. And I talk to them online and they're like, 'Oh my god, it's so boring here!'

A 13-year-old girl was skeptical about the chances that the redevelopment would offer the original residents the option of re-settling in their downtown community, predicting: "It's going to be more clean and more people are going to live here, and the old people are going to move to farther places."

Many youths spoke about Regent Park's downtown location as one of its primary benefits. The location was particularly important to the males, particularly those in the 16-20 age group. Especially important was the fact that Regent Park was close to various amenities and good

public transit. One of the young men interviewed from this age group sums up this view: “This is a proper location, man. The 24-hour streetcar, the Yonge bus, and everything!”

Not only the older males expressed enthusiasm about living in the urban core. One of the younger female participants in the study, who was relocated to inner suburban Toronto, also noted that she greatly preferred her former downtown location over her current suburban address.

Social Mix: Young people Envision Regent Park as a Mixed Income Community: “It’s going to be way posh!”

The young people interviewed cited advantages and disadvantages of the plans to turn Regent Park into a mixed income community. But they were much more forthcoming about potential negative compared with positive outcomes. The positives were more practical and pragmatic—e.g. that security would be taken more seriously in a community of people of greater means, or that maintenance and upkeep would be kept to a higher standard, compared to the previous level of care in their community that was exclusively rent-gear-to-income. Perhaps drug dealers would be less likely, some speculated, to infiltrate a mixed income neighbourhood.

At the screening of the rough cut of the video, when asked if there were other key issues not really addressed by the video, the assembled youth cited the issue of social mix, and who is going to move into the buildings they are building. One 14-year-old youth asked: “How are you going to mix people with no income with people with high income?” She elaborated, “The people from Regent Park are louder. Rich people don’t like loud people. “[Their response will be], ‘I’m going to call security.’” She further imagined the scenario...

The rich people are going to have more power. And they might as well kick all of us out. Say, if we’re playing music so loud. And they’ll call security. And security is going to say, ‘Well you guys are going to have to move because you’re causing a ruckus.’

She anticipated that in the mixed income community, “people are going to get treated differently. And they might not listen to the people with the lower income. They may be treated differently compared to the people with more income. Her forecast, put simply was: “The rich people are probably going to take over.”

Another of the study participants expressed the view that the income mix associated with the revitalization plan might result in improved maintenance, saying “I guess it’s kind of the hope for the new people, they want to keep it cleaner and safer. So they want it to be nicer.” A youth aged 16 offered some tentative optimism that the community’s reputation might benefit from more affluent residents: “It’s kind of a good idea because it makes Regent Park something better, like something more expensive, so people think that Regent Park is not, like, a ghetto area.”

Another youth, aged 14, reflected on how the new social mix of the redeveloped community would change things. This young participant, whose family had been relocated within Regent Park, wasn’t completely looking forward to the completion of the construction:

Kind of, but not completely, because it won't be the same as it is now because, like, when they build it back, a lot of richer people are probably going to buy it and obviously they want people who can pay for it, pay down or whatever. It won't be the same...A lot of people are going to be moving away.

One of the key informants who had spoken with many of the relocated Regent Park phase 1 residents reported having heard a range of opinion on the question of social mix, but noted pessimistically that "The one that sticks in my mind is that it's not going to work."

Sense of community in Regent Park

Many of the youth interviewed viewed Regent Park in a positive light because of what they saw as a strong sense of community among residents. According to them, such sense of community is important. While they were well aware of the negative image of Regent Park, and also of the serious problems with physical infrastructure and vandalism and crime, they still valued—and missed—the strength of the community they and their families had experienced there. Some who had been relocated some distance away recalled fondly their memories of a close-knit community where neighbours knew each other. A number of those relocated youth made regular or occasional visits back to Regent Park. One high school student who had moved some distance away traveled back several afternoons a week to tutor young cousins who still lived in Regent Park. Some wondered whether that community could be reconstituted after the redevelopment. Some were pessimistic about such prospects.

A 14-year-old who had lived in the same Regent Park building for 10 years, and had been relocated with her family to a housing unit elsewhere in Regent, described her feelings about the previous home, making the connection between neighbourly ties and a sense of safety:

It feels like I spent my whole life there, because...it was like I knew everybody, and liked everybody. It was a comfortable place to live. You always felt safe because everybody was around you...even though the building was very old, it felt like a good place to be in...I just loved the building [and] the people living in it. Because everybody that lived on the same floor, like, I know everybody. We weren't afraid.

