

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLICY, PLANNING AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD CHANGE:
THE CASE OF THE GOTTINGEN STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD, 1950-2000

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Urban and Rural Planning

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
March 2003

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Change: The Case of the Gottingen Street Neighbourhood,
1950-2000
SCHOOL: School of Planning, Faculty of Architecture & Planning
DEGREE: Master of Urban and Rural Planning
CONVOCATION: April 2003

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Dedication

To my beloved parents, Bahata Melles and Tsehai Megersa.

With love, gratitude and respect, I thank you.

In honour of my grandparents, whose legacies live on...

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBD	Central Business District
CCD	Cornwallis Courts Developments Ltd.
C/GD	Creighton/Gerrish Development
C/GDA	Creighton/Gerrish Development Association
CIAM	Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne
CMHC	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
CRA	Community Reinvestment Act
CT9	Census Tract Nine
CT10	Census Tract Ten
DND	Department of National Defence
GSMA	Gottingen Street Merchant's Association
HMDA	Home Mortgages Disclosure Act
HRM	Halifax Regional Municipality
MISA	Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association
NHA	National Housing Act
NIP	Neighbourhood Improvement Program
PWGSC	Public Works & Government Services Canada
RRAP	Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my warmest appreciation to my committee, Professors Grant Wanzel and Frank Palermo - a fine balance of pragmatic and visionary. Thank you to Grant for being generous with your time and engaging me in fruitful, weekly conversations early in the process; and Frank for always providing key insights and provoking imagination. You have always left me with more questions than answers. Most of all, both are inspirational in their commitment to community building.

To Dorothy, the "queen", whose enthusiasm was one of the reasons I landed in Halifax; thank you for sharing so many hearty laughs.

Thank you, Tracy, for your support, for introducing me to Flash, and prodding me to let go of the words.

I am eternally grateful to my family and friends for their constant encouragement along the way. To David: "Cinch by the inch, hard by the yard." To Daniel: Surprise...I finished! To Sister Jackie: For sharing the journey. And to my old friend, QM: "Of you, I'm sure" too.

Most important, "*egzaber yistilign*" to my beloved Kevin - your immeasurable depth of support continues to be a source of strength for me. From coast to coast, our journey continues...

ABSTRACT

Why should we, as citizens and planners, be concerned with the causes of neighbourhood decline? Despite theories that suggest decline is part of a neighbourhood's life cycle, this inquiry asserts that neighbourhood decline is not a natural process, but rather a condition influenced by policy, planning and investment decisions. It is ineffectual to suggest strategies for neighbourhood revitalisation without analysing and understanding the history of a neighbourhood.

Therefore, utilising a case study approach, a historical and statistical analysis of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood in the north end of Halifax, Nova Scotia was conducted to examine its change. A once vibrant and diverse street, Gottingen Street today exhibits classic signs of inner city neighbourhood decline, manifested through vacant buildings, decreased population, vacant lots, derelict buildings and a high rate of commercial transition. The following question guided the research: *Is there a relationship between policy, investments and neighbourhood decline in the Gottingen Street area over the fifty year period, 1950-2000?* What concurrent social and economic changes have occurred in the population, and how have these factors impacted the commercial corridor?

The thesis objective was to analyse the neighbourhood through changes in the socio-economic profile of residents, changes in the commercial corridor inventory, and simultaneous policy and investment decisions. The indicators are recorded in ten-year increments. An examination of the interconnected, complex relationship between these variables is beneficial to future decision making processes. Providing insight into the processes affecting neighbourhood decline in the Gottingen Street area may result in increased policy sensitivity to the needs and realities of local communities.

In chronicling the evolution of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, two key findings present themselves in the analysis. First, a definite relationship exists between policy, planning, investments and neighbourhood change. Second, a sequential pattern is observed between these variables, evident in the ten-year intervals. In this regard, the major commercial changes (1970's - 1980's) occur the decade after the largest demographic changes (1960's), while significant policy and program decisions and implementations of the 1950's - 1960's precede the major neighbourhood changes. The research findings also revealed that a positive relationship did not exist between significant financial investments and revitalisation of the study area. Subsequently, one can surmise that it is not the amount of the investment that is significant, rather it is how the investment occurs, and for what purpose. With a greater contextual understanding of a place, more strategic investments, and thus revitalisation may prevail.

Chapter 1

Introduction

*Sankofa - One must return to the past in order to move forward.*¹

1.1. The Research Problem

There is no monolithic solution to the problem of neighbourhood decline. Neither is there one monumental reason for its existence. Even more perplexing is why, despite investments and attempts at revitalisation, does a neighbourhood stay in a perpetual state of decline? Neighbourhood change is inevitable; however when this change is triggered by circumstances that cause continual negative impacts, the reasons for neighbourhood decline should be examined. Gottingen Street is a classic example of a neighbourhood main street that was once vital, diverse and active. Today the street exhibits classic signs of inner city, neighbourhood decline, which is manifested through vacant buildings, decreased population, empty lots, a high rate of commercial transition and derelict buildings. Known as the main vein of the inner city, the Gottingen Street corridor and its surrounding environs in North End Halifax is an example of a situation in which high levels of investments do not positively correlate with neighbourhood revitalisation.

1.2. The Research Question

Gottingen Street has transformed from the city's first main street², to its current characterisation as an 'inner city ghetto'. The nostalgia attached to the "way things were" is reminiscent of the street's golden years that have come and gone. Will it ever return? Gottingen Street will never be the way it once was, however this does not preclude the need

¹ Sankofa is an Adinkra word of the Akan people of Ghana. http://www.sankofa.com/store/store_a.shtml. Accessed January 12, 2003.

to understand how and why its transformation occurred. So that history does not repeat itself, this is a necessary first step in any future revitalisation plans. Certainly, the political will must be present, led by sound research to inform decision making.

Why should we, as citizens and planners, be concerned with the causes of neighbourhood decline? Neighbourhood decline is conceptualised as a process that leads to the loss of people, jobs, businesses, and physical deterioration. Despite theories that suggest neighbourhood decline is part of a neighbourhood's life cycle, this inquiry asserts that neighbourhood decline is not a natural process, but rather a condition influenced by policy, planning and investment decisions. As such, planners have a responsibility to ensure that social and economic policies will foster rather than negate neighbourhood vitality and growth.

Undoubtedly, there are many complex variables that could be examined - some of which are local, national, and even international in scope; however, attempting to address this range of possibilities is beyond the nature and scope of this focused examination. The primary research question is therefore defined as follows: *Is there a relationship between policy, investments and neighbourhood decline in the Gottingen Street area over the fifty year period, 1950-2000?* What concurrent social and economic changes have occurred in the population, and how have these factors impacted the commercial corridor?

It is the writer's hypothesis that there exists a definite relationship between policy, investments and neighbourhood change, which have had significant social, economic and physical impacts on the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. During the fifty-year study period, Gottingen Street went from a thriving commercial and entertainment district in the 1950's, to an area of slum clearance and large-scale redevelopment by the 1960's. In this period of mass demolition and rebuilding, a large concentration of public housing was constructed adjacent to Gottingen Street. During the 1970's, reinvestment began to occur in the neighbourhood, mostly through federal programs such as the Neighbourhood Improvement

² Proctor, 1989.

Program (NIP), and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). In the late 1980's and early 1990's the federal government continued spending money on revitalising the neighbourhood, while at the same time essential community services such as banks and the local supermarket were vacating their premises on the commercial corridor. Although a significant amount of money was directed into the community, the signs of rebuilding or revitalisation were not apparent— in fact the opposite was true. While the population dwindled, and the storefronts became increasingly vacant, the large scale public housing development unfortunately added to the perception of the North End as an inner city ghetto.

It would be incorrect, however, to paint a picture of this neighbourhood as that of complete despair. Although the North End is a distressed neighbourhood physically and economically, several strong institutions exist that serve as pillars in the community. For example, the North End Memorial Library, Cornwallis Street Baptist Church, Brunswick United Church, the YMCA (known as the 'community Y'), and the North End Health Clinic have all played an integral role in community based development initiatives. The works of these organisations have contributed to the undeniable strengths of the community. However, from a holistic, community development approach, social, physical *and* economic revitalisation are needed simultaneously to strengthen the community.

The influences of policy and investment decisions have had significant social, economic and physical impact for Gottingen Street, and its surrounding area. The deterioration most identifiable on Gottingen Street's commercial corridor is a metaphor for the decline of its surrounding area and is symptomatic of a larger calamity that has impacted the entire neighbourhood.

An examination of the interconnected, complex relationship between these variables is beneficial to future decision making processes. Providing insight into the processes affecting neighbourhood decline in the Gottingen Street area of Halifax may result in increased policy sensitivity to the needs and realities of local communities.

1.3. Scope of Study

The scope of this thesis is limited to analysing social, economic and commercial changes in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood between 1950 and 2000, as related to simultaneous policy decisions and their subsequent implementation. Just as one's eyes mirror the soul, the core commercial district of Gottingen Street is a reflection of the social and economic prosperity of the neighbourhood. Vacant buildings, vacant lots, and no activity at night are signs of a soul in distress. Gottingen Street is significant psychologically as much as it is commercially for the neighbourhood.

The indicators are recorded in ten-year increments, thus treating each decade as a miniature case study in itself. Socio-economic characteristics will be analysed in the context of the adjacent downtown core, and the Halifax Metropolitan area. By comparing the divergence of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood from trends in the adjacent neighbourhood and the larger Halifax community, one is able to infer that micro-level forces are at work in the study area and thus explore what these may be. Using census tract level data will provide an opportunity to analyse and measure impacts at the neighbourhood level.

The thesis objectives are:

- i) To analyse neighbourhood change through the following indicators:
 - a) changes in socio-economic profile of residents (population, housing tenure, employment rate, persons per household, avg. household income)
 - b) create and analyse changes in commercial corridor inventory
- ii) Policy/Program Context & Implications: What programs/policies that relate to social, economic or physical dimensions of the neighbourhood exist, and what were their implications?
- iii) Identify key government investments in the neighbourhood
- iv) Analyse how these variables intersect to affect the neighbourhood's decline (What is their relationship? Are there linkages?); this is be the crux of the thesis
- v) How do these findings reflect on an approach to planning?

One significant characteristic omitted from my study is the racial composition of the study area. In the recent book, *Black Canadians*, Joseph Mensah found that 66% of Blacks in Nova Scotia reside in Halifax, and are concentrated in high poverty areas. Twenty-seven ethnic groups in Halifax were studied to determine their concentration in census tracts with high (40% or more) poverty rates. Of the twenty-seven ethnic groups studied, Blacks ranked second.³ A large proportion of Blacks in Halifax live in the census tract that defines the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. Therefore, it would have been prudent to analyse the changes in the racial composition of the neighbourhood, however Statistics Canada did not include Blacks as a category in the 'ethnic origin'/race question until 1981. That is to say that people of African descent were not discernible in the Canadian census figures until just over twenty years ago. For the current researcher this was an unfathomable research discovery. Given this stark omission, representation in the demographic analysis was considered invalid.

Examining multiple variables, like these noted above, is necessary as no single indicator can point to significant neighbourhood change. Rather, it is the combination of social, economic and physical variables that may reflect on a place. Dimensions of commercial change are examined through the creation of a decade by decade inventory. This information is used to produce a key map for each decade, profiling the significant changes on the street's fabric. Findings and analysis pertain only to the study area and are not meant to reflect the reality of other urban neighbourhoods, although perhaps general observations can be made about the need for planning at the neighbourhood level, because most urban neighbourhoods will be unique and there will be a need to understand the context of each place.

³ Mensah, 2002.

1.4. Study Area

The near north end of Halifax embodies a distinctive character, both historically and presently. Historically, Halifax's North End was a significant part of the city. As the neighbourhood adjacent to the dockyards, its close proximity to the harbour and related naval activities provided residential and commercial opportunities for workers involved in waterfront industries and to members of the naval forces. The main street, Gottingen Street, began its commercial development in the early 1900's (see Figure 1.1).⁴

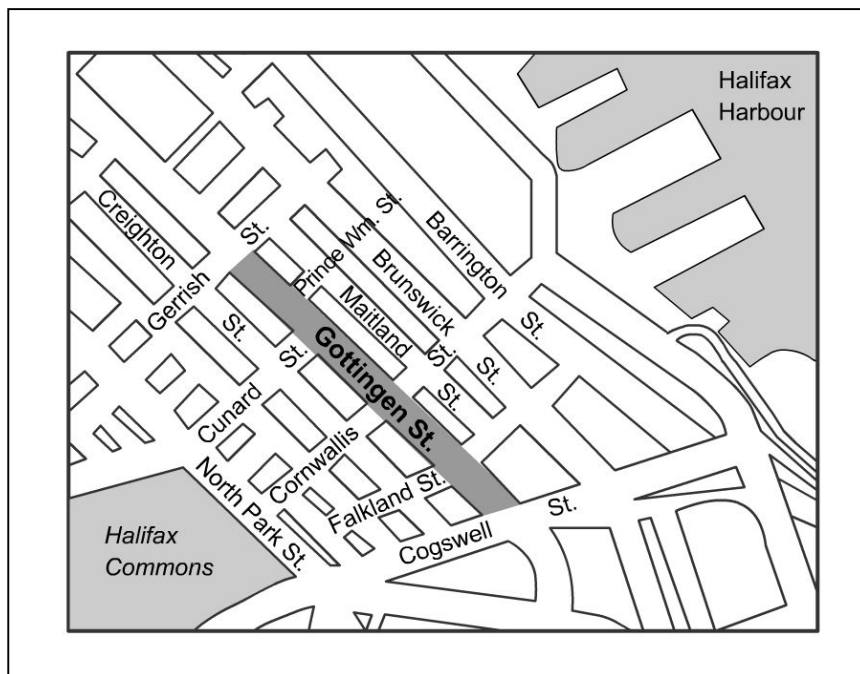


Figure 1.1. Gottingen Street in North End, Halifax.

⁴ For a detailed account of this history, refer to Paul Erickson's, *Halifax's North End*.

Although Gottingen Street itself is a major north-south arterial on the Halifax peninsula (see Figure 1.2a), the commercial district of the neighbourhood is defined as the portion of Gottingen Street that runs from Cogswell Street in the south to Gerrish Street in the north (see Figures 1.1 and 1.3).

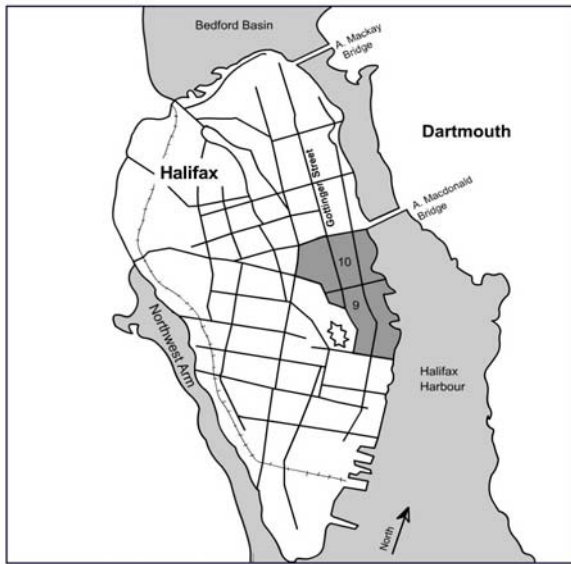


Figure 1.2a. Halifax Peninsula Context Map

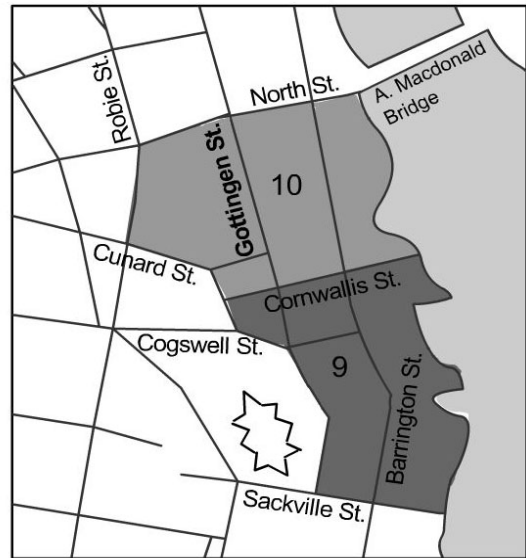


Figure 1.2b. Census Tract Context Map



Figure 1.3. Gottingen Street Commercial District

The boundary of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood (the study area) coincides with census tract 10 (CT10) of Statistics Canada (see Figure 1.2b).⁵ A demographic snapshot of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood over time is compiled using data from Statistics Canada's CT9 and CT10. CT10 is the heart of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood as it comprises the residential area directly adjacent to Gottingen Street's commercial corridor, as illustrated in Figure 1.2b.

CT9 is included in the study for two reasons: 1) a small portion of Gottingen Street's commercial corridor is located in this CT (from Cornwallis Street south to Cogswell Street); and 2) CT9 comprises the downtown core, thus offering opportunities for comparison in this analysis. Similarities and differences between the two will be highlighted in the analysis. Throughout the thesis CT10 will be referred to as "the neighbourhood", or "the study area", while the adjacent CT9 will be referred to as "downtown" or the "the downtown core".

1.5. Methodology

It is ineffectual to suggest strategies for neighbourhood revitalisation without analysing and understanding the history of a neighbourhood. A case study approach is used to inform this longitudinal (1950-2000) study. Social science literature suggests that this method can be used to explain or explore an existing hypothesis, or generate new ones in research.⁶ Given that the purpose of this study is to determine the links between policy, investments and neighbourhood change, it is an appropriate methodology for exploring what has occurred in the Gottingen Street study area over time. Therefore, a historical and statistical investigation is used to examine the relationships between these three variables.

The study utilises secondary data and research as the primary source of information. Data are collected from the federal census, pertinent policy and planning documents, city directories, and archival information (articles and photos) as well as a review of the literature

⁵ It should be noted that census tract renumbering occurred in 1971. Prior to that, census tracts nine and ten were numbered census tracts four and five respectively. All boundaries, however, remained the same.

⁶ Fischler, R. "Case Studies of Planners at Work" in *Journal of Planning Literature*, Vol.15, No.2, 2000, p.185.

pertaining to neighbourhood planning. Other primary sources include: site visits and informal discussions with merchants and residents that were integral to understanding the place in its current distressed state exemplified by dilapidating buildings, vacant buildings, empty lots and high commercial turnover.

The premise for undertaking a historical and statistical analysis in this case study is based on the idea that in order to move forward, there must be an understanding and appreciation of the past; the historical context from which the present day situation arises. For the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, its future can only be positively affected by taking the history of what and how decisions have been made to affect its present day reality, and utilising that knowledge to better affect its future. From the specific circumstances of its history, general conclusions may be drawn.⁷

1.6. How will thesis add to the solution?

This study presents a case for recognising the impact and implications of policy at the neighbourhood level. A focused examination of the relationship between policy and neighbourhood change is important for several reasons. In general, such a study will shed light on what the real implications are of policy decisions made at the federal level to the lives and realities of people locally. Determining the links between policy and neighbourhood decline at the local level will give planners, policy makers, community activists, residents and merchants an awareness of the interconnected, comprehensive nature of the decline of the Gottingen street neighbourhood. Although there may be some transferability in the links established in this study, the results are meant to reflect solely on the condition of the study area. If there is a strong planning acumen of how policies impact neighbourhoods, then future planners will be able to shape new urban policies that assist in the building of strong, equitable neighbourhoods. In turn, such neighbourhoods will

⁷ This follows from the inductive research methodology which begins from the specific and moves to the general.

positively affect the city and region as well. Poverty alleviation, and a strong commercial and residential presence, in any neighbourhood, is dependent upon several factors. For example, the alleviation of inequalities in education, employment, housing and health should concern planning because it is only when these inequalities are minimised that communities will improve and flourish.

1.7. Summary of Thesis Structure

Each chapter is treated as a case study of a decade, exploring each of the variables (outlined in the “scope of study” section of this chapter) to be examined in the thesis. Alongside policy, this will aid in setting the backdrop of the social and economic situation of each decade, thus telling its own story. Each chapter (chapters two to six) will contain the same three elements: 1) a neighbourhood profile that consists of a demographic snapshot of the residents and a key map of the Gottingen street commercial corridor at the beginning of each decade, 2) relevant policy of the decade, and 3) related projects/developments/investments in the neighbourhood.

A key map of the Gottingen Street Commercial District is provided for each decade of the study period to reconstruct the patterns of change over the fifty year period. Consistent with the research methodology, a key map is produced in ten-year increments, from the beginning of each decade. Gottingen Street has left its legacy in the minds of those who were familiar with its more vibrant days. Utilising data from the city directories, this proved to be an interesting exercise in recreating this past. Similar to the rest of the neighbourhood, the land use pattern of the core commercial district includes commercial, residential and light industrial.

Visualising what the street looked like in previous decades is central to understanding that what is happening on the main street, in a sense, reflects the "health" of the entire neighbourhood. The street is a metaphor for what is occurring on a larger scale. Like one's facial expressions that shows signs of what is happening internally, so too does the street

facade. The study's objectives are realised in chapter seven, which presents an analysis and interpretation of the data over time, drawing implications from the portrait drawn in the preceding chapters. Chapter seven also considers what the findings mean for the approach to planning. The conclusions and reflections are addressed in chapter eight.

Chapter 2

The Federal Bulldozer Years⁸: 1950-1960

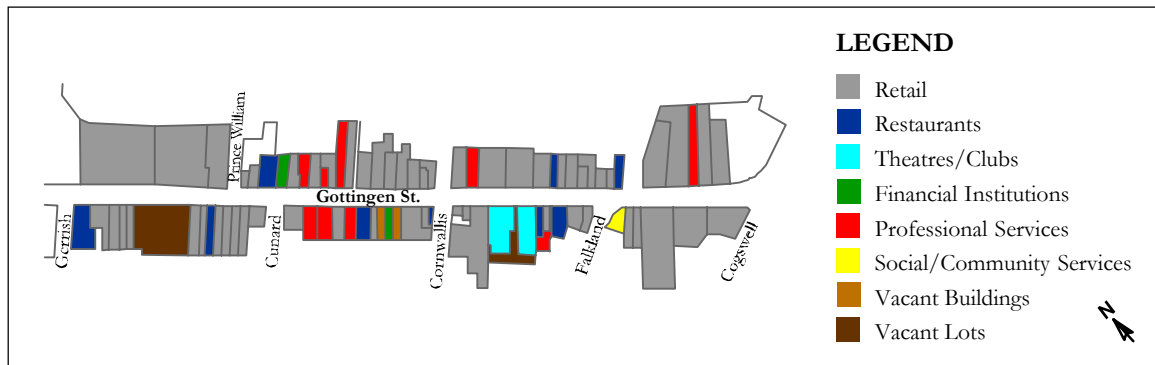


FIGURE 2.1. GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR INVENTORY MAP, 1950

Established in 1749, the city of Halifax's location on a harbour necessitated a strong military presence, which was accompanied by extensive naval and commercial activity. The Second World War increased the military presence in Halifax and caused a significant population boom as well as a stronger commercial presence. Housing for this population explosion was handled by the development of prefabricated housing in the city's North End, where thousands of military personnel and their families lived. It is within the prosperous postwar period, of the late 1940's, that the urban structure of Halifax (and by default its neighbourhoods) would undergo major changes.⁹

⁸ This term was coined by Martin Anderson, author of the book, *The Federal Bulldozer*, to symbolise the catastrophic effects of the Federal Urban Renewal policies in the United States.

⁹ Sandalack, 1998.

2.1. Neighbourhood Profile – A Social & Commercial Snapshot

Prior to discussing the redevelopment plans for the neighbourhood, it is essential to recreate a snapshot of what the Gottingen Street neighbourhood looked like during the 1950-1960 period. Integral to understanding a place is familiarity with the socio-economic condition of the people and the place. This chapter, and the pursuant 'decade' chapters, will begin with a neighbourhood profile, consisting of a description of the core commercial district and a demographic profile at the beginning of the decade.

2.1.1. Core Commercial District Profile

The key map, Figure 2.1, of the 1950 era and the following table is a summary of what the commercial district of Gottingen Street looked like in 1950. The inventory includes Retail, Professional Services, Social/Community Services, Restaurants, Entertainment, and Financial Institutions; and the sheer number of 130 retail/commercial services within a span of four blocks reflects the amount of activity that the street once enjoyed. Major retailers such as Kline's clothing and shoe stores, the Metropolitan store, the New York Dress shop and Glube's were all major retailers for the neighbourhood and the city. "It was once a thriving avenue of hustle and bustle." stated one former business owner. "Thousands of Haligonians patronised Gottingen Street, spending their hard-earned dollars on merchandise that met most budgets."¹⁰ With ten different restaurants and cafés to choose from, such as the popular Fountain Tea Room, movie goers at the venerable Casino and Vogue Theatres were surely not disappointed. Adding to the diverse milieu was the large concentration of professional services available on Gottingen Street. Physicians, dentists, tailors, and barristers all graced the commercial district (a combined total of 19 in 1950), thereby allowing trips to the grocery store or meat market, barber or beauty salon, or bank to easily coincide with a trip to the doctor's office. Giving a brief account of the street's history, Robin Metcalfe writes, "The Miracle Mile of Values enjoyed its heyday after World War II. Clothing and furniture stores like Freeman's,

Glube's, Heinisch's and Kline's kept the longest hours in the city: as late as 11pm on Fridays."¹¹ It is certain that the more than 100 residents of the street enjoyed such conveniences. The collective memory of Gottingen Street by former residents, business owners and shoppers are very similar - Gottingen Street was the place to shop, dine and be entertained in the city. Evidenced by the 130 outlets to choose from, this was undeniably a diverse and thriving commercial district during the day and evenings.

TABLE 2.1 GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR, 1950 PROFILE

INVENTORY		1950
Retail		95
Financial Institutions		2
Professional Services		19
Restaurants/Cafés		10
Entertainment (movie theatres, clubs)		4
Community/Social Services		---
Churches		1
Residential Addresses		96
Residents (# of people listed)		113
Vacant Buildings		1
Vacant Lots		2
-----		4
Total Retail/Commercial		130
TOTAL OCCUPIED ADDRESSES		227

Source: Might Directories (1950) *Halifax and Dartmouth City Directories*

2.1.2. A Demographic Profile

As illustrated in Table 2.2, in 1951 the Gottingen Street Neighbourhood comprised 9% of Halifax's overall population. With an average of 4 persons per household, the study area is consistent with the rest of the city. The neighbourhood, however, has a high rate of tenant

¹⁰ Jacobson, J. "Nostalgic about Gottingen Street", *Mail-Star*, 29 September 1989.

¹¹ Metcalfe, R. "Real estate versus real life", *Atlantic Insight*, January 1988, p.29.

occupancy at 78%, as compared to the downtown core's 87%, both significantly higher than the city average of 45%.

It is interesting to note that, although the age structure of the population is relatively similar (see Figure 2.2), 68% of the population is employed in the study area, while in the city it is slightly less at 61%.¹² This high employment rate in the neighbourhood may imply that there was a strong local economy fuelled by the 130 retail/commercial entities on the commercial corridor.

TABLE 2.2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS, 1951

Characteristics	Downtown Core	Gottingen Street Neighbourhood	Halifax
Population	6267	11,939	133,931
Persons Per Household	4.2	4.1	4.2
Employed	2395	5489	53,362
Employed (%)	59	68	61
Tenure (%)			
Owner Occupied	13	22	55
Tenant Occupied	87	78	45

Source: Canada Census (1951)

¹² To make sense of the employment percentage, one needs to know something about the population structure. Thus, in analysing employment levels, the percentage of people employed is weighted by the employable population, which is the portion of the population between the ages of 15 and 64. Analysing population structure serves two purposes: 1) it gives the researcher a more realistic picture of employment levels, and 2) it provides a sense of the age structure of the area. Therefore, each observation on employment percentage is weighted by its population age structure; the employment percentage is derived by dividing the number of people employed by the number employable.

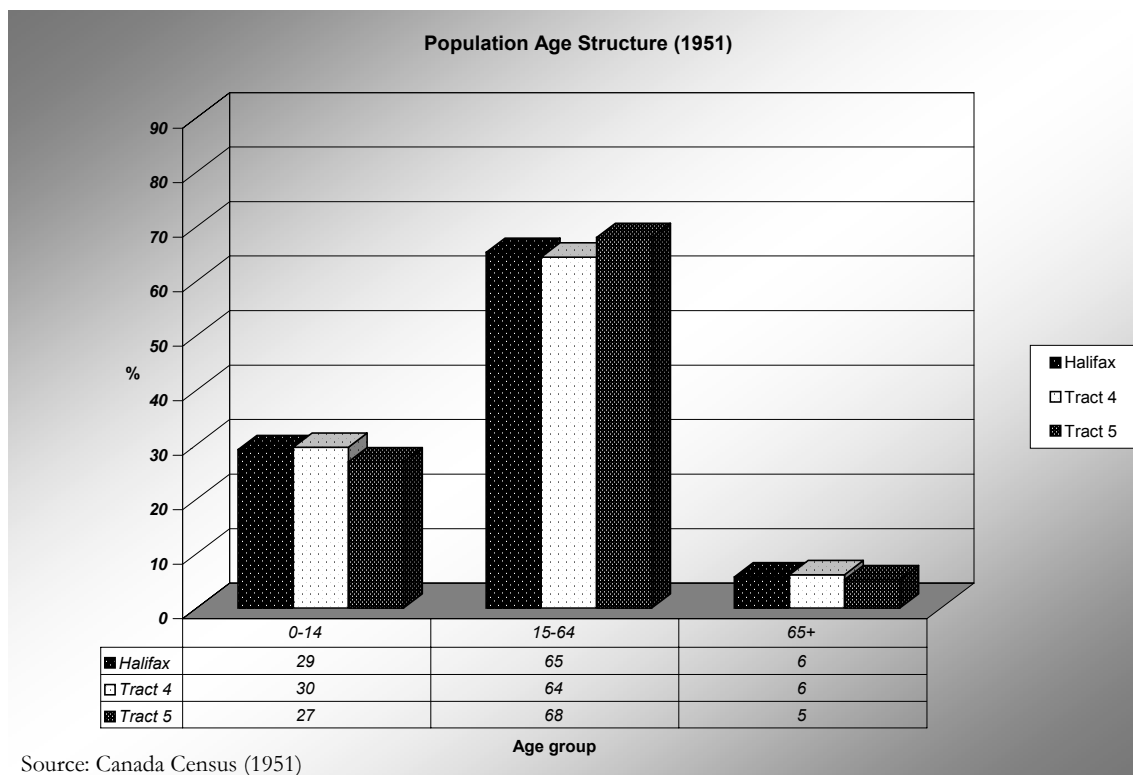


FIGURE 2.2. POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE, 1951

2.2. Relevant Policies and Studies

2.2.1. The National Housing Act

The National Housing Act (NHA) of Canada was established in 1938. The original intent of the NHA was to ensure the provision of housing. For example, under the original Act any redevelopment plans were to include significant residential areas, while providing "decent, safe and sanitary accommodation for any families displaced by a redevelopment project."¹³

¹³ Stephenson, p.vii.

Within several years of its original enactment, key amendments were made that would broaden its scope. The NHA soon encompassed redevelopment efforts not solely concerned with housing. For this reason, discussion of the intent of the amendments is important when attempting to understand subsequent neighbourhood renewal policies and implementations.

First, the 1944 amendments to the NHA were pre-empted by the recommendations of the federal government's Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, a committee established to deal specifically with the issues of housing, and community and social planning. A subcommittee, known as the 'Curtis Committee', reported that there existed "congestion, deterioration, misuse and blight" in Canadian communities.¹⁴ The committee's recommendations were three-fold:

- 1) Broad-scale housing programs in response to demand created by both the Depression and the end of World War II,
- 2) New housing stock in anticipation of population growth projections, and
- 3) Renewal of houses in the older sections of cities.¹⁵

In order to implement some of these recommendations, CMHC was born in 1945 with the directive to increase the flow of mortgage funds (both in access and amount), and to provide affordable housing.¹⁶ For better or for worse, the responsibility of housing, and therefore of related urban planning, was now predominantly in the hands of the federal government.

Another significant amendment to the National Housing Act occurred in 1956 which greatly influenced what was to happen in the area slated for redevelopment in the city of Halifax. The objective of the NHA as originally stated was "the improvement of housing and living conditions."¹⁷ Prior to 1956, the national mandate was clear. Federal assistance was available for redevelopment *only* (emphasis mine) if the land cleared would be used for low-rental housing or for public purposes. The 1956 amendment, however, gave much more room for

¹⁴ Canada Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, IV. (1944). Report of the Subcommittee, *Housing and Community Planning*, p. 161.

¹⁵ Hodge, Gerald, p. 110

¹⁶ Loreto & Price, p. 60. Its double mandate is significant and perhaps paradoxical because it is the former of the two that helped fuel mass suburbanisation.

¹⁷ NHA (1953-1954). c.23, s. 1 found in Loreto & Price, p. 90.

interpretation as it now stated that land may be redeveloped for its "highest and best use"; this could be low or high rental, public, commercial or industrial use.¹⁸ No longer was the sole focus on improving the crumbling social structure through the provision of low-cost housing; now the focal point was "highest and best use", thus opening the doors to more lucrative development.

It is within this broadened framework of the NHA that the Urban Renewal Program came into existence in Halifax. Vicarious authority was given to one man, Gordon Stephenson, a geography professor from Toronto, to chart the city's course. Stephenson's 1957 redevelopment recommendations would have an ineradicable impact on the city's core.

2.2.2. History of the Urban Renewal Program

The modernist notion of planning was characterised by a rigid separation of land uses. In this, 'functional city'¹⁹, employment, residential, recreation and institutional uses were separated and linked by roads. The urban renewal program was a by-product of this mode of thinking.²⁰

The term 'urban renewal' was first coined in the United States Housing Act of 1949 and put into effect through the allocation of federal funds to local municipalities for the purpose of slum clearance and the creation of social housing projects. Through this legislation and the power of eminent domain, local authorities were sanctioned to condemn and confiscate property in blighted areas, and subsequently clear the land for resale to private developers. As an added incentive, the government also made funds available for infrastructure improvements. Combined with the inclusion of commercial redevelopment in the 1954

¹⁸ Stephenson, p. vii.

¹⁹ This was the theme of the 4th meeting of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne, CIAM IV, whose members were proponents of this form. Cited in Frampton, 1992.

²⁰ Sandalack, 1998.

amendment to the United States Housing Act, these three factors significantly increased private sector reinvestment.²¹

Urban Renewal policy wreaked havoc on inner city neighbourhoods throughout North America. Initially, the demolition was in a physical sense, but it was followed very quickly by social and economic destruction for neighbourhoods in the urban core. Urban Renewal policy would not only change the physical fabric of the inner city but would have long term social, economical, and psychological ramifications. In most cities which enacted such policies, including Halifax, people were displaced and communities disintegrated. This writer believes that it is one of the main reasons that the Gottingen Street neighbourhood is still in a state of social and economic decline, and thus it is necessary to explore the rationale behind the program, and its pursuant implementation. Prior to illustrating the specifics of urban renewal enactment in Halifax, a brief historical account of its formation as a concept and its objectives will be reviewed.

Discussions surrounding the need for social equity and healthier living conditions did not spontaneously grow out of the post-World War II period; the issues were merely overshadowed by the war. Throughout the 1930's, Humphrey Carver, a pioneer of community planning and housing in Canada,²² and other like-minded individuals attempted to address the issue of poor housing conditions. One example of these early efforts was the establishment of "The Housing Centre" at the University of Toronto by Carver and fellow professors. In 1939, a national housing conference was held highlighting slum housing issues. The outcome of the conference was wide support for the idea that the provision of satisfactory housing for all Canadians should be overseen by the federal government.²³

Canada was facing urban housing problems in the post World War II period. The focus of the Canadian government was on two simultaneous processes: development and redevelopment of the urban centres. To facilitate the latter process, in 1956, Canada adopted the notion of

²¹ Holcomb & Beauregard, 1981.

²² He took a leading role at CMHC advocating and writing on these issues.

²³ Hodge, pp.110-111.

urban renewal as a national policy. The program formed the nexus of urban redevelopment schemes and activities, with the main objective of addressing the growing *physical* deterioration of inner cities. This new planning tool almost single-handedly caused a flurry of planning activity in both Canada and the United States during the 1950's and 1960's. In Canada, land could be cleared and redeveloped for its highest and best use, and the federal government would fund 50% of this effort. What municipality would not take advantage of such a lucrative financial investment offer?

It is difficult to determine if Canada simply followed in the footsteps of the United States, since both urban renewal policies were similar, as well as their subsequent amendments that allowed for a much broader definition of renewal. In the United States, urban renewal policy originated in the 1949 'United States Housing Act', which was then modified in 1954 to encourage private sector investment. In Canada, this policy originated in the National Housing Act which originally focused on redevelopment for low rental housing or public purposes. This focal point broadened after the 1956 amendment, which now allowed redevelopment for the "highest and best use" (low or high rental, public, commercial or industrial use). Strikingly similar amendments occurred on both sides of the border. It is unclear why both countries changed their original stance; was Canada merely trying to emulate the U.S. example? Regardless, the fact remains that amendments occurred - and important decisions were made on this premise.

2.2.3. The Context for Urban Renewal in Halifax

Halifax, albeit relatively small in size, did not escape the bulldozer and urban renewal's calamitous effects. Mirroring the craze sweeping the country, urban renewal profoundly impacted Halifax's downtown core and adjacent north end neighbourhood. The financial and political agency given to the notion of redevelopment and rebuilding did not predict the long-term social, economic and physical effects of urban renewal decisions.

Like many cities after the war, Halifax was in the psychological state of rebuilding. With its geographic and historical positioning as a port city, Halifax's central downtown area and adjacent neighbourhoods were the heart of economic activity. The wartime boom increased the city's population; particularly in the downtown and adjacent 'North End'²⁴ neighbourhood. This area is consistent with CT9 and CT10 as illustrated in Figure 1.3, but extends north of the McDonald Bridge. By 1947, the population exploded to 99, 000; a 40% increase within six years.²⁵ Most low-income housing was found in the centre of the city and adjacent northern neighbourhoods. The increased population, amplified with the physical and economic signs of an ageing central area, created an environment of both overcrowding and physical deterioration. Blended with a multiplicity of tenement housing, Halifax now had an area commonly characterised as a "slum". It is important to note that this was an external characterisation, and was not likely how residents referred to their environs. From the point of view of the city, however, the above factors made the city's downtown core and near north end clear candidates for the slum clearance program. A consequential redevelopment study would lead the way.

2.2.4. Stephenson's Redevelopment Study

In 1956, Halifax City Council, in conjunction with the province and CMHC, commissioned Gordon Stephenson, a professor from the University of Toronto, to examine the city's housing conditions in order to determine the following:

- i) the areas which require development and the order in which such areas should be redeveloped;
- ii) the best methods for re-housing families living in the areas planned for redevelopment;
- iii) the recommended uses for the land when redeveloped.²⁶

²⁴ In this broader context, the North End refers to both the far North End and the old North Suburbs.

²⁵ Erickson, p. 76.

²⁶ Stephenson, p. vii.

It is within the broadened context of the 1956 National Housing Act amendment that Stephenson based his recommendations. As already noted, the NHA's original purpose was housing and stipulated that any areas slated for redevelopment must be predominantly housing before or after redevelopment. The 1956 amendment was crucial for it enabled Stephenson to make seminal recommendations since the revision now allowed for any type of redevelopment.

The study focuses on redevelopment of a 119-block radius comprised of the downtown core, and the inner city situated in the near north end of the Halifax peninsula (see Figure 1.3). Previously, an advisory committee to the city had surveyed 56 of those blocks, comprised of old residential development. After presenting to city council, the decision was made to extend the scope and nature of the survey. This led to the commissioning of Gordon Stephenson, and hence the redevelopment study that built on the previous work of the advisory committee.²⁷ Stephenson's broader study included the Gottingen Street commercial district and surrounding neighbourhood.

Stephenson's 1956 Profile

At the time of the redevelopment study, Gottingen Street was the commercial centre for the northern end of peninsular Halifax. Stephenson's study characterises the Gottingen Street commercial district as one of the two streets (the other being Spring Garden Road) that plays an important function outside of the downtown core. The diversity of retail and services makes it a destination not only for the neighbourhood residents, but also for the rest of the city.²⁸

In his study, Stephenson documents the condition and property value of residential buildings, and the situation of overcrowding, which he asserts collectively lead to slum conditions. The conditions were calculated as a percentage of all dwellings in a block. As mentioned earlier the eight blocks directly adjacent to the Gottingen Street commercial district span from Cogswell

²⁷ Stephenson, pg. vii.

²⁸ Stephenson, p. 42. The other street is Spring Garden Road.

Street in the south, to Gerrish Street on the northern perimeter. The indicators he measures are defined as follows:

- i) Overcrowding - The percentages are based on the premise of one room per person in the block. The percentages of overcrowding for each block follow from the following calculation: $\text{number of persons} - \text{number of rooms} \times 100 / \text{number of persons}$.
- ii) Sanitary Equipment Degree of Deficiency - This measures the degree of deficiency, shown as a percentage, in the provision of sanitary equipment. In accordance with Ordinance 50, clause 8, at minimum every residential dwelling should have one water-closet (W.C.), one lavatory basin and sink and one bath for every fifteen persons. One point was scored against each building which failed to reach the standard with respect to any of the three required fittings. A deficiency percentage was established using the following formula: $\text{number of points against} \times 100 / \text{number of persons in block} \times 3$.
- iii) General Condition of Buildings - Percentages by blocks indicating degree of inadequacy in structure, space, light and ventilation, as prescribed in Ordinance 50, clauses 3, 4 and 5. The degree of inadequacy in the block was determined as follows: $\text{number of points against} \times 100 / \text{number of persons in block} \times 3$.²⁹

The following table summarises the findings for the relevant blocks. The first three factors are recorded as a degree of the condition, and are therefore represented as a percentage stating the degree of inadequacy or deficiency. The last four columns represent monetary values.

TABLE 2.3 CONDITION AND VALUE OF RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS ALONG THE GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR, 1957³⁰

Block Number	Over Crowding %	Sanitary Equipment Deficiency %	Condition of Residential Buildings %	Assessed Value of Property by Blocks (in thousands of dollars)			Block Value per sq. foot in dollars
				Land	Building	Combined	
14	Nil	21%	67%	118	285	403	4.4

²⁹ For further details on these 3 classification systems, refer to Stephenson, pp. 46-50.

³⁰ This table has been created using data from the Redevelopment Study Survey, 1956 and the Clemishaw Valuation of all property in Halifax, 1955. Both sets of data are found in Stephenson, 1957.

15	9%	28%	61%	266	640	906	7.5
17	4%	20%	60%	155	335	490	6.0
19	19%	6%	48%	229	536	765	2.9
22	22%	28%	56%	183	396	579	4.1
23	1%	21%	62%	241	603	844	7.5
24	11%	17%	49%	180	665	845	8.4
25	3%	17%	42%	124	335	459	4.5
Range	0-22%	6-28%	42-67%	118- 266	285-665	403-906	2.9-8.4
Average	9%	20%	56%	187	474	661	5.6

As illustrated in Table 2.3, the overall condition of these residential buildings directly adjacent to the Gottingen Street commercial corridor is generally poor. On average, the condition of residential buildings on these eight blocks was deemed 56% inadequate. The average rate of overcrowding here is 9%, which in the context of the larger study area is not severe.³¹ Within this context, the following section is a summary of Stephenson's proposals and pursuant implementations.

2.2.5. Proposals for Redevelopment in the Gottingen Street Neighbourhood

The proposals below are in relation to the neighbourhood and its core commercial district.³²

1. *Change zoning by-law from mixed-use to commercial/industrial.* Prior to the redevelopment study, the zoning for the core commercial district is a combination of multifamily residential, mixed residential, commercial and industrial – all of which are present on the street. Stephenson suggests that the zoning by-law be changed to predominantly commercial/industrial, with redevelopment of some of the houses behind Gottingen

³¹ The Jacob Street area below Citadel Hill had an overcrowding rate of 76%; while just north of City Hall the rate was 100%.

Street to parking lots. The justification for clearing this land to non-residential use is that the current mixed-use zoning would not be suitable for large-scale redevelopment with fragments of commercial co-existing with residential.”

2. *Regulated use of Ordinance 50 to improve on the deteriorating condition of residential dwellings.* Based on his survey of conditions, meeting minimum physical standards could improve the quality of life for families. Stephenson is not merely concerned about the social conditions however; as he recognises that “even the worst housing in the Study Area is highly profitable real estate”.³³ The improvement of residential buildings for their economic value is of greater concern than the social considerations/benefits of revitalisation.
3. *Land clearance for commercial expansion and non-residential improvements.* Proposal 8 is the most important recommendation affecting the Gottingen Street commercial district as it spans the core commercial district and suggests clearing multi-family residential for parking lots. The proposal succeeded in displacing 660 people. According to Stephenson, clearing residential units here would increase the “efficiency and attractiveness” of the City by locating parking behind shops and disallowing parking on the main street. In effect, this proposal would cause Gottingen Street to turn into a vehicular thoroughfare, thus discouraging stopping and shopping. One is more likely to stop if parking is visible on the street. More importantly, the proposal would also displace a population base that would support the local businesses and economy due to close proximity.

As shown in Table 2.4, the difference between present and proposed population leaves 3360 people displaced from the neighbourhood. Stephenson suggests they move into an area that is outside their neighbourhood - further north to the suburban portion of peninsular Halifax. Figure 2.3 illustrates where in the study area the schemes are located.

³² Stephenson, 1957.