Considering the whole redevelopment plan, weighing the positives and negatives, she was clearly aware of both. While the buildings certainly needed renewal, she worried about the social cost of dispersing the residents:

It's a good thing, but at the same time, I'm not sure. It's a good thing that they're fixing the buildings and stuff, but people are moving out and it's not going to be as fun as before. Everybody's going to miss each other...because they knew each other for their whole lives. Some people were born there, and it's like their whole life has changed.

At many points in the interviews with young people it became clear that they felt strong ties to the Regent Park community. Many missed it after relocation; many returned to visit friends, neighbours, and/or to access services that they had grown to depend on. While many have much criticism of aspects of the environment of Regent Park, most express fondness for the

community. Most of the youth expressed agreement with the description of Regent Park as “one big family.”

A 13-year-old recalls,

I remember going to sleep for the last night [before the move]. I didn't know anybody here. I was scared because I didn't know anybody... All of the people there [old building] are kind and all of them are friends and they play outside together and the families know each other.

A 16-year-old observes the disconnect between the public's view of Regent Park and the actual community there. As with many of those interviewed, this youth's vision of the community includes the open spaces and walkways—most of which will be sacrificed in the new, higher density redevelopment:

I think a lot of people outside of Regent Park think it is a dangerous area where everybody hides in their little houses and doesn't talk to each other. But it's kind of totally different. Especially during the summer, outside on the sidewalks in the middle area. Everybody's there ... talking to each other... People wouldn't think of that when they think of Regent Park.

Another 16-year-old echoed this sentiment, describing Regent Park as “[P]retty much one big community. Everyone knows one another, like everyone knows someone in here, and everyone usually gets along.”

This idea of a strong sense of community in Regent Park was particularly prevalent among the 16-20 year age group, with eight among those older participants agreeing that Regent Park was like a large family. Two study participants in the 12-15 year age group also talked about the issue during the interview. Moreover, of all the respondents who identified this issue in a positive light had been relocated either elsewhere in Regent Park or had not yet been relocated, and they were more likely to be male than female. Dissent from this view of Regent Park as a big, close-knit community was relatively rare; however several of the participants expressed this view, citing the presence of gangs in the area.

Keeping in touch with old friends and making new ones

Some of the relocated youth did manage to keep up contacts with their age peers. Some returned to visit regularly or occasionally. Many reported using telecommunications technology—cell phones, instant messaging, and various online social networking sites—to maintain social contact with friends from Regent Park. In this regard, the young people were in an advantageous position over many of the older, less technologically savvy residents, in being able to take advantage of various forms of communication media to maintain contact with friends after relocation. Several of the young people mentioned that distance was simply not a factor in maintaining contact with old friends. One 20-year-old described how his cell phone provided a way to stay in contact with his friends:

I've had my same number for like a couple of years now, so they all know my number and even people I haven't talked to in a while, they call me back a year later, and 'Hey, what's up bro?' Plus there's Facebook and all that [stuff] right now. As long as you don't change your phone number, everybody's going to find you.

Nevertheless, the younger participants, in particular, did tend to find distance a barrier to keeping up with old friends after relocation. A 13-year-old reported that she was unhappy about the redevelopment and relocation "because a few of my friends that moved out of the places that are already broken down moved far away—like to Jane and Finch. So I can't keep in touch with them that much." Overall, she reported that she really didn't like the move, because "I wanted to stay with all my friends."

A 14-year-old whose family was relocated from one area of Regent Park to another recalled losing contact with old friends at the time of moving. "When I moved I don't think I had any contact with them." All that remains is telecommunication contact: "I have contact with them on MSN, but other than that, I haven't seen them." This comment seems to reflect the key distinction the youth made between regular face-to-face (real) contact and the occasional electronic substitute. The large-scale relocation of phase 1 Regent Park households deprived many of the youth of the opportunity to maintain important and valued contact with neighbours, friends, and relatives.

Interviews with the youth also asked whether they had formed new friendships after relocation. Most said they had—through contacts at school or in the new neighbourhood location. One 13-year-old attributed her ease in making friendships to the open space that characterized her new housing environment: "This one's better, because they have more open space and I met new friends. Yeah, I know the whole neighbourhood already."