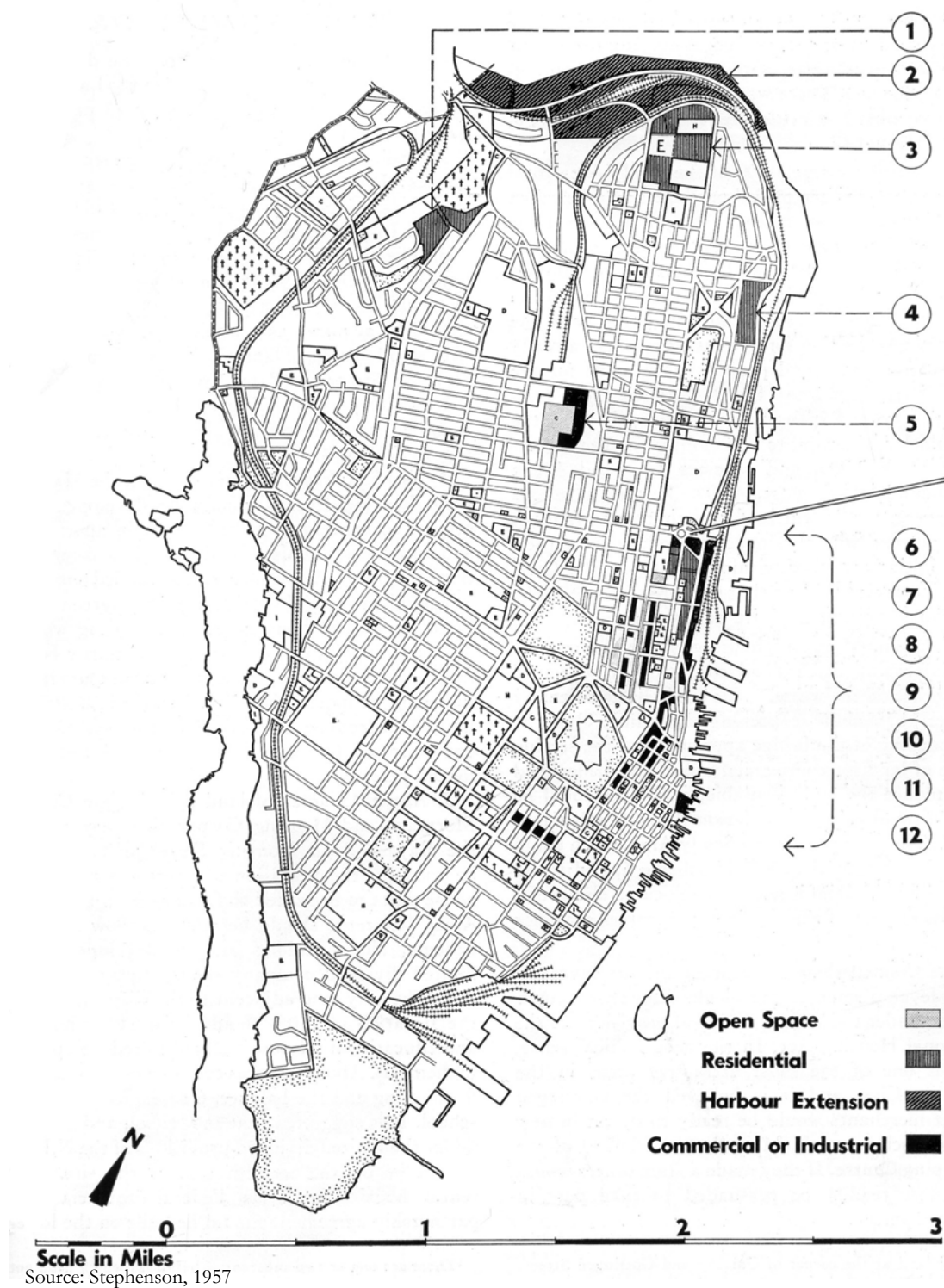
³³ Stephenson, p. 54.

TABLE 2.4 PROPOSED SCHEMES AFFECTING STUDY AREA & ADJACENT DOWNTOWN CORE³⁴

		Proposed Schemes	Present Population		Proposed Population
Gottingen Street Neighbourhood	6	40		Total 2510	600
	residential, library, open space				
	7 east	1420			Nil
	7 west	1050			1100
Both Neighbourhoods	8*	660			Nil
Downtown Core	9	1620		Total 2550	Nil
	10	170			Nil
	11	100			Nil
Total Schemes 6-11		5060			1700

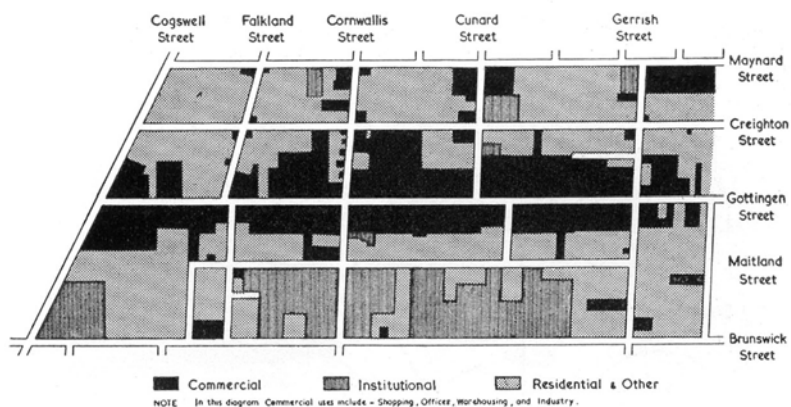
³⁴ An excerpt from Stephenson's proposal, p. 56, 1957.

FIGURE 2.3. AREA MAP OF PROPOSED SCHEMES

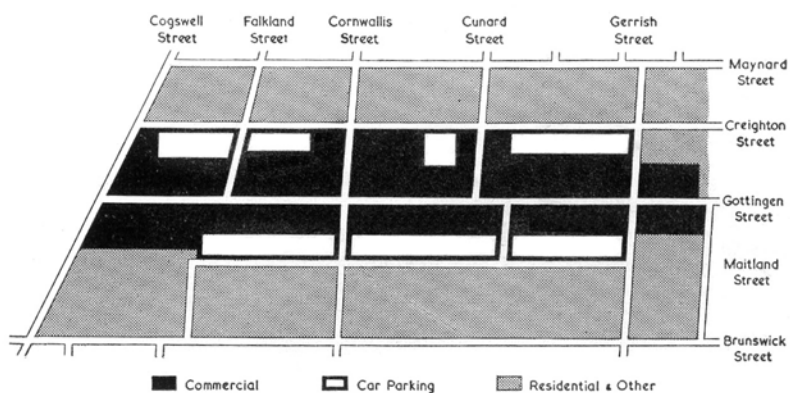


For the core commercial district, between Cogswell and Gerrish Streets, seven pay parking lots within seven blocks are proposed. With such implementation, a clear division between the commercial and residential blocks would be established. As indicated earlier, existing land use was a mix of retail and residential within the shopping blocks (see Figure 2.4). Scheme six, which falls between Gerrish and North Streets on Gottingen Street, proposes residential, a library and open space. It is the only scheme that proposes to significantly increase the population of the area to be renewed. Stephenson recommends that both schemes could be decided upon fairly quickly.

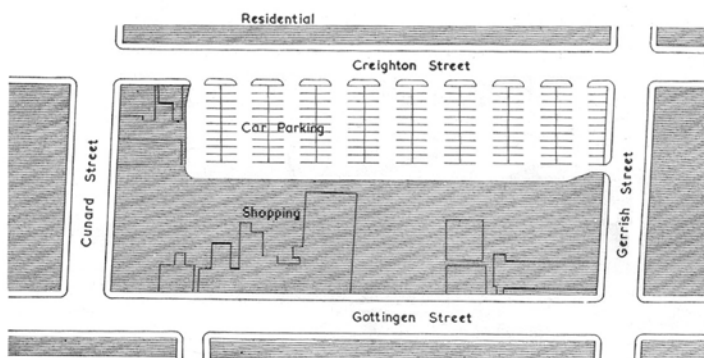
FIGURE 2.4. GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL DISTRICT: PRESENT AND PROPOSED LAND USES



existing plan



proposed plan



parking plan

Source: Stephenson, 1957

2.3. Policy Based Neighbourhood Changes

The following are some neighbourhood changes resulting from Stephenson's redevelopment proposal.

1. From scheme eight, two of the suggested seven parking lots were built for the "Gottingen Street shopping centre", as Stephenson referred to it. They were both built on the west side of Maitland Street, between Portland Place and Cornwallis Street (see Figure 2.4, proposed plan). This measure took parking off the main street and located it behind shops and businesses. This one incremental change led to the transition from a neighbourhood main street to a thoroughfare for vehicular traffic to and from the downtown core.
2. Three other parking lots exist within two more blocks which serve businesses, namely the North End Health Clinic, the Derby Restaurant and Lounge, and the North Branch Library. All three are also on the west side of Maitland Street.
3. In scheme six, the library and residential buildings were built as proposed. Also, the George Dixon Recreational Centre was also constructed as part of the redevelopment plan.

In current planning practice, mixed-use zoning is a tool used to sustain vibrancy in neighbourhoods. Conceivably this is one of the main reasons that Gottingen Street thrived as a diverse, animated main street for both the neighbourhood and the rest of the city. The ideology of the day did not see this as a positive force but rather a weakness as Stephenson recommended that the various uses be separated. The rebirth of Gottingen Street is, however, possible in the current, mixed-use zoning of the neighbourhood.

The Redevelopment Study is paradoxical because it clearly documents the overcrowding situation, but recommends that areas be cleared and redeveloped for commercial use. Although the study calls for some residential construction, the amount is not nearly enough to replace the current housing stock, or even begin to address overcrowding. How is it that the

overcrowding situation was so well documented but adequate provisions were not made in the proposals?

The Gottingen Street area was a successful mixed-use neighbourhood, but primarily due to age it needed rehabilitation. Its problems, though, were misdiagnosed. An attempt to make a distinct demarcation between commercial and residential uses was considered the cure - with the premise being “uncertainty leads to confusion and further deterioration.”³⁵ Although Stephenson suggests people should be rehoused, he doesn’t think they need to be in the same neighbourhood, thereby putting greater importance on commercial enterprise than a sense of community and the neighbourhood residents. These decisions are indicative of an era when sensitivity to social consequences was not a major factor in decision making.

The major drawback of the proposals outlined in Stephenson’s Redevelopment Study for the Gottingen Street neighbourhood is its emphasis on automobile flow & economic vitality above consideration for the neighbourhood unit. This decision would eventually result in an astronomical population loss. Without people to support the community’s social and economic viability, how is a neighbourhood supposed to begin the process of rebuilding? It appears the focus of the redevelopment was economic rebuilding at a larger scale than just the neighbourhood. The city was growing into a region, with significant developments such as the building of the Angus McDonald Bridge occurring in 1955. The lens from which the city was viewed was very much a macro perspective. Clearance and redevelopment at a grand scale were viewed as effective tools for increasing the efficiency of the region. The city neglected, however, to examine the effect its actions had on the neighbourhood. Purposely, Gottingen Street became a strategic route connecting the two cities of Halifax and Dartmouth, and in effect the redevelopment study worked against the neighbourhood's existence.

³⁵ Stephenson, p. 18

2.4. Conclusion

Urban renewal in Halifax was no different than in other parts of the country. The draw of federal money to urban centres was irresistible to municipalities across the country – and the reaction was similar – clear and rebuild. A well-known example of this occurred in Halifax’s downtown core. In accordance with one of Stephenson’s recommendations, the City of Halifax demarcated the area below Citadel Hill as the Central Redevelopment Area (CRA) - an 8.8 acre area where the conglomerate of buildings known as Scotia Square currently exists. It was stated that “no development project in the post-war period matched the CRA in its scope or implications for the downtown area.”³⁶ With so much money available from the federal coffers, the political sentiment of the day recognised there may be drawbacks, but in their eyes the benefits outweighed the negative externalities. Only time would tell the unfolding story.

Imagine looking at a map and after some time certain areas are no longer amenable to the eye. Conceivably, the "designer" would outline what is no longer pleasing, erase it and commence redrawing that portion of the plan deemed unsuitable. Urban renewal was analogous to this scenario. Municipalities identified, and drew boundaries around areas that they no longer found attractive in their cities, and proceeded to reconstruct these portions of their maps. Social networks and communities exist within these boundaries. The physical erasure of old, dilapidated buildings proved disastrous - for the human element was also rubbed out. This monumental federal influence - politically, financially, and physically - in urban renewal lead to the creation of the pejorative saying, “the federal bulldozer.” The phrase was a cynical reflection of the heavy-handed policy that directed the wrecking ball approach to urban redevelopment.

In its original formation, the notion of urban renewal was potentially positive, based on providing more low income housing. However the drive for economic development, fuelled by post-war growth, coupled with the fact that Halifax wanted to develop in the path of larger Canadian cities, was solidified by: 1) the 1956 NHA amendment that allowed redevelopment

³⁶ Grant, p. 60.

for highest and best use, and 2) the influential Stephenson report of the same year. This amendment killed the initial social intent, and turned it into the no conscious bulldozer.

The Urban Renewal Program was controversial at best. Reflecting on what good may have come of the program, Gerald Hodge suggests that it essentially raised the profile of planning in Canada.³⁷ There were those who opposed and those who favoured its brand of urban renewal. As one local historian suggests, "All the major planks of the Stephenson Report were attempted, and most of them were achieved in one form or another. Once implementation began, battle lines were drawn between proponents and opponents of its particular approach to urban renewal."³⁸

³⁷ Hodge, 1998.

³⁸ Erickson, p. 80.

Chapter 3

The Rise and Demise of Urban Renewal: 1960-1970

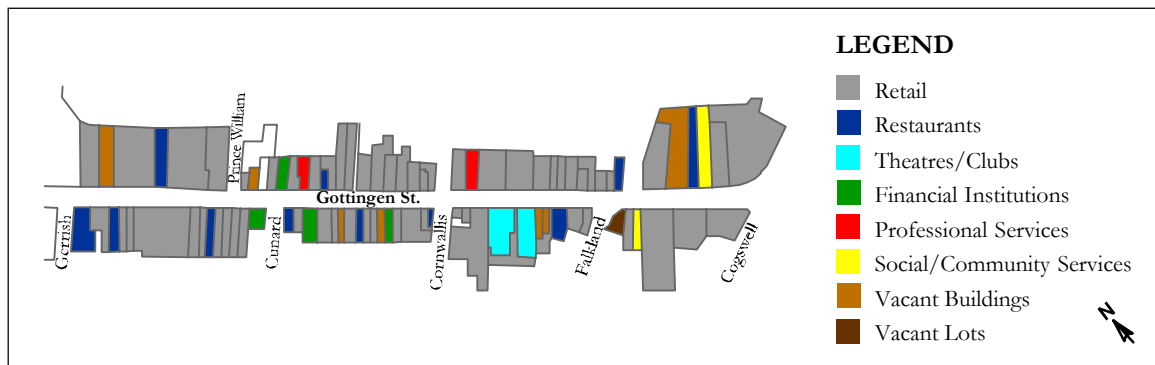


FIGURE 3.1. GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR INVENTORY MAP, 1960

During the 1960's many changes occurred in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, as well as in the central business district just a few blocks away. While the implementation of urban renewal policy decisions began at the end of the previous decade, the majority of such decisions were not fully realised until the 1960's. By the end of the decade, the social and physical fabric of the neighbourhood would be altered in a very significant way.

It should be noted, however, that several processes were at work during this period in history. As mentioned in the previous chapter, mass suburbanisation was fuelled by the CMHC mandate to increase the access to and amount of mortgage funds made available for the new housing stock built in response to the post-war housing demand. Following the demographic shift, businesses were also drawn to the suburbs where there was more space and lower taxes. Simultaneously, the advent of the shopping mall made its mark. In 1956, Nova Scotia's first two shopping centres were built in the suburbs, the Bayers Road Shopping Centre and the Dartmouth Shopping Centre, followed by the construction of the Halifax Shopping Centre in 1962. For example, the major retailer Eaton's relocated from Barrington Street in downtown

Halifax, to act as an anchor for the new Halifax Shopping Centre.³⁹ Each of these developments played a role in drawing businesses and pedestrians off the street, alongside urban renewal policies and implementations.

3.1. Neighbourhood Profile - A Social and Commercial Snapshot

3.1.1. Core Commercial District Profile

Hat shops, children's clothing stores, theatres, restaurants and cafés, all are a part of the richly woven fabric of Gottingen Street in 1960. A multi-purpose street that meets basic shopping needs as well as shops and services that meet specific needs such as: beauty salons, barber shops, shoe stores, men's wear, dentists' offices, accountant services, optometrists, barristers, and the list goes on. How many streets can be filled with such variety within a four block span? These elements, in addition to approximately fifty residential addresses were tightly woven together on this small stretch of Gottingen's commercial corridor. Given this diversity, this certainly was a varied and dynamic street during the 1960's. One long time business owner reminisces about the days gone by:

"As I stood on the street yesterday, I saw little pedestrian traffic, not like I remembered from the 1950's and 1960's when there would be line-ups of people at Kline's (and Heinich's, Rubins, Reitmans, Discount Shoeland) to buy the specials on Promotional Days and to share laughs and barbs with the sales staffs of those stores that placed the customer's desires ahead of almost anything else - even profits if a sale could be made."⁴⁰

During the 1960's there were several indicators of confidence in the area's commercial sector. For example, by 1960, the first Lawton's Drug Store in Halifax joined the commercial core of Gottingen Street and by 1965 Sobeys' grocery store also located on Gottingen. The opening of the first chain drug store in this location is indicative of the street's vitality. Another measure of a neighbourhood's good economic health is the presence of financial institutions. By 1960, Gottingen Street housed four financial institutions, two more than in the previous

³⁹ Sandalack, 1998.

⁴⁰ Jacobson, J. "Nostalgic about Gottingen Street", *Mail-Star*, 29 September 1989.

decade. While the total number of retail/commercial sites on the street increased slightly from 131 to 138, the number of residential addresses decreases by 50%, from 96 to 48 (see Table 3.1). This significant reduction in residential addresses was a sign of things to come.

TABLE 3.1 GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR, 1960 PROFILE

INVENTORY	1960
Retail	104
Financial Institutions	4
Professional Services	13
Restaurants/Cafés	13
Entertainment (movie theatres, clubs)	4
Community/Social Services	1
Churches	---
Residential Addresses	48
Residents (# of people)	80
Vacant Buildings	9
Vacant Lots	1
-----	---
Total Retail/Commercial	138
TOTAL OCCUPIED ADDRESSES	187

Source: Might Directories (1960) *Halifax and Dartmouth City Directories*

3.1.2. A Demographic Profile

By 1961, the downtown core lost 1,887 people, a 30% decrease from 1951. The Gottingen Street neighbourhood, however, gained 1131 people, a 9% increase. The two neighbourhoods combined lost 756 people, a total loss of 4% of its population from 1951 (see Table 3.2).

TABLE 3.2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS, 1961

Characteristics	Downtown Core	% Change 1951-1961	Gottingen Street N'hood.	% Change 1951-1961	Halifax	% Change 1951-1961
Population	4380	-30%	13,070	+9.5%	183,946	+37%
Person Per Household	4	-4.8%	4.3	+4.9%	4.0	-4.8%
Employed	1492	-38%	6883	+25%	71,319	+34%
Employed (%)	59	0%	75	+7%	63	+2%
Tenure (%)						
Owner Occupied	14	+1%	24	+2%	55	0%
Tenant Occupied	86	-1%	76	-2%	45	0%

Source: Canada Census (1961)

The large population decline within the downtown core can be explained by schemes eight and nine of Stephenson's report. Scheme eight proposed a clearance of an area just east of Gottingen Street to create parking lots, while scheme nine proposed the complete clearance of the Jacob Street area to make way for new development. By 1962, both areas had been completely cleared.⁴¹ As indicated in the previous chapter, the combined population loss for those two schemes was 2280 people (see Table 2.4). This figure is important for when it is compared to the figure acquired during the 1961 census (see Table 3.2) taken a year prior to clearance, the population loss indicates that 1900 people were likely displaced and relocated to other areas of the city (due to the two clearance schemes). For example, many residents of the Jacob Street area located in scheme nine were relocated from the neighbourhood to Mulgrave Park, a public housing development at the far northern end of the peninsula. It is unclear as to where the 660 people displaced by the parking lots east of Gottingen Street would end up

⁴¹ Erickson, p. 80.

living. Some may have stayed within the neighbourhood but moved further north into the study area, where the population had increased by nine percent. This may partially explain the population's increase in the study area. In the same period, the city's population increased by 37%. It is also interesting to note that while the average number of persons per household decreased slightly in Halifax and the downtown by 5%, in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood the number increased slightly by 5% to 4.3 persons per household (see Table 3.2). It is possible that some who were displaced from the adjacent downtown core moved into the neighbourhood, while others moved into the neighbourhood because it was experiencing an economic boom in which more jobs were available. The neighbourhood's employed population rose 7%, from 68% to 75% between 1951 and 1961, while the city's employment rate rose by only 2%. The employable population in the neighbourhood increased by 2%, while in the adjacent neighbourhood and in the city, this population aged 15-64 declined slightly (see Figure 3.2).

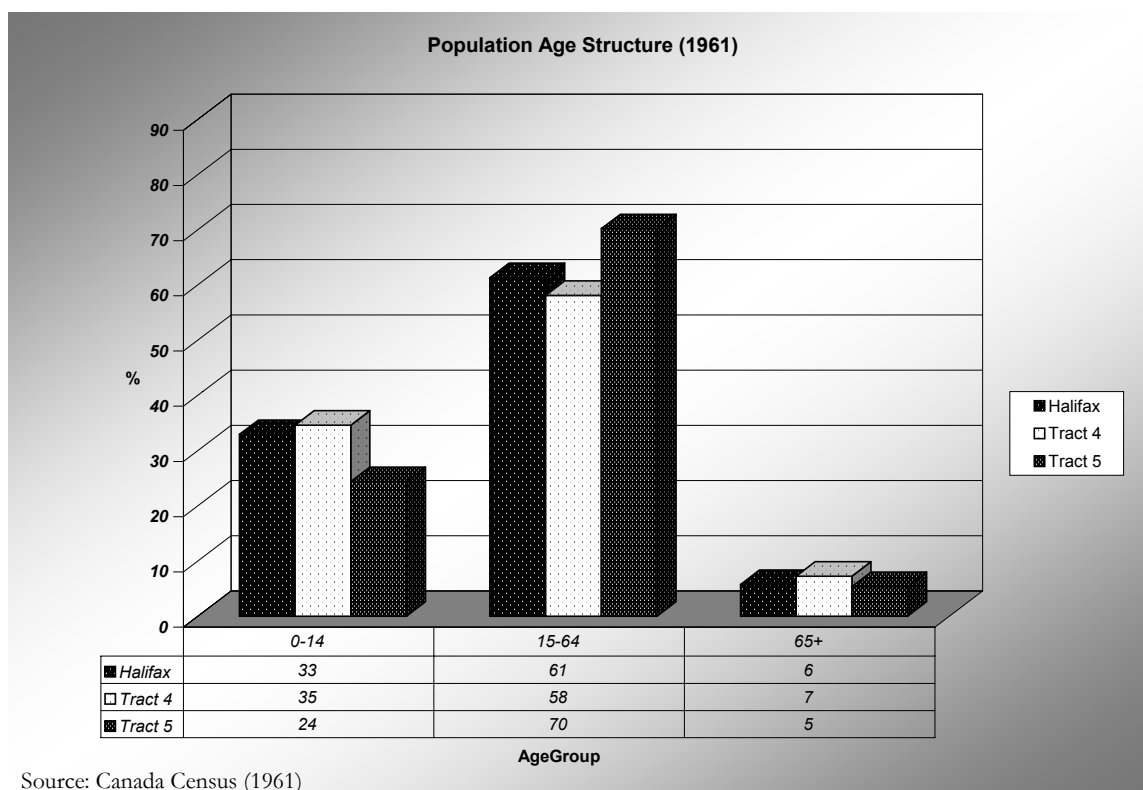


FIGURE 3.2 POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE, 1961

3.2. Policy Based Neighbourhood Changes: The Enactment of Urban Renewal

"All the major planks of the Stephenson Report were attempted, and most of them were achieved in one form or another. Once implementation began, battle lines were drawn between proponents and opponents of its particular approach to urban renewal."⁴²

The Federal Bulldozer

Consistent with scheme nine of Stephenson's 1956 redevelopment proposal, demolition of 8.8 acres, approximately 6-8 city blocks, began in 1958 and continued for five years. Considered slum housing by city planners and officials, this area below Citadel Hill was home to more than 1600 people.⁴³ It was not only housing that was ripped out of this area, but businesses, people and social relationships were also destroyed. The ensuing large scale redevelopment named Scotia Square, was built in phases from 1965-1975. Located on prime land in the central business district, Scotia Square is a retail/office space/residential development linked by internal pedestrian walkways.

As indicated in the previous chapter, by 1962 the homes east of Gottingen Street were cleared and 660 people were displaced and replaced by parking lots, consistent with scheme eight's parking plan for the proposed Gottingen Street Shopping Centre.

Mulgrave Park, a 360 unit, large-scale public housing development in the far north end of the city (outside of the study area), was built in 1962 for the purpose of re-housing residents displaced by renewal schemes, specifically the 1600 people displaced from their homes in the heart of Halifax's central business district. The construction was a direct result of scheme nine in Stephenson's redevelopment proposal. Although Mulgrave Park housed some of the former Jacob Street area residents, many were left to find their own housing.⁴⁴ Building affordable housing was not the problem, but rather it was the new physical environment which was large and obtrusive, and the undemocratic process of relocation that made the scheme oppressive.

⁴² Erickson, p. 80.

⁴³ Erickson, p. 78

⁴⁴ Grant, p. 59.

In other words, this forced relocation not only severed a community network, but also took away the choice and autonomy of its residents.

Again, from 1964-1969, the city would relentlessly expropriate the land of yet another community and force the relocation of its residents from 1964-1969. This time it was Africville, a now historic African-Canadian settlement of approximately 400 people, located on the northern tip of the Halifax peninsula, on the shores of the Bedford Basin.⁴⁵ Once again, a large-scale public housing project would be built to rehouse this community - consistent with scheme six of the redevelopment plan. The expulsion of this community's residents also caused a loss of autonomy, as most went from being homeowners to tenants. Children, who used to enjoy natural open space as their playground, now had slabs of concrete as their recreation grounds.⁴⁶ By what was now a predictable fashion, the federal government entered into an agreement (made possible by the NHA) by first making land available for the redevelopment. To accomplish this, the Institute of the Deaf and Dumb was bulldozed and the land cleared for redevelopment. In 1966, the 250 unit development, Uniacke Square, would be completed along Gottingen Street, directly adjacent to the neighbourhood's northern boundary, as defined earlier in this study. Along with housing, this plan included a public library, a recreation centre, new school buildings and a post office. Today, the North Branch Memorial library, the George Dixon Recreation Centre and one elementary school, St. Pat's-Alexandra, still remain while the neighbourhood has since lost their post office and one school due to a declining population. The library and community centre continue to be assets for the area, especially the library which provides many community programs and is often considered the heart of the neighbourhood. Before the end of the decade, more public housing would be built in the neighbourhood in the form of three senior citizen high rise towers. Two of these seniors' complexes, Ahern Manor and Sunrise Manor, are situated along the Gottingen Street commercial district, thus increasing the lower income, unemployable population in the area.

⁴⁵ For a detailed account of the history of Africville, see Clairmont D. & Dennis Magill. (1994) *Africville: the life and death of a Canadian black community*. Canadian Scholars' Press: Toronto.

⁴⁶ Excerpt from the NFB of Canada produced video entitled, 'Remember Africville', 1991.

In Halifax's North End, two large public housing developments were built according to the guiding principle of urban renewal. Although built to provide low-cost housing, these public housing developments were also born out of destruction of neighbourhoods, where people were forced to move outside of their social networks.⁴⁷ This paradoxical history has most certainly added to the present day stigma attached to these public housing developments, its residents, and by extension the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. Relevant to this study, this stigma has extended itself to the Gottingen Street neighbourhood.

Large projects, such as Uniacke Square, were built to rehouse people forcibly removed from their homes in the name of city rebuilding; this became a negative place for Uniacke Square residents from its inception. Add to this a racial component, in a province where the legacy of slavery exists, and the racial desegregation of schools occurred just ten years prior (in 1955), and one can begin to understand the hostility and resentment that was brewing in the neighbourhood. For Africville residents, it was an unkind reminder of the history of their forefathers and mothers in Nova Scotia, circumstances which continue to impact the place even today.

3.3. The 1964 NHA Policy Amendments

How was it that so much redevelopment and building of public housing did not occur until the 1960's? After all, the NHA's Federal/Provincial Public Housing Program was introduced in 1949, while its Urban Redevelopment Program was enacted in 1956. Under this program, a cost share provision was outlined as a 75/25 percent split between the federal/provincial governments. The answer may lie in the fact that during the 1950's, it seemed the economic recession did not allow municipalities to meet the infrastructure requirements of such large housing projects.⁴⁸ Given the economic reality of the day, provincial governments may too

⁴⁷ Sewell (1994) talks about how this was an early shortcoming of public housing that manifested itself in large cities across the country.

⁴⁸ Rose, p. 37.

have been deterred by their 25% cost share responsibility. Albert Rose, an advocate of public housing in Canada, felt that given the efforts to start the program, the success rate by 1960 (in terms of the number of public housing developments that were built during this era) was disappointing.⁴⁹

In 1964, there were two significant amendments to the NHA, lending itself to the building spurt that occurred in Halifax and other cities throughout the country. First, regarding public housing, an amendment to Section 35 gave CMHC the responsibility to provide 90% of the capital costs, with the provincial contribution now only being 10%. As mentioned above, the previous cost-share had been a 75/25 percent split. Although the provincial capital cost decreased, accountability for operating losses would now be shared equally between the two arms of the government, and ownership remained with the provinces. Second, addressing urban redevelopment, Section 23 was amended to broaden the approach taken in the prevention and treatment of urban blight. Preparation and implementation of urban renewal schemes, and insured loans for public housing in these areas were all considered worthy of contribution by the federal government. Provincial governments were given full authority to approve their local urban renewal schemes, but the federal government, through CMHC, would pay half of all costs incurred in the preparation and implementation of these plans. This whole section of the Act was not only broadened, but also renamed to "Urban Renewal", from "Urban Redevelopment." By 1964, the terminology that first appeared in the United States Housing Act fifteen years prior was now being officially used for the first time in Canada's National Housing Act. For Albert Rose, this new direction, passed in June 1964, meant the following:

"From that time on the whole question of whether slum or blighted areas were to be cleared, the social questions accompanying the processes of re-housing and relocation, the whole question of whether low-income persons and families were to be offered decent and adequate housing at a price they could afford - these and numerous related social questions were put squarely in the laps of the provincial governments."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Rose, pp. 36-37.

⁵⁰ Rose, pp. 40-41.

In the Halifax context, the flurry of activity that began the Uniacke Square project in 1964 and the Scotia Square complex in 1965 were a direct result of these amendments. Both left an indelible mark on the Gottingen Street neighbourhood and the entire inner city area. By the end of the 1960's, four major implementations led to an investment of 7.4 million dollars (see Table 3.3). The social questions accompanying this process, however, remained.

TABLE 3.3 MAJOR PUBLIC INVESTMENTS IN GOTTINGEN STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD, 1960'S

Project	Investment
Maitland Street Clearance & Relocation for Parking Scheme	\$110,000
Africville Relocation	\$600,000
Urban Renewal Uniacke Square Public Housing Halifax North Memorial Library	\$670,000
Scotia Square Redevelopment & Mulgrave Park Public Housing	\$6 M

Source: Slade, 1958

3.4. The Social Effects of Redevelopment Emerge

Throughout the 1960's change occurred at an accelerated pace in urban areas. Decisions were made and implementation of these policy decisions began soon thereafter. Towards the end of the decade, the social issues connected to these large-scale physical developments were coming to light. Rapid urban change was taking place. Something that had not been considered by policy makers was what effects the clustering of large public housing developments would have on the already existing concentration of poverty on two segments of the population: those living it, and the perceptions held by outsiders. The stigma was detrimental as, among other things, commercial viability decisions affecting the inner city were made based on these negative views. A commercial entity's decision regarding where to locate was often influenced by where the public was willing to spend their money. Given the growing stigma attached to the inner city, commercial viability in these areas was negatively

affected. "Tabloids in Canadian cities sensationalised conditions in the inner city and provided a regular reinforcement of an image of poverty and pathology."⁵¹ This was certainly the experience of merchants on Gottingen Street, as will be evidenced by the dramatic decline in the number and type of businesses by 1970.

Social issues became more salient and citizens began to organise and demand that their concerns be heard, and that they become involved in decision-making. Let us recall that in this period the construction of new public housing was often based on the decision to demolish existing neighbourhoods in the name of urban renewal. Some residents criticised public housing while trying to stop the destruction of their existing neighbourhoods. These neighbourhood battles occurred in the larger cities of Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, but also in the smaller cities of Halifax and Hamilton.⁵²

Overall, the collective mood and values of the day were shifting towards a greater awareness of social issues. In 1968, these augmenting concerns and criticisms led to the federal establishment of a Task Force on Housing and Urban Development. Paul Hellyer, then minister responsible for CMHC, led what came to be known as the Hellyer Report. Travelling across Canada, Hellyer reported on the effect of urban renewal on families, the connections between low income people and their housing needs, and the effect of large public housing projects. His report was released in January 1969. The following is an excerpt of his conclusions pertaining to public housing:

The big housing projects, in the view of the Task Force, have become ghettos of the poor. They have too many "problem" families without adequate recreational facilities. There is a serious lack of privacy and an equally serious lack of pride which leads only to physical degeneration of the premises themselves.... There is a social stigma attached to life in a public housing project which touches its inhabitants in many aspects of their lives.⁵³

⁵¹ Ley, p. 320 in Bunting & Filion, 1991.

⁵² For a detailed account of these struggles, see Fraser, G. (1972) *Fighting Back*. Hakkert: Toronto and Sewell, J. (1993) *The Shape of the City*. University of Toronto Press: Toronto.

⁵³ Hellyer, pp. 53-54 in Sewell, p. 136.

By the end of the decade, alarm bells were ringing and both citizens and government were concerned about the state of urban neighbourhoods. A new policy direction began to emerge shaped by the changing ideology. In Nova Scotia, this changing ideology was expressed in the 1969 Planning Act which made citizen involvement in the planning process compulsory. The time was right as citizens in Halifax and across the country demanded to be a part of the decision making process affecting their neighbourhoods.

The values of the day were shifting, but were the winds of change too late? Had irreversible damage already been done? Was it too late to remedy the effects of the unforgiving bulldozer? These questions will be revisited later in this study.

3.5. Conclusion

With the framework and proposals laid out, the enactment of federal policy decisions emerged quickly in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood during the 1960's. Unabashedly, the bulldozer appears, to unravel the rich and tightly woven pattern of the street and neighbourhood. The changes throughout the 1960's were very physical and real, as the demise of the neighbourhood began to present its symptoms. Although it did not take the city long to remove people, redevelopment would take decades to complete. Often buildings would stand derelict for years, thus intensifying the appearance of a slum, causing greater harm physically, socially and psychologically to the area and its residents than if officials had left some of the so called "slums" intact until the government was ready to rebuild. Halifax's downtown core and the Gottingen Street area's categorisation as a slum were perpetuated by the actions of urban renewal. This uninviting image would further add a stigma to the area that had a detrimental impact on the Gottingen Street commercial corridor.⁵⁴

Changes came quickly and harshly, consistent with this period in history that is symbolic with change. Across North America, the sixties are well known as a time of revolution and change, but this change was not always for the better. The dichotomy of this time was blatant. Battles

⁵⁴ Erickson, p. 82.

for empowerment and increased rights were being won on one front, yet there was significant destruction of place – as homes, social networks, and communities were destroyed as a result of urban renewal policies. It is a truism that change always comes with a price, and that those most vulnerable often pay. This was certainly the case for the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, where the “change” of slum clearance uprooted people from not only their homes, but also from their community.

Chapter 4

From Redevelopment to Rehabilitation: 1970-1980

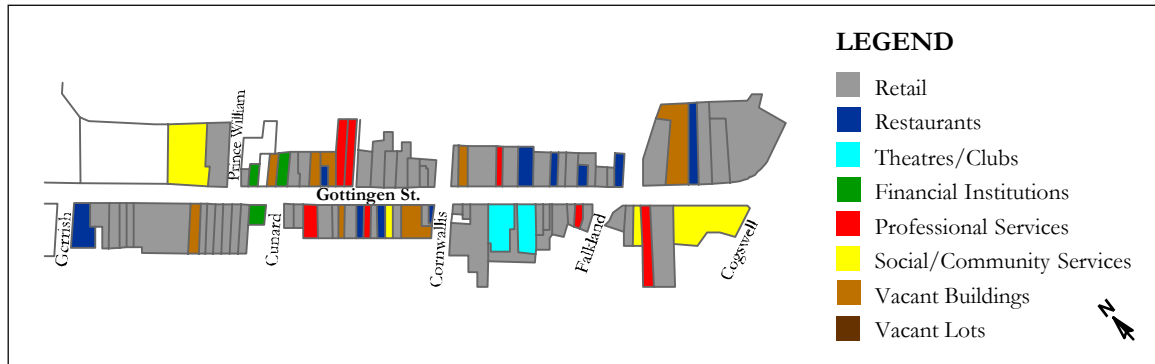


FIGURE 4.1. GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR INVENTORY MAP, 1970

4.1. Neighbourhood Profile - A Social and Commercial Snapshot

On the eve of the 1970's, a new policy direction began to emerge. This shift went from the destruction of neighbourhoods to their rehabilitation.

4.1.1. Core Commercial District Profile

The amount of retail/commercial activity declines by a significant 31% between 1960 and 1970, with the largest decrease in the retail sector, from 104 businesses to just 69. Community services, however, began to increase for the first time during the study period. By 1970, Gottingen Street gained three more establishments categorised as community services. In 1960 there was only the John Howard Society of Nova Scotia; by 1970 the non profit society was joined by the Nova Scotia Society for Care of Crippled Children, the Salvation Army Men's Hostel, and the Halifax City Social Services. After 44 years of business in the community, Kline's clothing and shoe store closed its doors in 1977.

TABLE 4.1. GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR, 1970 PROFILE

INVENTORY	1970
Retail	69
Financial Institutions	3
Professional Services	9
Restaurants/Cafés	11
Entertainment (movie theatres, clubs)	3
Community/Social Services	4
Churches	
Residential Addresses	31 ⁵⁵
Residents (# of people)	38 ⁵⁶
Vacant Buildings	9
Vacant Lots	

No Return	2
Total Retail/Commercial	95
TOTAL OCCUPIED ADDRESSES	130

Source: Might Directories (1970) *Greater Halifax and Dartmouth City Directory*

4.1.2. A Demographic Profile

The Gottingen Street neighbourhood goes through its most significant demographic changes between the years 1961 and 1971. By 1971, the Gottingen Street neighbourhood loses more than 5400 people, 42% of its population. Its adjacent neighbourhood, the downtown core, also lost a significant proportion of its population, losing more than 2000 people, a 49% decrease from 1961 (see Table 4.2). The total population loss for these two neighbourhoods was an astounding 48%, or more than 8400 people. Halifax on the whole however, grew by 21%. Although the average number of persons per household dropped in all three areas, the average household size shrank more in the urban core, as compared to the whole of Halifax. Most noticeably, in the downtown core the average has dropped by 1 person.

⁵⁵ This number does not include the number of residential addresses at Maitland Towers, which has ten floors.

⁵⁶ This number does not include the residences at Maitland Towers.

‘Average household income’ first appears as an indicator in the 1971 Census. At this time, the Gottingen Street neighbourhood's average income was \$6,196, significantly lower than the city average of \$10, 293. In the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, the number of renters in 1971 increases by 7% to 83%, indicating that fewer people are able to own their home. In other words, more than eight out of ten people rent their homes in the Gottingen Street area. This is significantly higher than in Halifax as a whole, where five of ten people rent. In the downtown core, the tenancy rate remained the same, at a very high 86%.

TABLE 4.2. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS, 1971

Characteristics	Downtown Core	% Change 1961- 1971	Gottingen Street N’hood.	% Change 1961- 1971	Halifax	% Change 1961- 1971
Population	2217	-49%	7584	-42%	222,637	+21%
Persons Per Household	2.9	-28%	3.7	-14%	3.6	- 10%
Employed	885	-41%	2720	-60%	90,405	+27%
Employed (%)	59	0%	58	-17%	63	0%
Tenure (%)						
Owner Occupied	14	0%	17	-7%	50	-5%
Tenant Occupied	86	0%	83	+7%	50	+5%
Average Household Income	\$6095	NA	\$6196	NA	\$10,293	NA

Source: Canada Census (1971)

Although both lost population and persons per household, the downtown core maintained its level of employment and tenure, while the Gottingen Street neighbourhood did not. A look at the population's age structure explains this trend/phenomenon. The study area lost 8% of its employable population, while the adjacent downtown core gained 10%. Inversely, the child population (ages 0-14) of the study area increased by 5% while that of the downtown core decreased by 12% (see figure 4.2). These figures suggest that by 1971 there were more

children and seniors in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood than in the previous decade. While the majority of the neighbourhood's population was still employable (62%), this figure is significantly lower. In 1966, the Uniacke Square public housing development was built along Gottingen Street as part of the federal urban redevelopment program. As Uniacke Square is housing that catered to lower income singles and families, this 250-unit development contributed to the increased number of children and tenants in the neighbourhood. It is feasible that this large development contributed to the significantly lower employment rate, which changed from 75% to 58%, after the housing development was built. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, another contributing factor was the significant loss of businesses, and thus sources of employment, along the commercial corridor. Going from an employment rate higher than the city's average in 1961, to dropping by 17% in one decade, it is evident that a less autonomous population was growing in the neighbourhood.

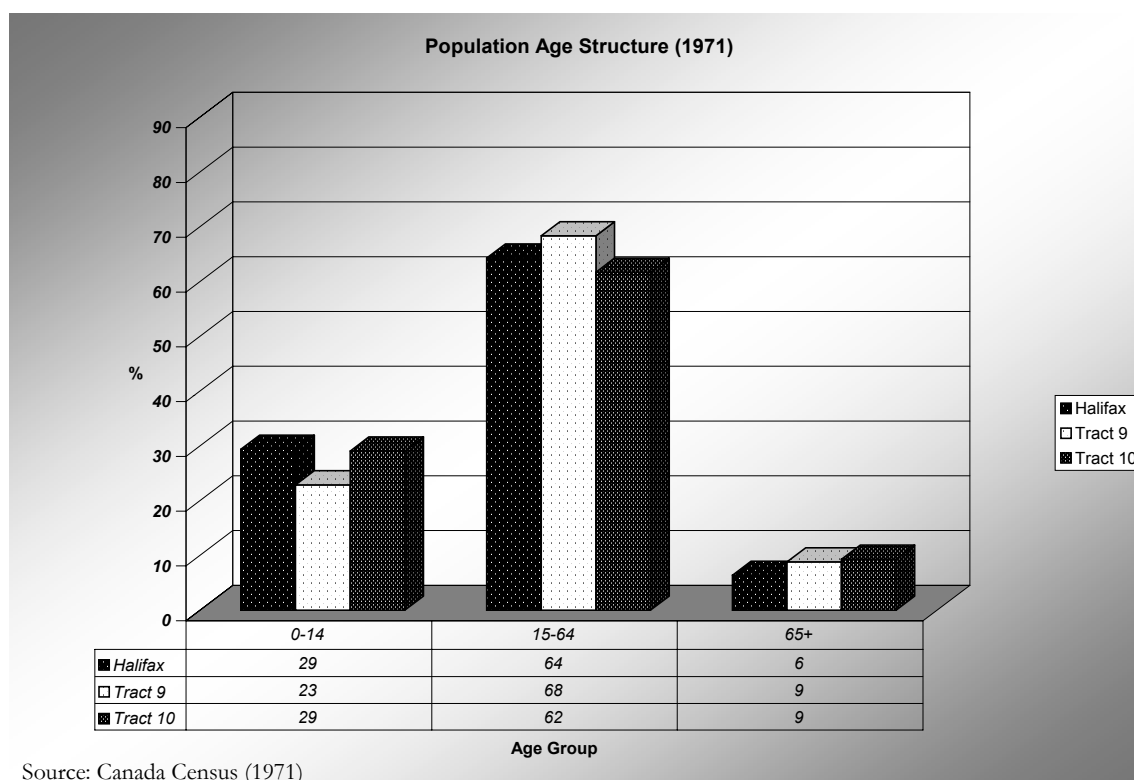


FIGURE 4.2. POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE, 1971

The largest demographic changes in the study period occur during the 1960's, and it is also true of the changes in the commercial district. This is the decade in which the decline in the amount and diversity of retail and services on the commercial district begins and is most accelerated. This decline closely paralleled the exodus of businesses from Gottingen Street in the 1990's. Until 1965 though, new businesses such as Sobey's grocery store were still moving into the neighbourhood. This leads the writer to believe that the decline, albeit rapid, began only in the latter part of the decade after policy decisions had been implemented, culminating in the Task Force on Housing and Urban Redevelopment and subsequent report by Paul Hellyer in 1969. The link between policy decisions and their social, economic and physical impacts on a neighbourhood were beginning to illuminate the neighbourhood's landscape.

4.2. A Paradigm Shift Towards Rehabilitation: 1973 NHA Amendments

The Hellyer Report of 1969 galvanised the government to quickly follow up by two consecutive reports, in 1970 and 1971, which built on Hellyer's findings. The Lithwick Report of 1970 was a comprehensive analysis that condemned not just housing, but planning and urban development policies as well. In 1971, a new federal portfolio, Ministry of State for Urban Affairs, was created and Michael Dennis and Susan Fish were contracted to conduct a major study of housing policies in Canada. The Dennis and Fish Report of 1971 was so critical of the government's role in creating a housing problem for lower income Canadians that the ministry who had commissioned the study did not want to publish it.⁵⁷ Both reports brought to the forefront inequalities in social and economic development, and access to housing. With Dennis & Fish's analysis came proposals to redress these problems; one that the Dennis-Fish Report recommended was that the public housing program be abandoned in its current form and be replaced by a non-profit program. Some of their reasoning is stated below; no one was left out of their criticisms:

“...problems of design caused by cost cutting or attempts to build outstanding housing for the poor; high density, high rise housing dictated by cost concerns; insensitive management that treats public housing tenants as welfare clients; the negative attitude of administrators, surrounding neighbourhoods, and the

⁵⁷ Rose, p. 52.

public generally. All are aspects of the stigma inherent in a program aimed only at the poor.”⁵⁸

Urban renewal in the 1960's was considered reinvestment in the inner core of cities, but with a plethora of damning reports on its effect, the program came up against a lot of opposition. After all, it was through urban renewal schemes that land assembly in urban core neighbourhoods became possible for municipalities, which usually meant the demolition of existing housing for both commercial developments and large public housing projects. Growing concerns and opposition eventually led to the cancellation of the Urban Renewal Program in 1972. The public housing program was terminated six years later in 1978.⁵⁹ As the preceding discussion shows, the reports written from 1968 – 1971 definitely had an impact on social planning and urban development. New programs focusing on affordable housing and neighbourhood improvement through rehabilitation were quick to follow.

With the abandonment of the Urban Renewal Program (and a few years later the public housing program), ten new programs were introduced with the 1973 amendments to the NHA. Four of those will be described here as they are pertinent to changes in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. The four new programs are as follows: Non-Profit Housing Assistance, Co-operative Housing Assistance, Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP), and Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP).