A minority of the youth described barriers to meeting new people their own age. One 16-year-old male who had moved outside the Regent Park neighbourhood, missed the presence of young people that characterized that area, expressing regret that the new neighbourhood had

...not much kids around. In Regent Park mostly I knew my neighbours...And yeah, you could always hear someone talking outside or something like that. You had a lot of company in Regent Park. A lot of my friends ...didn't like that I was moving out—you know how friends are.

Another youth, a 16-year-old female, while only moving from one area of Regent Park to another, found that the move disrupted her friendships:

I don't really know anybody in this neighbourhood and I don't really have time to go outside and make friends because I have school and volunteer and everything, so it's harder to make friends when you're moving a lot.

In general, the relocated youths expressed at least some loss of contact with their friends. This theme was emphasized particularly by youth in the 12-15 year age group. Eight youths in this age group reported loss of contact with friends, as compared with three youth in the 16-20 age

group. Out of all of the youths that identified loss of contact, five were male and six were female. Furthermore, eight had been relocated inside Regent Park and three were relocated outside the Regent Park area. The loss of contact with friends is exacerbated by the fact that many of the youths' friends were also relocated in the course of the redevelopment. One 16-year-old female observed: "Like I said, [previously] all my friends were just a building away and we'd just walk by, and you would see them and say 'hi.' Now they're all scattered throughout Toronto."

Although there did not appear to be a clear difference in the loss of contact with friends among the participants in this study based on relative distance moved, a 16-year-old male—who was himself relocated outside of Regent Park—observed just that relationship:

The farther you are, the less chance you'll have access to services, programs, your friends—and you might not see these people any more. It might be 10 years before you see what happens to them...

Right of return

Although the displaced families from Regent Park phase 1 have a legal right to return, it remains to be seen how many actually will come back. Particularly for relocated households with children, do they intend to return? Do their families wish to return?

A 16-year old participant mused on her family's chances of returning:

My family's pretty sure that they are not going to be able to move back...even if they [TCHC] have told us that they are going to relocate us back into the building, it's going to be pretty impossible because of all the plans for it to become like a condominium. The thing is, it's going to be pretty hard to move back...when there's a high demand from...people from higher economic status."

She elaborated, later on in the interview:

A lot of people...are kind of thinking that once they've made the new buildings, they are...not going to move back. ...It's going to be hard...[As a landlord] would you rather choose to take someone in who is going to pay you a lot of money or take someone in who is only going to give you a little bit? It's hard to compete with that sort of people.

Another participant of same age reported:

Well, I heard my parents saying they will let us choose if we want to move back we can—or if we don't want to move back, we can stay, but either way they are going to have to move back when they break the buildings.

Conclusions

Other than informational school programs offered to younger students, most Regent Park youth interviewed were not part of any formal consultations around redevelopment. Some youth did not have a realistic sense of the scope or scale of planned redevelopment. They did not report having had opportunities to influence the shape or the process of the redevelopment. Some wondered why their homes could not have been renovated and repaired, rather than being razed and rebuilt.

In many immigrant families, youth play an important role as translators and interpreters for their parents. The housing authority needs to communicate details and procedures of relocation and redevelopment to the youth, in part so they can convey this information to the adults in their households.

Youth value the strong sense of community they experienced in Regent Park. Many who have moved away still retain ties to the Regent Park communities—both informal ties of friendship and ties with more formal community services and programs. They describe Regent Park as being like a family.

Relocation—even within the borders of Regent Park—can result in disruption of youths' ties of friendship. The younger participants in particular reported loss of contact with friends after moving. Their loss of contact with friends after relocation was exacerbated by the fact that many of their friends had also been displaced and relocated.

Relocated youth are proficient in telecommunications technology. Many use cell phones, instant messaging, and various online social networking sites to maintain their Regent Park contacts. Yet many miss social contacts with old friends and former neighbours.

Youth are aware of and troubled by the poor conditions and disrepair of Regent Park. Many are intimidated by the presence of homeless people and drug dealers in and around their buildings. Some think the planned social mix in the revitalized community will ensure the health of the community's physical infrastructure; others worry that the influx of new, higher-income residents will damage the strong sense of community that had characterized Regent Park.

Living downtown is important to the young people interviewed. Convenience and accessibility are high priorities for most of the youth, and are among the reasons most want to stay in or return to Regent Park.