4.2.1. Non Profit and Cooperative Housing Programs

Non-Profit housing (cooperative housing is a type of non-profit housing) was an attempt to alter two major aspects of the public housing program – how it was built and how it was managed. The housing would be managed by non-profit corporations, or in the case of cooperatives, by the members who live there. In addition, these developments would be more integrated into neighbourhoods than the obtrusive, yet “island-like” public housing developments - thus creating a mixed income environment. These models were a very different approach from the traditional, top-heavy government structure. Non-Profit housing

⁵⁸ Dennis M. & Susan Fish, p. 218.

⁵⁹ Across Canada the public housing program was terminated in 1978, except for in the Northwest Territories where it lasted until 1983. Sewell, p. 137.

developments would be smaller scale and integrated into the existing neighbourhood. Initially, the idea was to locate this housing in the inner city in order to rehabilitate existing sites or build new developments, but soon the idea spread and non profit corporations began to build in the suburbs as well. Still funded by the federal government, but managed and owned by non profit corporations, this smaller scale provision of affordable housing was an alternative to public housing which the federal government had heavy-handed control over. In Halifax, a Mayor's Task Force was set up in 1975 to identify vacant, boarded up buildings then make suggestions for co-operative housing, non-profit housing or private sector housing. The effort resulted in the construction of several non-profit developments within the boundaries of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood.

To replace large-scale clearance and redevelopment, the new spirit of rehabilitating neighbourhoods came in the form of two programs working in tandem, the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP), and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). The objectives of each program are outlined in the following subsections.

4.2.2. Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP)

The objective of the NIP was to utilise tri-level government resources “for the purpose of improving the amenities of neighbourhoods and the housing and living conditions of the residents of such neighbourhoods.”⁶⁰ The projects varied by area, but six overall objectives were set for the program, which was funded by all three levels of government:

1. To improve those residential neighbourhoods which show evidence of need and of potential viability.
2. To improve and maintain the quality of the physical environment of the neighbourhood.
3. To improve the amenities of the neighbourhoods.
4. To increase the effect of related programs.
5. To improve the neighbourhoods in a manner which meets the aspirations of neighbourhood residents and the community at large.
6. To deliver the program in an effective manner.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Lyon D. & Lynda Newman, p. 7. Excerpt from An Act to Amend the National Housing Act, 1973.

4.2.3. Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP)

Complimenting NIP, the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) was designed “...to assist in the repair and improvement of existing substandard housing and to promote its subsequent maintenance.”⁶² Wholly funded by CMHC, the amount of assistance was determined by the homeowner’s income. This assistance came in the form of both forgivable and repayable loans. Indeed this is a program designed to help homeowners, improve their properties, and by extension their neighbourhood. Neither the NIP nor the RRAP program directly benefited the lowest income earners in the neighbourhood, – i.e. tenants. The RRAP program may have even hurt some tenants who could conceivably face higher rent due to upgraded living conditions, and subsequently be displaced. Once again, the economically disadvantaged were facing potential negative impacts of programs designed to improve their living conditions.

4.3. Policy Based Neighbourhood Changes: NIP and RRAP in the Halifax Context

How did the NIP and the RRAP manifest themselves in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood? An overall investment of 3.4 million dollars was made, as seen in Table 4.3.

TABLE 4.3 MAJOR PUBLIC INVESTMENTS IN GOTTINGEN STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD, 1970'S

Project	Investment
NIP Area 1	\$1 M
RRAP	\$1.9 M
George Dixon Centre	\$500,000

Source: Fraser, 1982

Halifax’s first NIP area was designated in 1975. NIP1 was located on the east side of Gottingen Street, bordered by North, Agricola and Cogswell Streets. Most of this 24 block area falls within the boundaries of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, with a small portion in the downtown core. In Halifax, one of the objectives of the RRAP was to have each property meet minimum building standards. In the first five years of the RRAP delivery in

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 8.

⁶² Fraser, p. 2. Excerpt from CMHC, RRAP, Delivery Handbook p. B-2.

Halifax, almost a million dollars was invested in NIP1.⁶³ Seventy-nine homeowner units and 165 rental units benefited from this infusion of funds, as well as improvements to streets, sidewalks, and day care/school facilities. In her thesis, Susan Fraser asserts that the programs made a visible difference on the physical landscape of the neighbourhood, and that the objectives of NIP/RRAP were met:

“The continued deterioration of the neighbourhood housing stock has been reversed. Tenants and homeowners have been provided with good quality housing. Buildings boarded and derelict for many years are reopened, creating additional housing units for the area and enhancing the general streetscape and property values. Of particular interest in the creation of new units is the number of former residents of the area who were able to return to the neighbourhood.”⁶⁴

At present, this enclave still has houses that are distinctive from the surrounding area. The current study's data enables one to assess any effects on the population level. The program's first five years ran from 1975-1980. It is difficult to ascertain how quickly the population was affected by these program implementations. The assumption made in this thesis is that any significant changes will only be evident sometime after 1980. From 1971 to 1981, the population of the study area was still on a dramatic decline and lost 32 per cent of its population.

4.4. Conclusion

The 1970's can be characterised as the defining decade that signalled the demise of the diverse and vital Gottingen Street commercial corridor. The loss of 42% of its population within a ten year period was catastrophic for the commercial sector, as was evidenced by the sharp decline, 31%, in retail/commercial activity. Instrumental reports of the early 1970's recognized the destructive force of large scale redevelopment. The social implications of policy implementations led to a paradigm shift in the approach to urban problems, as a gentler, rehabilitative approach came to the forefront.

⁶³ The exact amount of loans was \$984, 447, as cited in Fraser, p.5.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp.6-7.

Chapter 5

A Decade in the News: 1980-1990

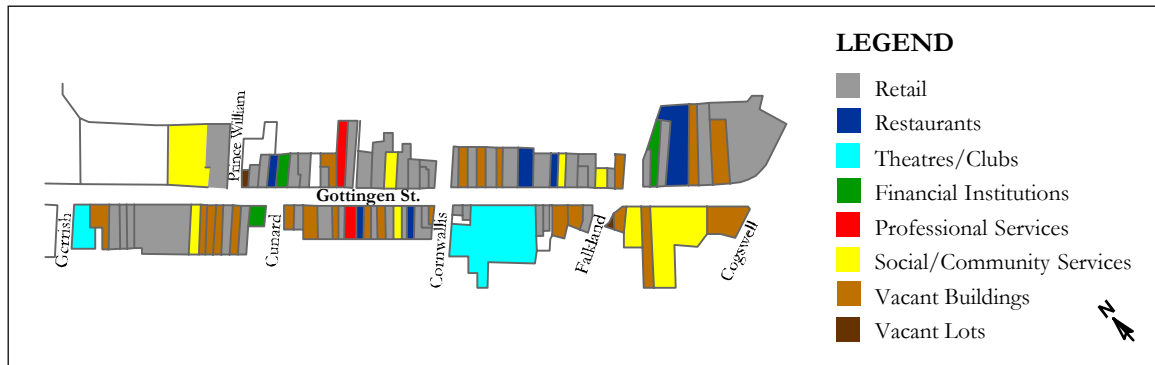


FIGURE 5.1. GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR INVENTORY MAP, 1980

5.1. Neighbourhood Profile - A Social & Commercial Snapshot

Throughout the 1980's newspaper headlines repeatedly professed that Gottingen Street was making a comeback⁶⁵, while, in reality, more stores were closing their doors permanently or relocating to other parts of the city. In 1987, Gottingen Street lost its only major grocery store, the Sobey's owned Foodland while the liquor store, considered the bane of the merchant's association, moved to Agricola Street.⁶⁶ Community services were on the rise, however, with the openings of the Vimy Legion, a nine storey apartment building with 39 apartments being rented to veterans and dependants of veterans, the Canada Manpower Centre, the St. Vincent De Paul Society, and the North End Community Health Clinic (see Figure 5.1). Nevertheless, the notion of a comeback was mainly fuelled by the proposal of two projects: the construction of a federal building to be located at the corner of Gottingen and Cornwallis streets and, a developer's proposal for building a commercial/hotel complex that aspired to single-handedly revitalise the north end. The latter never occurred, but both were viewed as pillars of hope that would revitalise the street. Others felt that the growing artistic community would lead the

⁶⁵ Small (1984), Ross (1984), Legge (1987), Smith (1988).

⁶⁶ Ross, Daphne. "Why Gottingen Street has got to come back before too long", *Real Estate Guide*, 11 February 1984.

revival, while another group felt that smaller scale garden projects would lead the way. In essence, anything new that happened on the street was seen as a potential catalyst for rejuvenation. Every new development or idea was seen as the possible catalyst for rebirth.

5.1.1. Core Commercial District Profile

For more than thirty years, the Heinisch building, situated on the east side of Gottingen Street, near Cornwallis Street, was occupied by a successful men's and ladies clothing store (Heinisch & Co. Men's and Ladies' Wear). By 1980, it was expropriated by the city, gutted and stripped as a potential venue for the City Market.⁶⁷ The site was deemed unsuitable for the market and therefore stood in this decrepit state for more than ten years. By 1990, it became one of five vacant lots on the commercial corridor, adding to the physical demise of the street.

In 1984, the city began to expropriate and assemble land anticipating the development of a 30 million dollar federal office building on Gottingen Street. Some of the businesses along Gottingen Street that were expropriated include: the Firestone tire store, Carpenters Union and K.C. Irving properties.⁶⁸ The city's land assembly began in 1984; however the federal building was not built until 1993. Consequently, for almost ten years some of the land sat vacant and unused.⁶⁹

Between 1981 and 1987, over \$500,000 was spent on revitalising the Gottingen Street area through the provincial and municipal funded Mainstreet Program, yet there are no public reports of what specifically was done with the money beyond façade improvements.⁷⁰

In an article dated September 22, 1984, merchants hoped that the construction of the federal building would serve as a catalyst for the street's rebirth. With the building's capacity for 1,000

⁶⁷ Ross, D. "Why Gottingen Street has got to come back before too long", *Real Estate Guide*, 11 February 1984.

⁶⁸ Gordon, R. "Federal building will spearhead Halifax growth", *The Chronicle-Herald*, 17 February 1984.

⁶⁹ One exception was the tire store which, according to my inventory, was still in operation in 1990. The city probably took ownership of the land but allowed the business to stay until construction of the new federal building began.

⁷⁰ Smith, L. "Street beats with new life", *The Mail-Star*, 1 April 1988. pp. 1E-2E.

employees, merchants were confident that other businesses would move back to the street to serve this increased market.⁷¹ In 1993, almost ten years later, the federal building was finally built, but the increased number of workers did not have a significant impact on the street's vitality.⁷² The federal building, therefore, failed to act as an incentive for new businesses to develop in the area.

The Gottingen Street neighbourhood was plagued with an array of inner city social, physical and economic problems. Once the city's main street with a neighbourhood population of 13,000, Gottingen Street experienced a steady decline between 1961 and 1981, which was evidenced by a loss of more than 60% of its population. Those who had the resources left the area, while those who did not stayed, thus leaving those with the least personal or political power to fend for themselves.

The local government's attitude had been mostly one of benign neglect toward the study area. For example, in 1988, the director of development and planning for the city of Halifax, Richard Matthews, stated:

"We don't really know what to do any better than anybody else does. There will come a time when Gottingen will become very opportune for something to develop."⁷³

Although Matthews claimed that the city had no policy of benign neglect, rather than designing a future for the neighbourhood, the city's policy was to wait and see how the street would evolve. This lack of strategy was again reiterated in a city staff report written in July of 1988:

"Gottingen Street may, in the future, act as a relief valve for the Central Business District (CBD)...As land prices rise in the CBD and Spring Garden Road areas and as land becomes scarce, the lower land values and availability in the Gottingen Street area may shift development in that direction."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Small, E. "Gottingen Street: Area is making a comeback", *The Mail Star*, 22 September 1984.

⁷² HRM & PWGSC, 1998.

⁷³ Smith, L. "Street beats with new life", *The Mail-Star*, 1 April 1988, p. 2E.

⁷⁴ Wild, L. "Staff opposes Gottingen St. boost", *The Daily News*, 19 July 1988.

Undoubtedly, this market driven revitalisation strategy was not in the best interest of the neighbourhood businesses or residents, as it was based on the notion that Gottingen Street would act as a “relief valve” for development. This non-committal, “let the market decide” stance also provided the city with an immediate reason not to directly invest in the neighbourhood, especially in light of two different development proposals for Gottingen Street - one for a \$15 million commercial-retail development (that requested a \$500,000 investment from the city), and the other for a Children’s Discovery Science Centre. Instead, city staff recommended a \$50,000 study of the Gottingen Street area. The funding of an area study was a highly criticised recommendation as yet another survey was not seen as the solution, especially since the *Gottingen Commercial Area Market Strategy Study* report had just been produced in 1986.

The proposed Peninsula North Secondary Planning Strategy was yet another missed opportunity for the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. First introduced in 1979, the planning strategy remained in draft form for more than 20 years. Although the emphasis of the strategy was zoning, as one of the main commercial corridors of the peninsula north area, the Gottingen Street neighbourhood may have benefited from a focused area plan, yet even earlier drafts of the strategy did not include specific plans for, or suggest anything that would directly impact Gottingen Street.⁷⁵

5.1.2. An Arts Renaissance on Gottingen Street?

In the mid 1980’s there was a so called ‘renaissance’ on Gottingen Street, led by the local arts community. Some believed this community would inject new life into the neighbourhood. Often an artistic community will move into an area which is viewed as non mainstream and carve out a space for themselves, in the process creating an enclave of sorts. This was the trend on Gottingen Street in the 1980’s, as new artists and artistic groups set up shop for the

⁷⁵ Power, B. “North end strategy to be tested”, *The Mail-Star*, 29 April 1986.

first time. The Cunard Street Theatre led the way, while the Eye Level Gallery, a non profit, artist run centre, moved to Gottingen Street from downtown Halifax in January of 1987. The old Cove Theatre became Club Flamingo, “the most vibrant nightclub in town”.⁷⁶ Other new tenants in the 1980’s were: the Other Art Gallery, Rumors club and Wormwood’s Cinema, an alternative film theatre. This community was equally drawn by the relatively cheap rental spaces. Artists and arts students from the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design (NSCAD) were also attracted to the area due to low rents and inexpensive live/work spaces.⁷⁷ Artistic groups, such as the Cunard Street Theatre and the Eye Level Gallery, were also attracting business to the street. Bob Brown, the president of the GSMA in 1987, stated that “outside businesses are beginning to realise that the perception Gottingen Street has more crime than the rest of the city is a “myth” and that it is a profitable area in which to locate”.⁷⁸ As vice-president of Dymaxion Research Limited, a company which relocated to Gottingen Street, Bob Brown and associates had heard about the image before relocating. As Brown stated, “it turned out to be much more imaginary than real, almost entirely”.

It is not surprising that some arts and culture groups decided to locate in and around Gottingen Street, since artists are traditionally attracted to areas where rents are cheap and the neighbourhood is eclectic. Both were characteristics descriptive of Gottingen Street during the 1980’s and today.

5.1.3. The Insidious Effects of Endogenous Neighbourhood Events

A micro view of the neighbourhood’s history highlights some endogenous events that impacted Gottingen Street, adding fuel to its characterisation as a "bad" neighbourhood. It should be noted that the area’s “image problems” existed prior to these neighbourhood events.

⁷⁶ Cities Column. “The revival of Gottingen”, *The Daily News*, 10 January 1987.

⁷⁷ In a January 1988 special report on the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, the director of student services at NSCAD, Susan Holmes, stated that the area has attracted art students to the area for about 10 years, because Canada Student Loans allow only \$85 per week for accommodations. Metcalfe, R. “Real estate versus real life”, *Atlantic Insight*, January 1988.

⁷⁸ Legge, L. p. 39.

Rather than being viewed as isolated incidents, these neighbourhood incidents that originated from within helped affirm existing myths.

In 1981, the Halifax police strike led to some unfortunate acts of vandalism on Gottingen Street, considered by some as a riot. Storefronts were smashed in and business owners responded by boarding up their windows – many abandoning the neighbourhood all together. The streetscape, blighted and forlorn, was now the perfect scene for illicit activity. As a result, Gottingen Street became known as “Plywood Alley” and soon thereafter problems with drug dealing escalated.⁷⁹ It was very unfortunate that some businesses closed their doors permanently after this incident; however their actions were a symptom and not a cause of the street’s rescinding soul. One month after these incidents, the middle class residents of the northern section of Gottingen Street received approval from City Council to rename their portion of the street (north of Young Street) to Novalea Drive.

The drug trafficking of a few became a burden for the entire neighbourhood. To augment an already bad situation, three murders occurred within ten months in and around the Gottingen Street area. All believed to be drug related, the plethora of murders that occurred between the spring of 1988 and winter of 1989 within the near north end neighbourhood were an anomaly, yet such incidents set the tone once again and confirmed that it was an “undesirable” neighbourhood. In an interesting exposé on the North End, Stephen Kimber writes:

“The drug traffic almost destroyed the North End as a community. In the mid-1980’s, television cameras recorded drug dealers claiming as their own turf the battered remains of Gottingen Street after the 1981 riot. Crack peddlers openly strutted the fruits of their illegal trade – fast cars, fancy suits, gold chains – for the edification of youngsters on the streets. The police looked on, seemingly powerless (or, some suggested, unwilling) to put an end to the dealing or to solve a string of apparently drug-related, gangland-style murders that were terrorizing neighbourhood residents.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Kimber, S. 1992.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 38.

Not only was the Gottingen Street area in trouble, but the negative publicity was detrimental for an already fragile neighbourhood. Problems escalated when news reporters captured footage of drug dealers claiming Gottingen Street as their turf.

Between 1988 and 1989 there were a total of three murders in the near north end, painting an unfortunate and perhaps unwarranted picture of the entire neighbourhood. The area's image problem precedes the violent circumstances of the late 1980's; however these events would allow the negative perception to be treated as a fair assessment of the area, although it was believed that all the murders were drug-related, and not random acts of violence. The third murder, in February 1989, forced the community's hand.

A small neighbourhood group came together and called itself 'Concerned Citizens Against Drugs'. They took action by organising a public meeting at the North End Library to which the police chief and mayor were invited to attend. More than 350 people attended an emotion filled session that lasted three hours. The neighbourhood initiative resulted in the mayor of Halifax quickly agreeing to open a community policing office inclusive of foot patrol officers. In this turning point for the community, executive director Quenta Adams said:

“For a long time, people here have relied on someone else to take care of things. After that meeting a lot of people decided they had to start taking responsibility for themselves. People began saying, “This is our community. Let's take it back.””⁸¹

Another aspect of endogenous events affecting the neighbourhood was the change in the prevalence of social service providers – The incidence of social agencies more than doubled in ten years. The Gottingen Street Commercial Corridor went from having four social agencies in 1970, to ten in 1980 (see Table 5.1). By the year 2000, this number would almost double once again, when nineteen community or social service agencies were present on the commercial corridor. There is a correlation between the increasing prevalence of social agencies and decreased commercial activity and economic development in the neighbourhood. While social agencies increased, commercial activity decreased just as dramatically during the

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 38.

same period. In 1970 there were ninety-five commercial establishments; by 1980 only seventy remained.

TABLE 5.1 GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR, 1980 PROFILE

INVENTORY	1980
Retail	49
Financial Institutions	3
Professional Services	5
Restaurants/Cafés	7
Entertainment (movie theatres, clubs)	6
Community/Social Services	10
Churches	0
Residential Addresses	17
Residents (# of people)	22
Vacant Buildings	30
Vacant Lots	2
No Return	11

Total Retail/Commercial	70
TOTAL OCCUPIED ADDRESSES	97

Source: Might Directories (1980) *Halifax and Dartmouth City Directory*

Private sector businesses will not locate in an area they feel the profit margin will be less than adequate. Unless a business has a vested interest in the community, a large conglomeration of social agencies in a four block span deters private sector commercial activity in the neighbourhood. This is clearly exemplified by the trend identified on Gottingen Street. A November 1989 article in the local community paper reports that although there seems to be a consensus that the work of social agencies is essential, their abundance in the neighbourhood is considered problematic. As one resident of the neighbourhood commented, "...although

everyone agrees they do essential work, the image they foster, whether it is an accurate one or not, doesn't help the area's economic development.”⁸²

5.1.4. A Demographic Profile

Between 1971 and 1981, there was a 32% decrease in the population of the study area (from 7584 to 5194), and a 31% decrease in the population of the downtown core (from 2217 to 1540). Even the building of Brunswick Towers apartments in the early 1970's, which added 1500 people to the area, had no major impact as the number of people leaving the neighbourhood was still greater than those moving into it. The city's population however continued to rise, this time by 25%. The number of persons per household was on the decline with the largest change occurring in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, from 3.7 to 2.3 persons per household. While the city's tenancy rate decreased by 6% at the beginning of the 1980's, it increased by 4% in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, and remained relatively unchanged downtown (see Table 5.2).

⁸² Harrington, J et al. “We're not anti-social...but enough is enough”, *The North End News*, 16 November 1989. This article discusses the sentiments of residents and business owners alike.

TABLE 5.2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS, 1981

Characteristics	Downtown Core	% Change 1971-1981	Gottingen Street N'hood.	% Change 1971-1981	Halifax	% Change 1971-1981
Population	1540	-31%	5194	-32%	277,727	+25%
Persons Per Household	2.0	-24%	2.3	-38%	2.9	-19%
Employed	940	+6.2%	1975	-27%	133,500	+48%
Employed (%)	76	+17%	56	-2%	69	+6%
Tenure (%)						
Owner Occupied	13	-1.0%	13	-4%	56	+6%
Tenant Occupied	87	+1.0%	87	+4%	44	-6%
Average Household Income	\$18,960	NA	\$13,431	NA	\$23,807	NA
Incidence of Low Income (%)	26	NA	58	NA	35	NA

Source: Canada Census (1981)

The employment rate in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood only decreased by 2%, to 56%, while the number of people employed in the adjacent downtown neighbourhood increased significantly by 17%, to 76% employment - even higher than the city's average of 69%. Although the employable population grew in both the neighbourhood and the city by 6%, it grew twice as fast in the downtown core, with a 13% increase from 1971 (see Figure 5.2). Inversely, the seniors' population increased at a higher rate in the study area (7%) than in both the adjacent neighbourhood and the city, which both only increased by 2%. It is interesting to note that in 1961, the employment rate in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood was 12% higher than the city's average. By 1981, the neighbourhood's employment rate dove to 13% below the city's average. In addition, the average family income in the study area is a considerable \$8,700 less than that of the city as a whole.

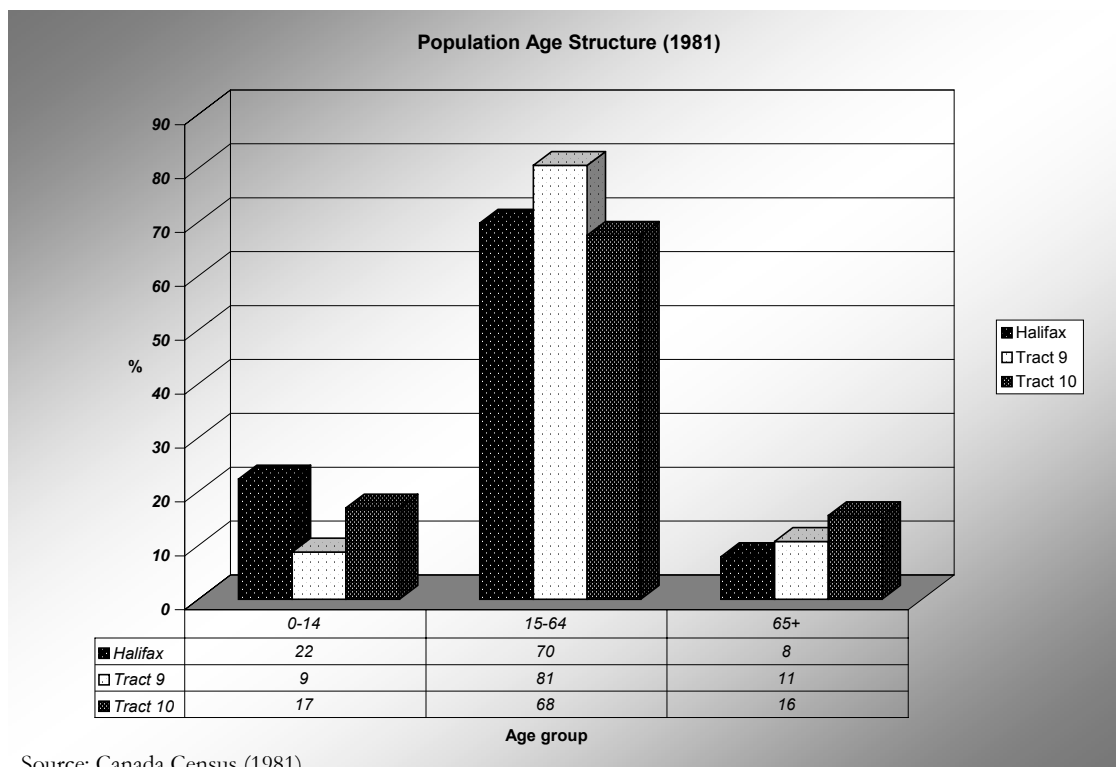


FIGURE 5.2. POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE, 1981

A new population characteristic, known as ‘incidence of low income’, was introduced in the 1981 Census and it highlights the incidence of low income in the city. This characteristic highlighted the percentage of families or individuals below the low income cut-offs. The Canada Census states that families in this situation would be in “strained” circumstances.⁸³ The Gottingen Street neighbourhood's incidence of poverty is an overwhelming 58%, compared to 26% in the adjacent downtown neighbourhood and 35% in the city as a whole. In other words, approximately 3 out of 5 people in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood are living below the poverty line.

Why is the downtown core doing better than the city, while the study area is doing far worse? Further evidence of the neighbourhood’s decline is in the employment rate. For example, the

⁸³ 1981 Census Canada, Census Tracts.

number of people employed in the adjacent neighbourhood is 20% higher than in the Gottingen Street study area. This situation can be explained by the fact that there were more economically segregated people living in and around Gottingen Street, often in high-density family public housing and seniors' public housing. There are five public housing developments within the boundaries of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, and they are located within a six-block radius of one another. They are: Uniacke Square, Ahern Manor, Creighton Street public housing, Sunrise Manor, and Gordon B. Isnor Manor. Not including the Creighton Street development, there are 677 units of public housing.⁸⁴ Without supporting evidence, it is conceivably the densest concentration of low income housing in Halifax. In the 1980's Gottingen Street's commercial district showed signs of continued decline, with only remnants of its diversity and commercial vitality present. Many businesses left along with many people who could afford to live elsewhere, therefore the poorest people comprised most of the neighbourhood. Between 1970 and 1980, total retail/commercial activity declined another 26%, leaving 30 buildings vacant on the four block commercial corridor, an incredible jump from only nine vacancies in 1970.

5.2. Neighbourhood Changes

5.2.1. The Mainstreet Program

The Mainstreet Program was a partnership between the province and the city whereby they share the costs of improvements to one 'mainstreet' selected by the city. In 1980, the Gottingen Street Merchants' Association (GSMA) incorporated in order to be eligible for the Mainstreet Program. In 1981, city council allotted \$100,000 for the program, for which both Barrington and Gottingen Streets were in consideration. In anticipation of mainstreet improvements, feasibility studies were conducted for both streets. In August of 1981, Gottingen Street became the first recipient of provincial redevelopment funds under this

⁸⁴ The number of units at the Creighton Street development is not known.

program. One report suggests that the main result of the 1981 Mainstreet program fund was an improved parking plaza.⁸⁵ In 1984 Gottingen Street merchants spent approximately \$40,000 on improving the look of the street.

Between 1981 and 1987, over \$500,000 was spent on revitalising the Gottingen Street area through the provincial and municipal funded Mainstreet Program, yet there are no public reports of what specifically was done with the money beyond façade improvements.⁸⁶

5.2.2. Uniacke Square Reinvestment: 1986-1988

An initiative to redesign the Uniacke Square public housing development began in 1986 under the leadership of Halifax MP, Stewart McInnes, whose portfolio was Minister of Housing. The Minister envisioned this project as an opportunity to achieve a number of different goals: 1) to enhance community self pride, 2) to upgrade the housing development so that businesses would be interested in investing in the area and 3) to create some economic spin-off through job creation. In the words of the Minister, the initiative was “a social experiment”.⁸⁷ While the motives of this social experiment were unclear, the result was an \$8 million investment in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood.

By the 1980's, many of the large developments built across the country in the 1960's were now acknowledged for their undesirable designs. Prior to redevelopment, most of the units at Uniacke Square faced onto courtyards. The development looked inwards, isolated from the main street and the rest of the neighbourhood. Although Uniacke Square is partially situated along Gottingen Street, the inward looking design created a physical separation from the street, which in turn functioned as a social barrier.

The major reconstruction of Uniacke Square was both internal and external, and took place from 1986 to 1988. Tenants were temporarily relocated while the internal spaces were gutted

⁸⁵ Metcalfe, R. “Real estate versus real life”, *Atlantic Insight*, January 1988.

⁸⁶ Smith, L. “Street beats with new life”, *The Mail-Star*, 1 April 1988. pp.1E-2E.

and completely renovated. A number of units were removed completely, allowing for a reconfiguration of most units to face onto a public street. In addition, some units were renovated to create a daycare and local housing office. Some concrete was replaced with grass, while other public spaces were converted into backyards. In addition, some units were redesigned to include front porches, giving more of a townhouse look to Uniacke Square.⁸⁸

With respect to the goals previously outlined by the Minister of Housing, the first goal of enhancing community pride is complex and beyond the scope of this thesis. The second goal of enticing businesses to invest in the area was not achieved as the neighbourhood's commercial activity continued to decline throughout the 1990's (see Table 6.1 in following chapter). The third goal, however, of creating jobs and thus further economic spin-offs was achieved to a limited degree. Some community members were contracted to do some of the redevelopment work, thereby creating a temporary economic spin off.

Some other major initiatives occurred in the latter half of the 1980's. As mentioned in chapter four, the withdrawal of the public housing program led to the introduction of various non-profit housing programs in the 1973 NHA amendments. The efforts of Halifax's Mayor's Task Force to identify vacant buildings resulted in the construction of a number of housing developments. In total, the groundwork was laid for the construction of eleven non-profit housing developments within the study area, a present day total of more than 450 units of affordable housing.⁸⁹ For example, several cooperative housing developments were built between Barrington and Brunswick Streets from 1986-1988. These developments were mixed income developments and certainly increased the population of the area. In 1991, the Gottingen Street neighbourhood experienced a population increase of 7% (approximately 380 people) – the first increase in thirty years. Funding for these cooperative housing projects came from a tri-level governmental partnership with the majority of funds provided by the federal government. Overall, investments in the Uniacke Square Redevelopment, the

⁸⁷ McInnis, S. Informational Interview, May 29, 2001.

⁸⁸ Sewell, 1994.

⁸⁹ Nova Scotia Government, Department of Community Services, Housing Services Division Inventory, March 2003. This figure includes municipal non-profit, cooperative and non-profit housing, with 163 units of cooperative and 295 units of non-profit.

Mainstreet Program, and the Gottingen Commercial Area Market Strategy Study infused 10.75 million dollars, as seen in Table 5.3.

TABLE 5.3 MAJOR PUBLIC INVESTMENTS IN GOTTINGEN STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD, 1980's

Project	Investment
Gottingen Commercial Area Market Strategy Study	\$45,000
Mainstreet Program (provincial/municipal)	\$500,000
Uniacke Square Redevelopment (housing, post office, library)	\$10.25M

Source: Metcalfe, 1988; Sewell, 1994; Smith et al., 1986; Smith, 1988

5.2.3. The Location of a Federal building on Gottingen Street

The discussion regarding the location and construction of a federal building along Gottingen Street that was first announced in 1984 under then MP Gerald Regan, continued during McInnis' posting as Minister of Housing. Although discussions broke off for quite some time during the change in government (from liberal to conservative), eventually the federal building issue resurfaced. Locating the building on Gottingen Street was supposed to serve as a catalyst for economic development in the area. For several years the bureaucracy stalled the project. Finally, in 1993 the Major General McDonald building was built. As already mentioned, this project was thought to be the “saviour”, the one project that would reverse the decline of Gottingen Street. In 1998 a community development analysis was undertaken to determine the effects of the federal building on the community. These effects will be discussed further in the following chapter.

5.3. Conclusion

Much took place in the study area throughout the 1980's. With abandoned storefronts lining Gottingen Street in the mid 1980's, continued social and economic decline, increasing poverty rates, and the increase of social agencies locating on the commercial corridor, discussion of a

large scale federal project to revitalise Gottingen Street continued throughout most of the 1980's. The artistic community made efforts to bring life back to the street. However, the neighbourhood's problems were exacerbated by a series of events that included looting during a police strike, drug trafficking and murder – all factors inflating the negative image of the neighbourhood.

Financial investments in the study area occurred in the form of a ten million dollar renovation plan for Uniacke Square, and the groundwork was laid for the construction of up to eleven non-profit developments in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. These developments would affect a small population increase in the neighbourhood by 1991. Both of the aforementioned developments occurred due to federal investment dollars. Additional financial investment occurred through the joint provincial/municipal Mainstreet Program, whereby more than \$500,000 was allotted for commercial corridor improvements. Small changes in the fabric began.

The city of Halifax's public view of Gottingen Street as a relief valve for downtown development was still problematic. This attitude and lack of policy direction negates the importance and uniqueness of the place, the neighbourhood, viewing it as an accessory to downtown when it has a sense of community, history and activity that is very different from downtown Halifax. The city's view of the neighbourhood is central to their decision making for the area, and the idea of Gottingen Street's commercial corridor as a relief valve for development indicated that there would be no specific planning for the area, but rather market driven revitalisation.

Chapter 6

The End of an Era⁹⁰: 1990-2000

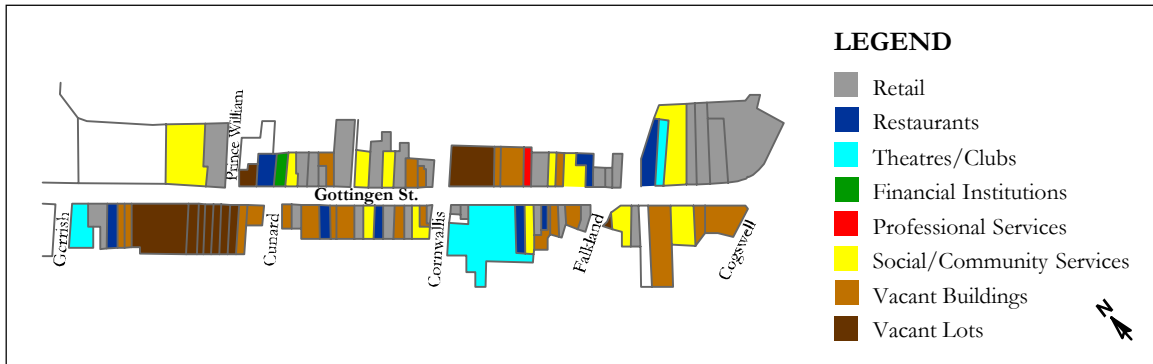


FIGURE 6.1. GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR INVENTORY MAP, 1990

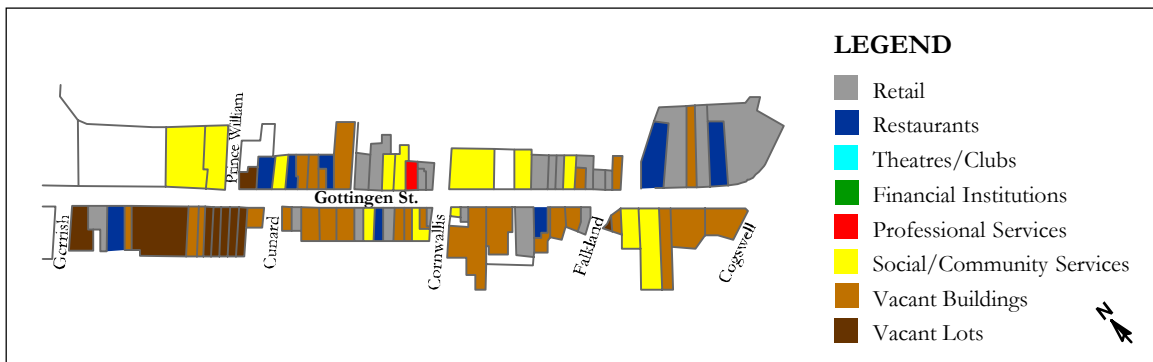


FIGURE 6.2. GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR INVENTORY MAP, 2000

⁹⁰ Headline in *The Daily News* announcing the closing of long time retailer, New York Dress Ltd., on Gottingen Street. Flinn, 1994.

6.1. Neighbourhood Profile

The recession that hit the entire country in the 1990's did not spare an already desolate neighbourhood. A discussion of key local events will provide insights into the micro-recession in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood during this decade. Such events include the nationally reported "race riot", the construction of the federal building, the community development analysis of the long anticipated federal project, and the Creighton Gerrish Initiative of the Creighton Gerrish Development Association (C/GDA). As well, some of the major anchors of the commercial district closed their doors permanently during this decade, which proved detrimental to this blighting main street. The 1990's case study is partially informed by a community development analysis of the McDonald building.

6.1.1. Core Commercial District Profile

Between 1980 and 2000, there was a 90% increase in the number of social services on Gottingen Street (see Table 6.1). During this period, the street gained nine new social service providers, going from 10 to 19 establishments within the four-block commercial corridor (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2). While the provision of social services was on the rise, businesses in the area were still struggling to survive. During the year 2000, thirty eight commercial establishments were in business – a mere silhouette of what existed in 1980. These figures suggest that one third of the activity on the commercial corridor was the work of community/social service agencies. The result was a high liquidation rate and a high transition area for businesses, thereby contributing to the community's increasing loss of autonomy.

The 1990's marked "the end of an era" for Gottingen Street, as some of the major anchors of the commercial district closed their doors permanently. Most notably, the Metropolitan Store (known as the Met), the New York Dress Shop, Glube's Furniture, and the Casino Theatre all closed their doors between 1991 and 1994. The Met closed its doors at the end of 1993, and the New York Dress Shop, one of the province's leading bridal shops, closed permanently in 1994. The historic and architecturally significant building housing the Casino Theatre also closed in 1991 and was subsequently demolished in 1997. Other closures include: the North

End Postal Outlet (1992), the North End Dental Clinic (1996), the Salvation Army Thrift Store (1997), and the Royal Bank of Canada (1997).

The Gottingen Commercial Area Market Strategy Study of 1986 found that the Met and the Sobeys' grocery store were anchors in the community as they not only served the immediate community but also people coming from the secondary zone – an area beyond the boundaries of North, Robie and Cogswell Streets. The study suggested that both the Met and Sobeys' must remain for the area to remain viable, however neither survived.

TABLE 6.1 GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR, 1990 & 2000

INVENTORY	1990	2000
Retail	36	28
Financial Institutions	1	0
Professional Services	5	1
Restaurants/Cafés	6	8
Entertainment (movie theatres, clubs)	6	1
Community/Social Services	13	19
Churches	0	0
Residential Addresses	8 ⁹¹	5 ⁹²
Residents (# of people)	8	5
Vacant Buildings (or businesses?)	25	35
Vacant Lots	5	6
Not Verified	7	16

Total Retail/Commercial	54	38
TOTAL OCCUPIED ADDRESSES	75	62

Source: Might Directories (1990) *Halifax City Directory*, Equifax Polk City Directory (2000) *Halifax City Directory*

6.1.2. A Demographic Profile

From 1981 to 1991, the data attests to a 7% increase in the population of the Gottingen Street study area, the first increase in 35 years. Conceivably, the addition of almost 400 people to the census tract may partially be attributed to the physical improvements in the 24 block area designated NIP1. However, several non-profit and cooperative housing societies were building in the neighbourhood during this period. In the same years, the incidence of low income decreased by 3%. This may be due to some gentrification in the area, but a 1986 study by Millward and Davis suggests that most of the renovation in the North End was due to a process of ‘incumbent upgrading’ – a process in which owner occupied housing revitalisation takes place without a significant change in the socioeconomic status or characteristics of the population.⁹³

Similarly, in this period there was a 5% increase in population of the adjacent neighbourhood, the first increase in 50 years. In the city of Halifax, there was an overall population increase of 15%. Over the last 40 years, the Gottingen Street neighbourhood’s tenancy rate has remained on average, at least 30% higher than that of the rest of the city. Most characteristics remained constant in 1991; however the average household income in the neighbourhood was more than \$23,000 less than the city average. This figure is a huge jump from a \$10,000 difference ten years prior. With the growth in population, employment rates increased in all three areas of the analysis; however the number of the Gottingen Street area residents employed is still considerably lower than the city average (see Table 6.2). Inversely, the employment rate in the adjacent downtown core was 10% higher than the city average. In addition, resident’s source of income is introduced as a new population characteristic in 1991, and finds that 73% of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood's source of income is employment income - not far below the city’s average of 80%. However, 20% of the residents in the neighbourhood are dependent on government transfer payments; this is an alarming 100% more than the city average of 10%.

⁹¹ This does not include the addresses or numbers of people at Vimy Arms Apartments and Ahern Manor.

⁹² This does not include the addresses or numbers of people at Vimy Arms, Ahern Manor and Sunrise Manor.

⁹³ Millward, H. and Donna Davis, p.148.

This means that 1 out of 5 people in the neighbourhood received government transfer payments in 1991, a trend that continues through 1996.

TABLE 6.2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS, 1991

Characteristics	Downtown Core	% Change 1981- 1991	Gottingen Street N'hood	% Change 1981- 1991	Halifax	% Change 1981- 1991
Population	1617	+5.0%	5580	+7.4%	320,501	+15%
Persons Per Household	1.7	-15%	2.1	-8.7%	2.6	-10%
Employed	1150	+22%	2350	+19%	163,515	+22%
Employed (%)	82	+6%	60	+4%	72	+3%
Tenure (%)						
Owner Occupied	15	+3%	13	0%	58	+2%
Tenant Occupied	85	-3%	87	0%	42	-2%
Average Household Income	\$37,017	NA	\$23,390	NA	\$46,786	NA
Incidence of Low Income (%)	24	-2%	55	-3%	34	-1%
Source of Income (%)						
Employment Income	86	NA	73	NA	80	NA
Transfer Payments	8	NA	20	NA	10	NA
Other Income	6	NA	7	NA	10	NA

Source: Canada Census (1991)

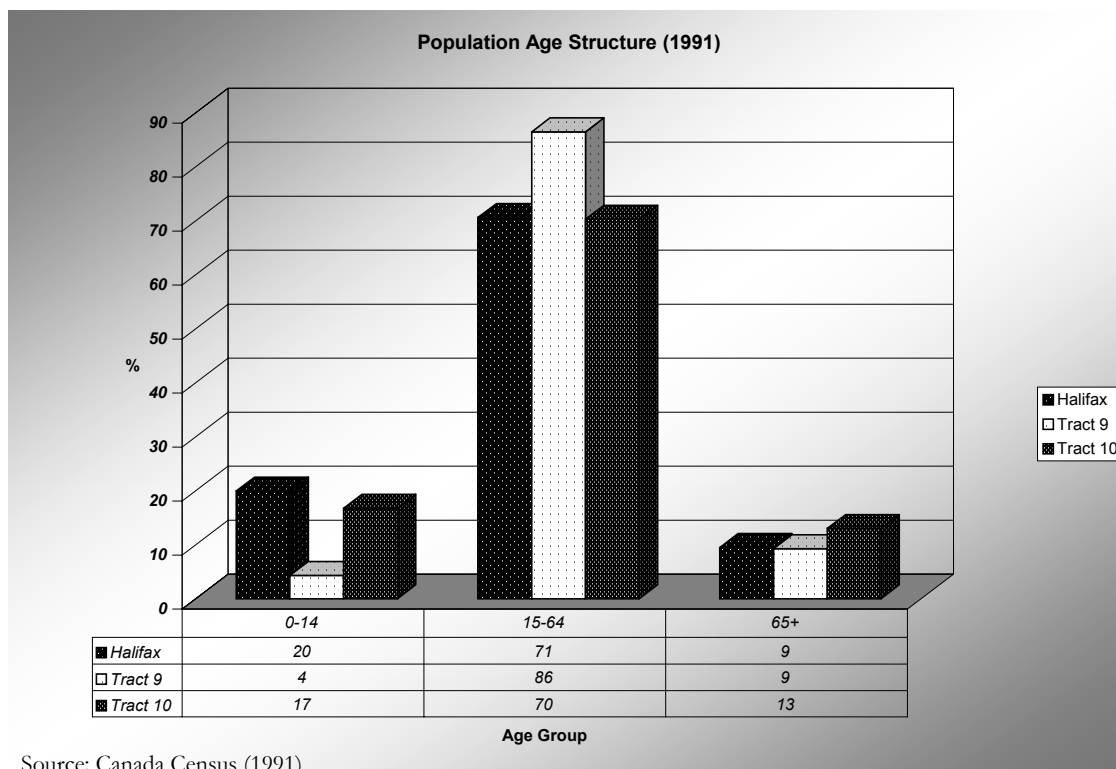


FIGURE 6.3. POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE, 1991

Although it does not follow the ten-year methodology set out in this study, the social and economic characteristics for 1996 are important to discuss in order to give the reader a sense of the neighbourhood's reality closer to present day. Of course the most telling picture would be the 2001 census figures; however those figures were not available at the time this study was conducted.

Although there was a 3% increase in the population of the adjacent neighbourhood, a considerable 19% decrease in the population of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood occurred within the first 5 years of the 1990's, dropping the population of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood by 1,000 people (see Table 6.3). This was a significant decline in only five years, possibly explained by the sale of the Gerrish Towers high rise apartments. Subsequently, the apartments were vacated and renovated for resale. After the small increase

in population at the beginning of the decade, it was evident that the neighbourhood was still in a state of transition and unstable. Its adjacent neighbourhood, and the city, however, both continued to grow in population.

The 1996 figures were more reflective of the national recession, which explains any consistency with changes in the city. For example, incidences of low income increased in the city by 6% and in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood by 10% (see Table 6.3). The city experienced a slight decrease of 2% in the employment rate, while the employment rate of Gottingen Street neighbourhood residents dropped by 9%. Also related to employment was the incidence of low income. In all three areas involved in the analysis, the incidence of low income increased, but again at a higher rate in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood than in the city. While Halifax increased to a 40% incidence of low income, the neighbourhood increased to an astonishing 65%. This means that almost 7 out of 10 people residing in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood were low-income earners and approximately 30% of the neighbourhood's residents were dependent on government transfer payments for income. Although the national recession impacted the economic profile of the entire city, the poorest segments of the city, in large part found in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, were hit the hardest.