Recommendations

Based on information collected from young people from Regent Park, the following recommendations are made:

While aware of its problems, youth value many aspects of life in their Regent Park community. Many youth would have an interest in playing an active role in the process of redeveloping their community. They wish to be involved in planning and decision making. Community development initiatives should provide a planning role for youth. Youth from phase 1 could add their experience and play a mentoring role in such an initiative.

Youth also need more information about the shape and process of redevelopment. Schools and the housing authority should ensure that young people, including those of high school age, are well informed about the phased redevelopment. For future redevelopment phases, it is recommended that youth be informed at an early point.

Many of the younger families in Regent Park are immigrants. Particularly among immigrant households, there should be recognition of the important role young people play in translating and interpreting the redevelopment and relocation plans for parents.

Proximity to schools is important to youth and to their parents; this should be accorded priority in offering relocated tenants alternative accommodations. In subsequent redevelopment phases, young people should be assured the opportunity to continue in schools they are already attending. Transportation and other supports should be available to support continuity of school enrolment.

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Appendices

1. Youth interview guide
2. Key informant interview guide
3. Video screening discussion guide
4. Video: *Growing Up Regent*

Appendix 1: Youth Interview Guide

Introduction: This interview asks about your experiences of relocation to and settlement in a new neighbourhood. I am interested in your own opinions—there are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to decline to answer any questions or parts of questions you do not wish to answer. And please add any comments or information that you think would help to describe the experience of moving while your home is being rebuilt. This interview should take about half an hour to complete.

1. A) How many people are in your household? Please describe their ages and relationship to you.
 B) How long did you live/have you lived in Regent Park?
 C) Have you always lived in Toronto? Where did you live before Regent Park?
2. How would you describe your home in Regent Park before you were relocated? (Condition, location, did you like it?)
3. What did you like best about that home? What did you like least?
4. Where do you live now? Can you describe your new home and your new neighbourhood?
5. A) When did you move from that home in Regent Park?
 B) Is this the location that you wanted to move to when relocating?
 C) What was important to you when deciding where to move?
6. What two words would you use to describe the experience of moving a household from one home to another?
7. Most everyone agrees moving is a hassle. What is the worst part of moving? What would you say is the best part of moving?
8. How does your new home compare to your old home in Regent Park (size, amenities, convenience, etc.)? How does the new community compare to Regent Park?
9. A) Have you maintained contact with many of your old friends after relocation? How often do you see them or talk with them?
 B) Have you made a lot of new friends in your new neighbourhood? Have you found it easy to meet new people in this area? Has this become easier with time?
10. Some people describe Regent Park as one big family. Do you agree with that statement?
11. How have the following been affected by your relocation, for better or worse:
 - i) School? Have you changed schools since relocation?
 - ii) Programs (after school, sports, music, homework clubs (Pathways)?
 - iii) Services or facilities (Doctors offices, libraries, parks, shopping)?
 - iv) Organizations, workplaces, places of worship?

12. Do you have more activities, sports, or other programs in your new neighbourhood than you old one? How would you say you have adapted or integrated into your new neighbourhood?
13. A) Did you feel you were well informed about the relocation process? Did you know well in advance that you were going to move?
B) Did you have a say in your family's decisions about the relocation process? What input did you have?
14. A) When a family moves, that move can affect adults and young people differently. How is the relocation experience different for young people than it is for adults? Do you think moving entails more important changes for young people?
B) In the first phase of Regent Park redevelopment, some relocated residents moved to other units within Regent Park, others moved close by, such as to Moss Park or St. Jamestown, while still other families moved much further away. In your view, what difference does distance make when relocating?
15. A) Do you know a lot about the redevelopment plans for this area? In your own words, how would you describe how they (TCHC) plan to redevelop this area?
B) How do you think Regent Park will be different after redevelopment? How do you think it will be the same?
C) Are you happy that they are redeveloping this area? Do you like the plan they have?
16. Some people have suggested that the redeveloped Regent Park be given a new name. Do you think this is a good idea or a bad one? What might be the advantages of changing the name? What would be the costs?

16 A) What about murals and graffiti—should they be preserved?
16 B) [Describe proposal for Regent Park-Cabbagetown museum] — a good idea?
17. A) Do you feel safe living in your new neighbourhood? Do you feel safe when you are walking through the neighbourhood after dark?
B) How does your new neighbourhood compare to your old one in terms of how safe you feel?
C) Are you aware of any gang activity or drug use in the area? Have you been exposed to this? How does it compare with Regent Park?
18. A) Do you miss your old home? If so, what do you miss the most?
B) Does your current place feel like *home* to you? What do you like best about where you live now? What do you like the least?
19. A) Do you and your family plan to return to the part of Regent Park where you used to live once it is redeveloped in 2009? Does your family talk about those plans for moving to a new building in Regent Park?
B) How long do you expect to live where you live now?

20. A) Overall, how would you describe the process of moving from your old home to your current one?

B) Are there ways that it could have been improved?

Background Questions

Age: _____ Grade in school: _____

Household Size: _____

Ethno-cultural background: _____ Country of Birth: _____

Employment (if applicable): _____

“Snowballs”: Can you suggest other youth relocated from Regent Park who we might contact?

Thank you!

Appendix 2: Key Informant Interview Guide

Key Informant Interview

Introduction: This interview asks about the process of relocation and resettlement of residents in phase 1 of the Regent Park redevelopment, with particular reference to youth aged 12-20 years. We are interested in your opinions—there are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to decline to answer any questions or parts of questions you do not wish to answer. And please add any comments or information that you think would help to describe the relocation process. This interview should take about half an hour to complete.

1. Since this is videotaped, please introduce yourself and describe your position .
2. What are your responsibilities in this position?
3. Prior to this job, did you have other connections to RP community?

Revelopment

4. What were some of the main objectives in the RP redevelopment and relocation processes?
5. In terms of the needs of youth in relocation and resettlement, were these addressed in the planning for relocation of Phases 1a and 1b resident households?
6. Community consultation and participation was built into the design of RP revitalization. Are you aware of ways youth have been involved in such consultation? Have you been personally involved in that consultation?
7. Re: Phases 1a (2005-6) and 1b “swimming pool” (fall 2007): *Are you aware of changes in the relocation process, lessons learned in the second round of relocation?*
8. Moving one’s household can be challenging. Do you know what services were offered to youth from Phase 1 households to ease their relocation and resettlement?
9. Do you have a sense of how the redevelopment has affected young people? How does age of young people affect their experience of relocation? Are you aware of other factors that make a difference?
10. Are you able to say, from the young people’s perspectives, what are their main concerns about redevelopment?
11. Are there things that can be done differently to ease the burden of relocation on youth?
12. The RP revitalization is a new and long-term project. With regard to youth from RP, are there lessons that have been learned already by TCHC and community agencies? Have there been any lessons learned from Phases 1a and 1b of this program—changes you would recommend for future phases?
13. Were there any models in mind that informed the relocation/redevelopment process at Regent Park? Are there examples from other jurisdictions of ways that households with young people were supported during relocation during redevelopment of public housing?

14. What do you see as some of the strengths of the relocation program that was implemented at Regent Park? What about the weaknesses? Any strengths/weaknesses regarding households with young people?
15. Thank you very much for your time and participation in this study. Would you be willing to be contacted again in future stages of this research?

___ yes ___ no

16. If yes, can you please confirm that the following contact information is accurate, so that we may be able to contact you in the future:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Alt. #: _____

Email: _____

17. We are interested in your suggestions of other individuals from the Regent Park community who are knowledgeable about the Phase 1 relocation, particularly as it has affected young people. Would you be willing to contact such persons, and see if they would be willing to be contacted to learn more about our research and to see if they might consider participating in this study? We will follow up with you to see if there are any such referrals, and if so, whether we may use your name in contacting them?

Other key Informants?

Appendix 3: Video Screening Discussion Guide

Video Screening, Youth Drop-in, May 2, 2008

Thank you for coming to this screening; thank you again for participating in the study.

This video is the result of interviews with some 30 young people involved with the Regent Park redevelopment. The objective of the film is to tell the story of relocation from youths' perspectives.

1. What, if anything, surprised you in this video?
2. What's the best thing, what works?
3. What's the worst thing, what doesn't work?
4. Are there things/people/ideas missing?
5. Is there anything there that shouldn't be?
6. What about diversity of views? Are enough viewpoints represented?
7. If you were hired as a summer intern to assist us in making this video, what would you try to change?
8. In general, what is the value of video as a means of researching a topic such as residents' experiences with Regent Park redevelopment?

Thank you.

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