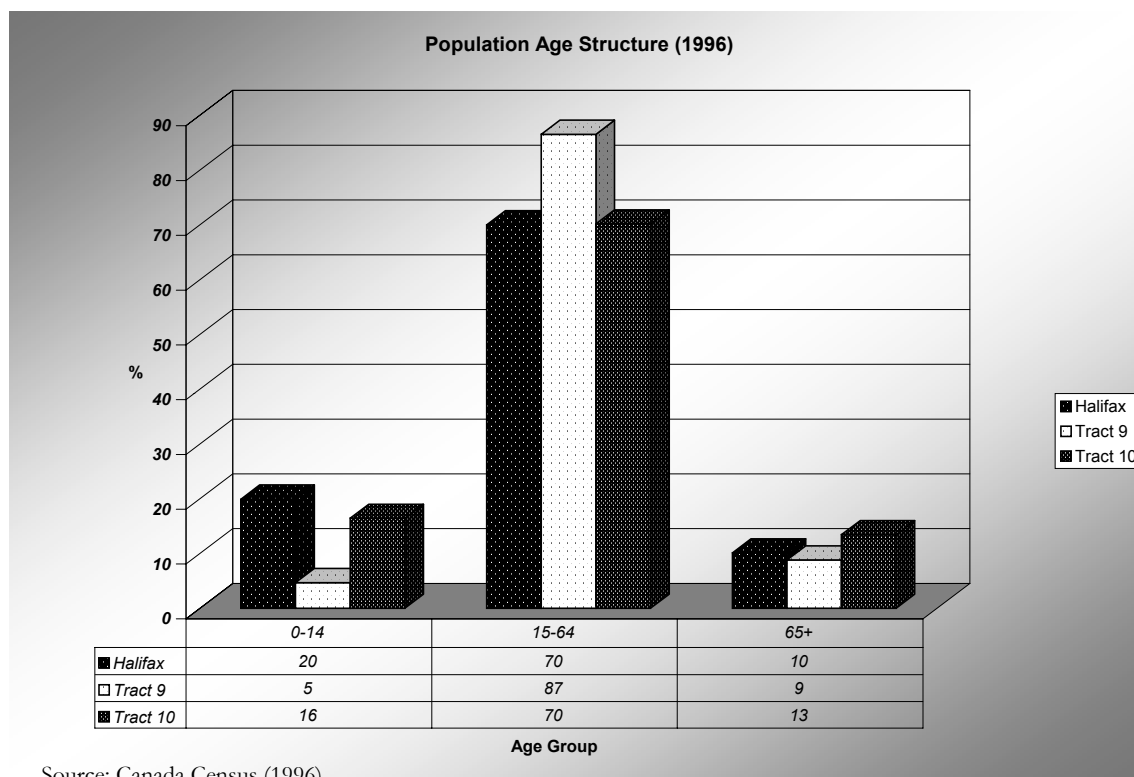
Between 1991 and 1996, the number of persons per household decreased in the neighbourhood by 10%, but remained constant in the city overall. The average household income in the neighbourhood was approximately \$22,000, which amounts to only 46% of the city's average of \$48,000. There is no real change in the population structure (see Figure 6.4).

TABLE 6.3 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS, 1996

Characteristics	Tract 9	Change	Tract 10	Change	Halifax	Change
Population	1664	+2.9%	4494	-19%	332,518	+3.7%
Persons Per Household	1.7	0%	1.9	-9.5%	2.6	0%
Employed	1150	0%	1610	-31%	163,040	-0.29%

Employed (%)	78	+4%	51	-9%	70	-2%
Tenure (%)						
Owner Occupied	14	-1%	13	0%	60	+2%
Tenant Occupied	86	+1%	87	0%	40	-2%
Average Household Income	\$32,281	NA	\$22,389	NA	\$48,015	NA
Incidence of Low Income (%)	47	+23%	65	+10%	40	+6%
Source of Income (%)						
Employment Income	80	-6%	67	-6%	76	-4%
Gov't. Transfer Payments	11	+3%	26	+6%	12	+2%
Other Income	9	+3%	7	0%	12	+2%

Source: Canada Census (1996)



Source: Canada Census (1996)

FIGURE 6.4. POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE, 1996

6.2. Neighbourhood Changes & Events

6.2.1. The 'Race Riot', 1991

In July of 1991, a disturbance occurred in the north end of Halifax, along Gottingen Street. Precipitated by the denial of a Black Nova Scotian into a downtown bar, unrest resulted the following day when police in riot gear confronted an angry crowd of 150 people. The incident resulted in stone throwing, broken shop windows and several arrests. In total, fifteen stores had windows shattered. The confrontation was reported nationally as a “race riot” on Gottingen Street. For Gottingen Street and its merchants, a minor victory occurred however, when the executive director of the GSMA prevented more trouble through his rapid community organising. Due to his efforts, only one merchant used wood instead of glass on the broken windows – thus diverting a tenth anniversary repeat of the 1981 “Plywood Alley”.⁹⁴

Although Gottingen Street managed to avert the physical disaster of ten years prior, it did not escape the augmenting stigma prescribed to the area. This was a major setback for the community’s image and the efforts to revitalise Gottingen Street. The effects were insidious. A street’s public image dictates whether or not customers will patronise the businesses or choose to live in the surrounding neighbourhood. Fed by the media frenzy that usually follows incidents such as the one related above, perceptions of Gottingen Street as a poor “dangerous” area intensified. The relationship between where people will go to shop and where stores locate is closely intertwined, and the perception of a place is a strong determining factor. Gottingen Street’s soul was never revealed. Instead its bumps and bruises were exposed, tainting perceptions and neglecting the reality of the place. The affect of such incidents and the ensuing negative image of the place thus protracted the street’s rejuvenation. Like most inner city neighbourhoods though, the reality is far more intricate and interesting.

⁹⁴ Kimber, 1992.

6.2.2. Federally Owned Land and Its Impact on Gottingen Street

As noted in the previous chapter, the 1984 announcement of a federal project on Gottingen Street was touted as the project that would reverse the street's decline. In the early 1980's, the city began land assembly through expropriation and eventual demolition.⁹⁵

Due to bureaucracy and unfulfilled political promises, the site first existed with vacant buildings and then as a vacant lot for a total of nine years as the commercial sector around it continued to decline. In 1992, a parcel of the federal land was sold to a developer, Cornwallis Court Developments Ltd. (CCD), and the federal government subsequently entered into a non-competitive, ten year lease agreement with the CCD. In 1993, the long anticipated catalyst for the revitalisation of Gottingen Street was built on the corner of Cornwallis and Gottingen Streets at a cost of seven million dollars. The development, named the Major General Donald J. MacDonald building, was a five-story office complex with parking facilities for 250 cars. Despite its construction, some merchants along Gottingen Street were not so enthusiastic given the lack of support they felt they were receiving from the city. A few months before the development was completed in 1993, one merchant spoke about the dwindling role of the GSMA. "Six years ago there were some new faces and we were kind of keen. But it was frustrating. It took forever to get the city or the province involved in anything we were doing."⁹⁶

The Department of National Defence (DND) was the first tenant; however they would vacate the premises four years later, in 1997. Presently, the largest tenant is the Department of Community Services, with approximately 200 employees. The other tenants are the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA), TG Restaurant & Deli, and Ellis Don Construction Ltd.

Many projects were proposed for this site, such as a hotel/office complex, and a Children's Discovery Centre, but in the end, the successful developer was Cornwallis Courts

⁹⁵ Gordon, 1984.

⁹⁶ Flinn, B. "Gottingen Street Met to close", *Daily News*, 11 August 1993.

Developments Ltd. (CCD) whose proposal corresponded with the federal government's objectives for the site. The objectives were as follows:

- 1) To provide an impetus for the revitalisation of a depressed area of Halifax and in support of the department's long standing commitment to the revitalisation of Gottingen Street.
- 2) To act as a vital catalyst to ensure the long term survival of small businesses and restore vitality to the area.⁹⁷

The rationale as to how CCD and the federal government would accomplish these objectives was based on the hundreds of federal workers that the project would bring to Gottingen Street on a daily basis.

When the original tenant, the Department of National Defence (DND) vacated the building in 1997, the perceived security concerns of new potential tenants resulted in a joint study conducted by the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and Public Works & Government Services Canada (PWGSC), which was released in 1998. The study's objectives were two-fold: 1) to determine the safety and security of the area, and 2) to determine if the federal building did, in fact, act as a catalyst for revitalisation on Gottingen Street in its first five years. Once the DND moved out, a potential tenant raised concerns about the safety of their employees, specifically of women working evening shifts. Thus, the methodology of the study consisted of crime statistics analysis, business surveys and interviews with both business owners and non-profit organisations in the area.

Crime statistics of three streets comparable in size: Gottingen Street; Hollis Street in downtown Halifax; and Portland Street in downtown Dartmouth, were compared over a three-year time period, 1994-1996. The statistics were categorised as violent crime, property crime, other criminal code offences, and drug offences. Although the study does not comment or show figures for 1994 and 1995, the authors found that in 1996, with the exception of property crime, the incidents of total crime were higher on Gottingen Street (256) than on Hollis (165) or Portland Streets (142). As the authors rightly indicated, the greater incidences of "sweeps" (police intervention programs) on Gottingen Street were reflected in the statistics.

Although there were concentrated areas where prostitution and drug trafficking occurred, the impact of police intervention programs on the data, in effect, invalidate the claim that there was more crime on Gottingen Street than in other comparable areas. Interviews with former and present community police officers in the area confirmed this fact.⁹⁸

To determine the community development impact of the federal building, business owners and non-profit organisations were surveyed and interviewed. While the majority of respondents (58%) stated that the MacDonald building “provided no economic benefits to the area since its inception in 1993”, 21% indicated business had improved since the building opened. Another 21%, however, were not accounted for in these figures. With respect to the first tenants of the MacDonald building (the DND), none of the respondents felt the DND contributed *substantially* to their business; 50% of respondents indicated the DND contributed nothing at all, while 46% felt they contributed a small amount.⁹⁹

In summary, the federal land on Gottingen Street sat vacant for nine years. As stated earlier, the federal government's objective with this site was to “provide an impetus for revitalisation of a depressed area of Halifax and to act as a catalyst to ensure long term survival of small businesses and restore vitality to the area.” The issue raises several considerations.

- There was no public input into the land-use decision making, i.e. how could this piece of land best be used as a catalyst for revitalisation?
- How did the federal government determine that an office complex would be the best solution? What would this do for the neighbourhood inhabitants?
- The anticipation of the federal project encouraged others to also sit and wait – perfect conditions for speculators who, because they don’t have a vested interest in the neighbourhood, were only interested in the bottom line. Lack of action and then lack of responsible action was, in effect, disinvestment.
- A holistic approach, seeking input from merchants, residents and other stakeholders while considering social and economic needs of the neighbourhood may have proven to be more fruitful.

⁹⁷ HRM & PWGSC, p. 2, 1998.

⁹⁸ HRM & PWGSC, 1998.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p.18-19.

- Given their stated objective, the federal government had a social responsibility to the area that was not met. For example, they sold the property to a private developer. Why? Was this their only option?
- The idea that one mega project would be the saviour of a commercial street is problematic, especially given the economically distressed state of the area. The understanding of the place seemed to go only skin deep. That is, on the face of it, Gottingen Street really needed physical resuscitation, which the government appeared focused on.

Did the McDonald Building fulfil its purpose as a catalyst for revitalisation? These findings indicate that the construction of the MacDonald building did not contribute to increasing business in the area, and thus had very little impact as a potential catalyst for revitalisation. As the community development analysis of the federal building study found, investing copious amounts of money on mega projects does not have an impact, nor do large financial investments alone suffice. The failure of this seven million dollar investment adds to the growing argument for a more co-ordinated effort between land use and social issues. The physical dimension of Gottingen Street was not the only element to consider. Without consideration for the people and their social-economic reality, neighbourhood decline will continue. Despite investments, all social, economic and commercial characteristics used in this study indicate that, indeed, continued decline has certainly been the case for the Gottingen Street neighbourhood.

In addition, the failure of the federal government building project to achieve its stated goals illustrates the centrality of understanding a place, and making informed decisions on how best to invest invaluable public money. The time it would take to undergo a comprehensive approach is worth the potential benefits. As indicated by the social and economic effects outlined in the analysis of this study, the negative externalities associated with such investment decisions increased with time. Investing in the social-economic development of the people may have been more effective than concentrating solely on the physical dimension of revitalising the street.

With its adverse affects, the continual government announcements over the years (surely for political reasons) about how this project would be the catalyst only increased the potential for

land speculation in the area. In this waiting game, those who endure the greatest burden are the residents and the merchants. It is not those in a position of economic power – the developers, the land speculators, nor the slum landlords - who will lose.

The city of Halifax's contribution to the redevelopment of the federally owned land on the corner of Gottingen and Cornwallis Streets came in the form of a parking garage, costing \$450-500,000, which it leased to CCD for 20 years for \$1 a year, beginning in 1993.¹⁰⁰ A half a million dollar output to build a parking garage in a neighbourhood under severe social and economic distress was not a sound, nor responsible investment. As in the late 1950's, the city's contribution to revitalising Gottingen Street was again focused on vehicular parking. Recently (2001), the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) invested millions of dollars into building a parking garage in downtown Halifax; with the view of encouraging the revitalisation of Barrington Street in the downtown core. Historically and in the present day, it appears that HRM has a predisposition to parking garages as a tool for revitalisation, repeating the pattern of the 1950's.

6.3. New Housing Policy – The Federal Devolution of Social Housing

In 1993, the federal government pulled out of social housing, thus devolving this responsibility to the provinces. This was a major policy change that dramatically affected the provision of housing for the country's lowest income people. No federal direction or responsibility in the area of social housing left the task to the innovation of the individual provinces and in some cases, municipalities. Some were more innovative than others. In Nova Scotia, as in other provinces, the non-profit sector stepped in. For the Gottingen Street area, with the majority of the population being low-income earners, the federal devolution of responsibility for housing meant that other initiatives would have to fill the void left by the government. As mentioned in the previous chapter, up to eleven social housing developments were constructed in the study area during the 1980's. Understanding the augmenting need for affordable housing, and social and economic development, in the 1990's a partnership

¹⁰⁰ Sword, 27 March 1992.

consisting of four community-based, non-profit societies came together as the Creighton/Gerrish Development Association (C/GDA). The C/GDA's work is in the heart of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. Through investment in three projects, the federal and municipal governments invested more than seven and a half million dollars (see Table 6.4) during the 1990's.

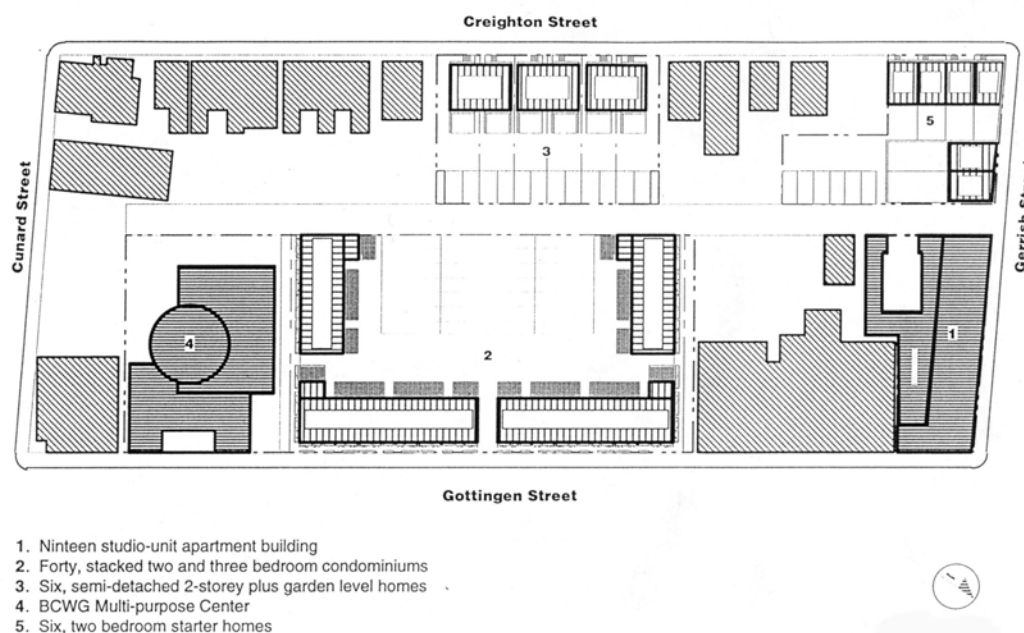
TABLE 6.4 MAJOR PUBLIC INVESTMENTS IN GOTTINGEN STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD, 1990'S

Project	Investment
Uptown Gottingen Property Improvement Program	\$80,000
Federal Office building	\$7 M
Municipal parking garage (contribution to federal office building)	\$500,000

Source: Gordon, 1984; Sword, 1982

6.3.1. The Creighton Gerrish Development: A Response to Housing Need

In the early 1990's, recognition of: 1) the short supply of affordable housing in Nova Scotia, with the need for affordable, good quality housing on the rise in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, 2) the federal government's decision to no longer fund new social housing, and 3) a desolate block in the neighbourhood, were the conditions that led to the creation of the C/GDA. The Creighton/Gerrish Development (C/GD) involves the phased regeneration of a desolate block on Gottingen Street bounded by Creighton, Gerrish, and Cunard Streets (See Figure 6.5). It is the 1.5 acre site of the former Sobeys grocery store which closed in 1987.



Source: Wanzel, 2001

FIGURE 6.5. THE CREIGHTON/GERRISH DEVELOPMENT SITE

With housing that ranges in tenure and typology, the development will include rental units for lower income singles, and the opportunity for affordable home ownership of two and three bedroom condominiums, semi-detached and single family houses. In addition, the development will include a multi-purpose centre for the Black Community Work Group, one of the four partners in the C/GDA. With the view that housing is a key component in a community's stability, and social and economic development, the housing will be offered to present or former neighbourhood residents.

The C/GD gained start-up funding from all three levels of government, but plans to achieve its goals without being continually subsidised. As indicated by the association's president, Grant Wanzel, this arrangement required creative partnerships, strategies and financing.¹⁰¹ In

¹⁰¹ Wanzel, G. 2001.

February 2002, the first of five phases was completed when the 19 unit apartment building (on the corner of Gottingen and Gerrish Streets) for lower income singles was officially opened.

The overall social and economic impacts of this development can only truly be measured after the project is complete, but one new resident in the apartment building stated:

“Before, I was on Cogswell Street, off Creighton. But the landlord wasn’t applying the basics towards my place – a safe, clean environment. He wasn’t really committed to providing what I was entitled to. For instance, I had a broken window which I asked, for about two weeks, to have fixed. And it was infested with cockroaches. Now I’m in a better, safer, cleaner environment. And I’m basically trying to make ends meet. It’s not that easy right now, where I just moved in, but it’s going to get easier. And when I can manage to have some extra, some change or whatever, I can hopefully help someone else....My feeling towards where I’m at now is that it’s an opportunity for me to have a place of my own. I want to make ends meet and to work towards my commitment to [Metro] Non-Profit Housing. I want to be a part of it. It’s a good thing they’ve got going.”¹⁰²

As expressed by this new resident, it is clear that a sense of stability is already forming for one of the many lower income singles in the neighbourhood. In 1995, one observer emphasized that priorities for the area must have the goal of bringing people back to the Gottingen community as, “A street with few people doesn’t need new benches.”¹⁰³ The C/GD initiative endeavours to accomplish just that.

6.4. Conclusion

The 1990’s resulted in continued decline for the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. For example, the level of retail activity continued to decline and commercial vacancies increased. The number of people employed declined, and the rate of poverty increased to an astounding 65% in the neighbourhood. Although this decade’s economic downturn was partially a result of the national recession, the neighbourhood’s escalated deterioration was part of an already

¹⁰² Lowe, L., ‘Bed, Bath and Beyond: Moving people home brings new life to an old neighbourhood’, *The Coast*, 31 January – 7 February 2002, pp. 10-11.

downward trajectory. Ironically, vacant sites on the commercial strip were due to the civic neglect of large landowners such as the City of Halifax and Sobeys's grocery store.

The expensive and long awaited federal redevelopment project at the corner of Cornwallis and Gottingen Streets had no real community development impact in terms of substantial contribution to existing businesses, new businesses emerging, or increased pedestrian traffic to support local merchants. In fact, both socio-economic and commercial decline continued, and no vitality was introduced to the area.

The latest endeavour to affect change in the neighbourhood is focused on one of humankind's basic social needs - the need for affordable housing. A spin-off of the 1993 federal decision to devolve responsibility for housing led to the creation of the Creighton/Gerrish Initiative. Its aim to provide a 71 unit, mixed income development on Gottingen Street is approaching the issue from the view that social well-being is central to neighbourhood revitalisation. A multi-year phased plan, it will take some time to analyse the effects of this effort.

The biggest lesson of the 1990's was that no single building, or amount of money put into a project, would suffice to rejuvenate Gottingen Street. Throughout the fifty year study period, 1950-2000, a panacea for change on Gottingen Street seemed elusive or indefinable. This 'silver bullet' approach, however, has been a part of the persistent problem following "urban renewal". Rather, concurrent social, economic and physical efforts are needed, and such initiatives have begun by community groups.

¹⁰³ Editorial. "Gottingen needs more than new look", *North End News*, 3 February 1995.

Chapter 7

MAKING THE LINKS: FINDINGS & ANALYSIS, 1950-2000

7.1. Neighbourhood Profile

The culmination of this study lies in the micro and macro analysis of the linkages between demographics, commercial change, policy/programmes and neighbourhood events within each decade. Ultimately, it is the fifty-year cumulative effect that will illuminate any patterns or relationship between these three variables, and their subsequent impact on the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. To this end, first a longitudinal analysis summary of each demographic characteristic and a commercial profile are presented, intended to inform any latitudinal relationships present among the variables.

7.1.1. Core Commercial District Profile, 1950-2000

The commercial change mapped over the fifty year period is a striking illustration of a once vibrant, diverse commercial corridor that became increasingly homogenous in its use over time (see Figure 7.1). From what was, at one time, a vibrant mix of retail, professional, restaurants and entertainment destinations, the street has steadily declined to the point where vacant buildings, empty lots, and a hub for social/community service agencies prevails. Details of this transition have already been illustrated throughout the earlier part of this thesis; however figures 7.1 and 7.2 visually illustrate the significance of this transition, while table 7.1 enumerates the commercial activity over the fifty-year period. Less visible, but equally important, is the loss of residential addresses on the core commercial district. Although the focus was on the commercial change, it is shocking that between 1950 and 1980, the commercial district lost 83% of its residential addresses and 81% of its listed residents.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ In absolute numbers, the 4-block district went from occupying 96 residential addresses in 1950 to only 17 in 1980. Listed residents numbered 113 in 1950, but only 22 in 1980.

FIGURE 7.1. GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL TRENDS, 1950-2000

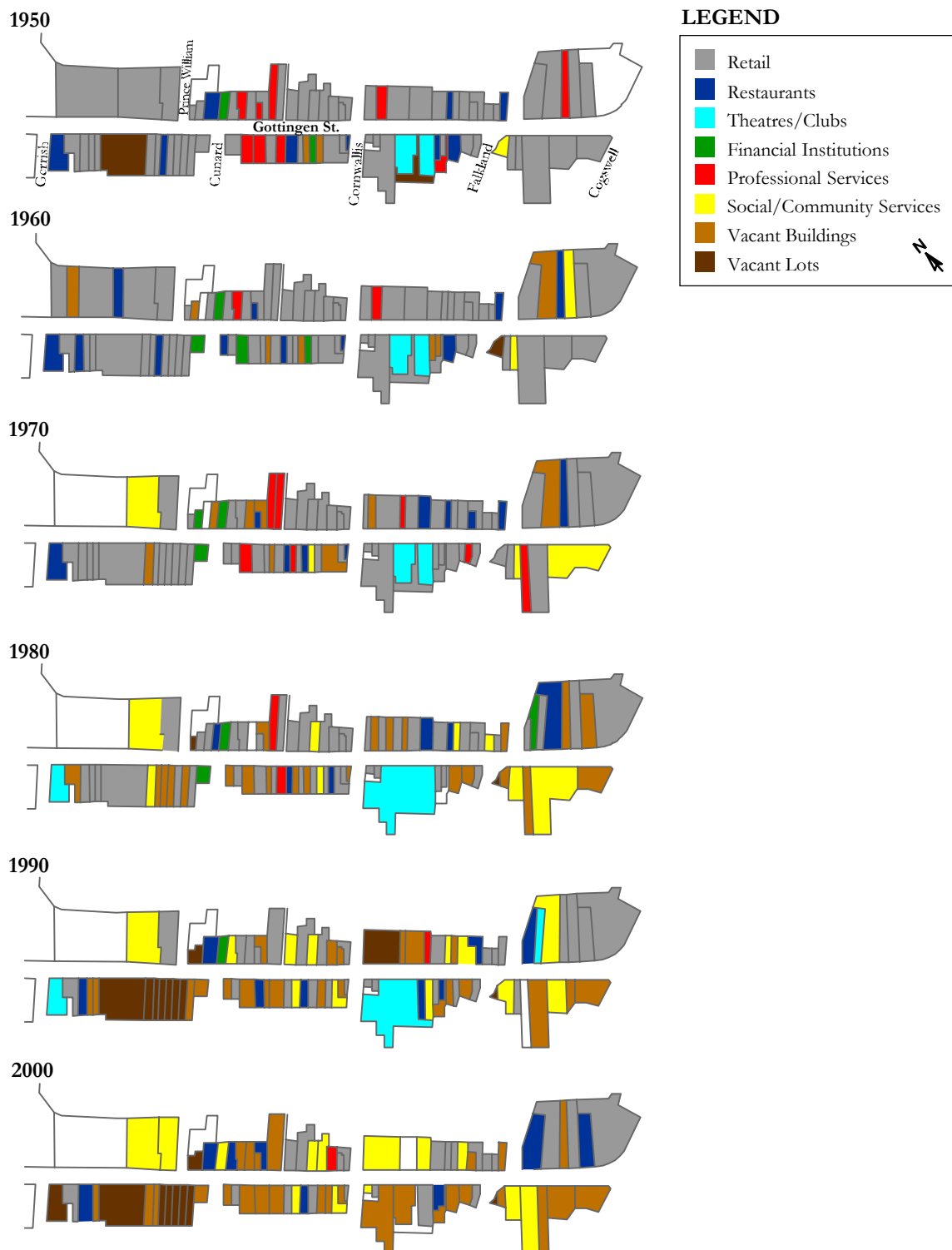


FIGURE 7.2. GOTTINGEN STREET SOCIAL AGENCIES VS. VACANCIES TRENDS, 1950-2000



TABLE 7.1 A SUMMARY OF GOTTINGEN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR ACTIVITY, 1950
- 2000

INVENTORY	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Retail	95	104	69	49	36	28
Financial	2	4	3	3	1	---
Professional	19	13	9	5	5	1
Restaurants/Café's	10	13	11	7	6	8
Entertainment	4	4	3	6	6	1
Community/Social Services	---	1	4	10	13	19
Vacant Buildings	1	9	9	30	25	35
Vacant Lots	2	1	---	2	5	6
No Return			2	11	7	16
Total Retail/Commercial	130	138	95	70	54	38

Source: Might Directories, 1950-1990; Equifax Polk City Directory, 2000

Figure 7.3 below illustrates the relationship between the level of commercial activity and the number of vacant buildings along the Gottingen Street commercial district. While only one vacant building was recorded in 1950, the gap between vacancies and commercial activity closed by the year 2000. With commercial activity at its lowest in fifty years, and the number of vacancies at its highest, the commercial district in 2000 was an equal mix of vacancies (35 listed) and commercial activity (38 listed). A parallel transformation of the street was occurring as the number of social agencies grew from only one in 1960 to an astounding nineteen present on the street in the year 2000.

The abundance of social agencies, vacant buildings and vacant land evident by the year 2000 has changed the form and function of this four-block commercial district. In fact, one can no longer consider this portion of Gottingen Street a true commercial district as it has manifested into a different type of place. The social agencies attract only service users while the under-utilised spaces discourage any type of street activity – a complete transformation from its previous expression and multi-purpose utility.

Central to this study's analysis is the timing of key transitions. The loss of diversity on the commercial corridor strongly correlates with the rapid decline in population (and other demographics such as employment rate, average household income, and persons per household), which were precipitated by both extrinsic and intrinsic factors. It is the writer's opinion that the extrinsic factors played a larger function, however recognises the subtle but strong effects of internal factors. This point will be discussed further in Section 7.2. The importance of this thesis lies in understanding the complexities and multiple variables affecting a neighbourhood at any given time. More importantly, understanding the intersection of these variables is central to affecting future change.

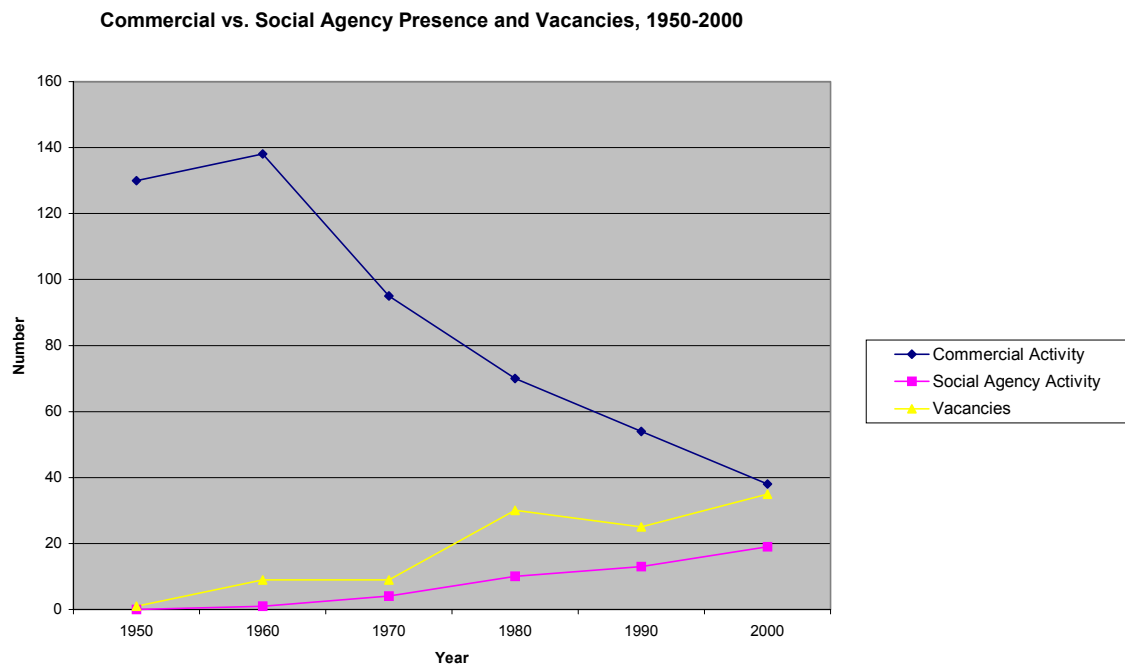


FIGURE 7.3. COMMERCIAL VS. SOCIAL AGENCY PRESENCE, AND VACANCIES, 1950-2000

7.1.2. A Demographic Profile, 1951-1996

One of the objectives of this thesis is to observe the neighbourhood's change through demographic indicators. Chronicling these changes in the study area provides a key piece to the research, as it is important to the researcher to understand how policy and planning has affected the people of the neighbourhood. The following is a summary and longitudinal view of the indicators used throughout this study to reflect on the Gottingen Street Neighbourhood.¹⁰⁵

TABLE 7.2 GOTTINGEN STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD INDICATORS, 1951-1996

	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	1996
Population	11,939	13,070	7,584	5,194	5580	4494
Persons Per Household	4.1	4.3	3.7	2.3	2.1	1.9
Number Employed	5489	6883	2720	1975	2350	1610
% Employed	68	75	58	56	60	51
% Tenant Occupied	78	76	83	87	87	87
Average Household Income ^a	— ^b	— ^b	6196	13,431	23,390	22,389
Incidence of Low Income (%)	— ^b	— ^b	— ^b	58	55	65
Source of Income (%)	— ^b	— ^b	— ^b	— ^b		
Employment Income					73	67
Gov't Transfer Payments					20	26
Other Income					7	7
Population Age Structure (%)						
0-14	27	24	29	17	17	16

¹⁰⁵ As a reminder to the reader, the Gottingen Street neighbourhood indicators are based on data from Census Tract 10 of Statistics Canada.

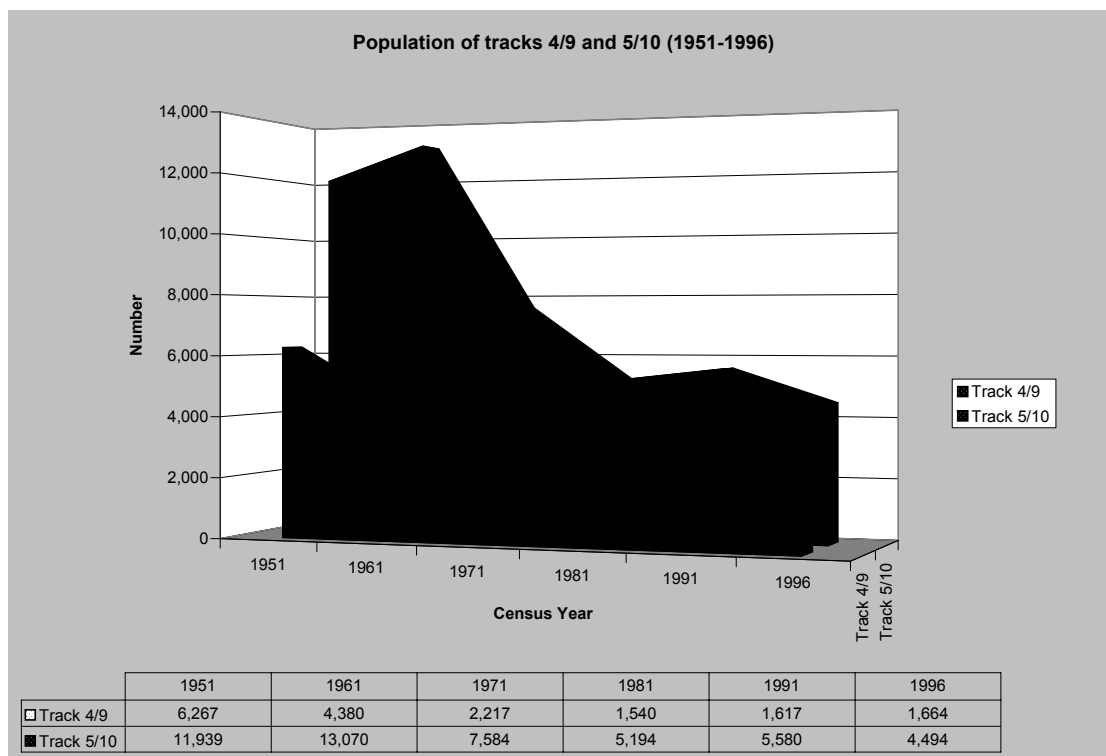
15-64	68	70	62	68	70	70
65+	5	5	9	16	13	13

Source: Canada Census (1951,1961,1971,1981,1991,1996)

- a. Unadjusted Figures
- b. Census Data not reported for this category in this year

Population and Age Structure

The Gottingen Street neighbourhood lost 66% of its population over the 35-year period spanning 1961 to 1996 (see Table 7.2). This amounts to more than 8,500 people - truly a phenomenal number that speaks volumes to the effect on the neighbourhood. By contrast, the population of the Halifax CMA grew steadily over the 50 year time frame, only showing a slightly slower rate of growth between 1991 and 1996 (see Figure 7.5). This reflected the urban growth trend across the country; however it is clear that the population was not flocking into the inner city as the population steadily declined in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood and the adjacent downtown neighbourhood. This implies that the growth was occurring in the suburban areas, a trend found in many studies conducted across the country.



Source: Canada Census (1951,1961,1971,1981,1991,1996)

FIGURE 7.4. POPULATION CHANGES IN TRACKS 4/9 AND 5/10, 1951-1996

While the neighbourhood experienced a significant change in population between the 1961 and 1971 census (see Figure 7.4), its changes in age structure were striking between 1971 and 1981. From 1951 to 1971, the 0-14 age group comprised no less than 24% of the population, while seniors were at most 9%. A dramatic decline in the number of youth and a rise in the number of seniors were evident in the 1981 census, with little further change to 1996. This change is consistent with the aging population. More specific to the neighbourhood however, this change in age structure was consistent with the increase in seniors' housing in the study area. In 1996, youth made up at most 17 % and seniors at most 16% of the neighbourhood's population. During the entire period 1951-1996, the employable age group, 15-64, comprised approximately the same proportion (averaging 68%) of the population in the neighbourhood. All these changes were consistent with a baby-boom in the 1950-1960s, a reduction in the birth rate during the period 1981-1996, and a corresponding increase in the average life

expectancy - depleting the number of youth and increasing the number of seniors. Similar trends in shifting demographic proportions were seen in the city of Halifax.

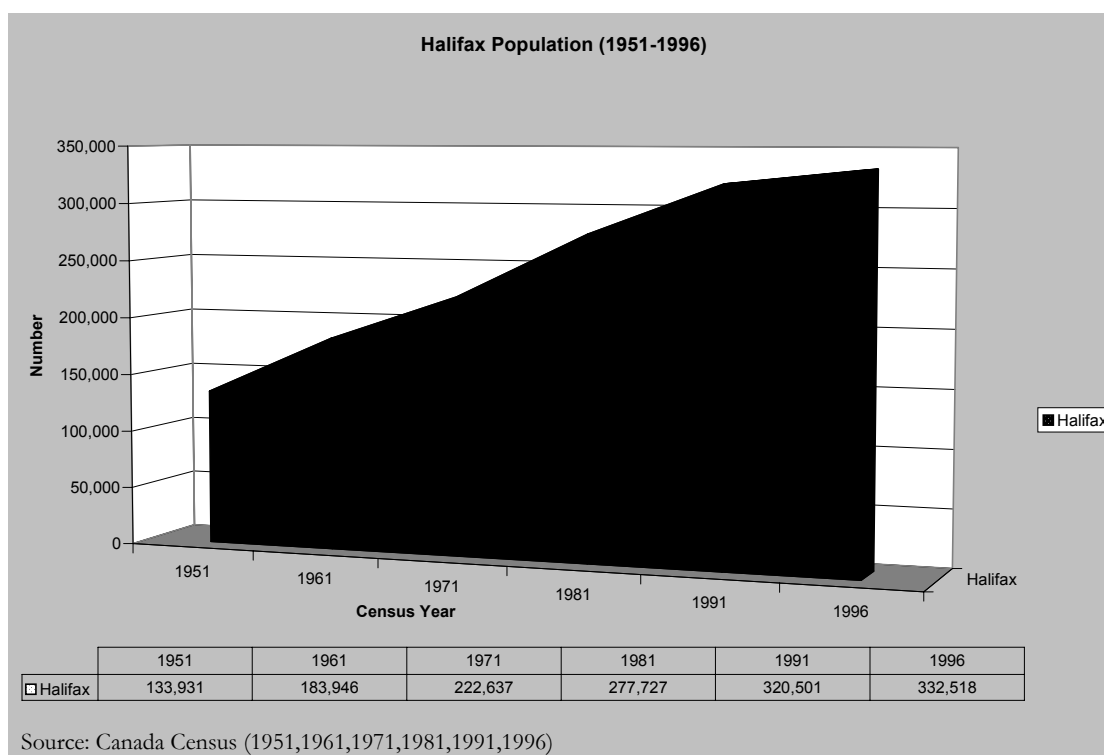


FIGURE 7.5. POPULATION CHANGES IN THE HALIFAX REGION, 1951-1996

Employment Rate

In both 1951 and 1961, the neighbourhood enjoyed a 68% and 75% employment rate, respectively. This high employment rate surpassed that of the downtown core and Halifax during the same years (see Figure 7.6). However, by 1971 we begin to see a decline in employment that eventually led to a complete reversal of this relationship. In 1996 only one in two people were employed in the neighbourhood, while in the downtown core more than three of four were employed.

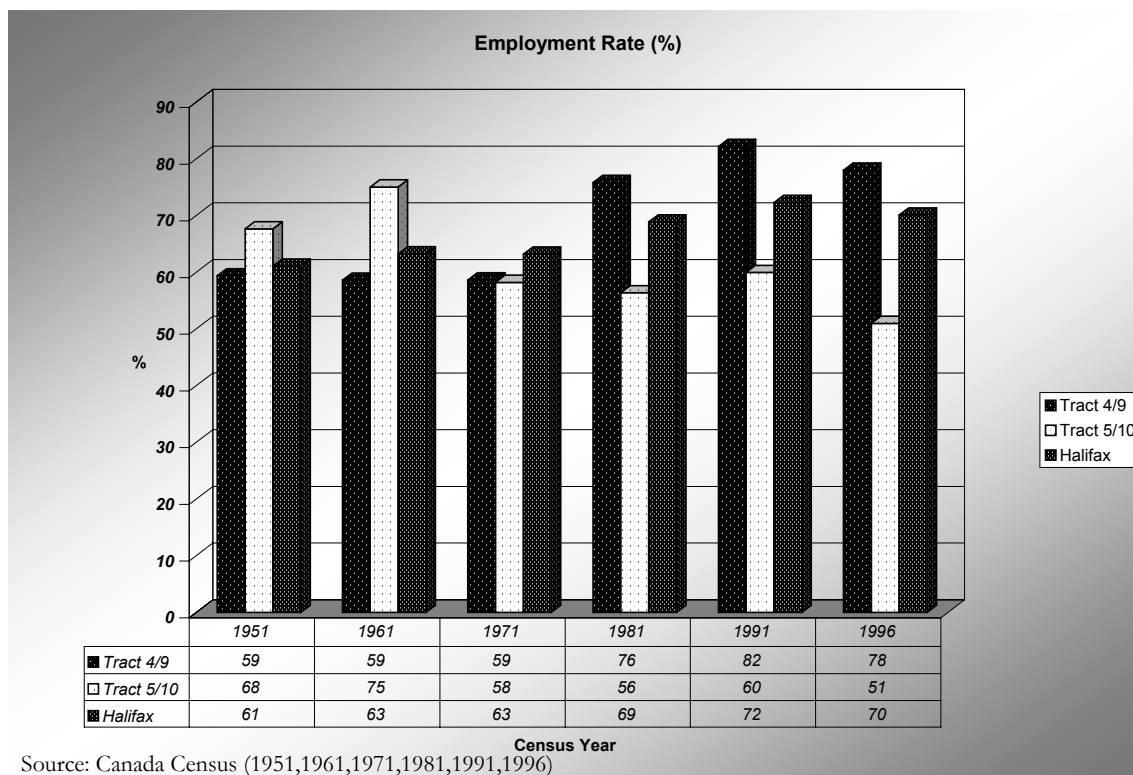
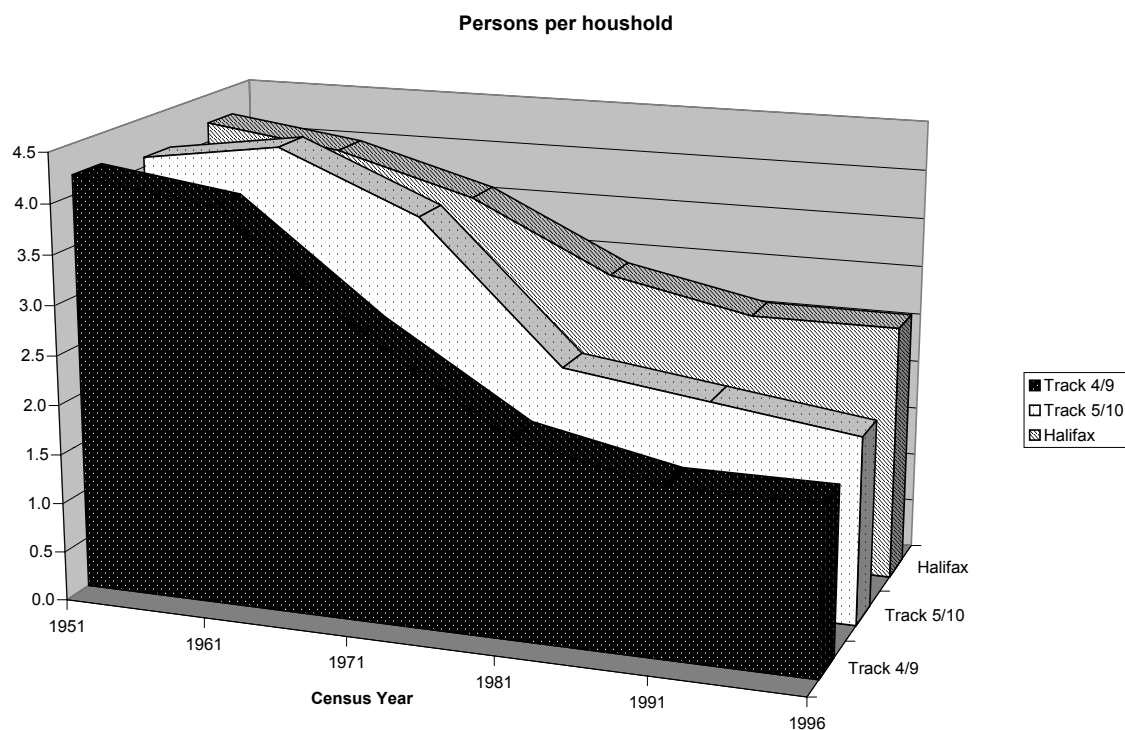


FIGURE 7.6. EMPLOYMENT RATE , 1951-1996

Persons per Household

In 1951, across all census tracts there were, on average, four persons per household. By 1996, this average fell to 1.7 persons per household in the downtown core and the study area, respectively. In Halifax as a whole, however, this average remained relatively high, with approximately 3 persons per household (see Figure 7.7). These differences in the numbers of persons per household may have arisen from the low urban area number being compensated by a high suburban occupation rate, to produce the rate of 2.6 observed across Halifax. The latter observation is consistent with the residential flight to suburbia. Although household size has decreased overall, it is evident more singles lived in the study area and downtown core. The greater propensity for singles to live in the inner city is partially related to available housing typology. There exists very little housing diversity in the study area, thus leaving fewer

options for larger households. In addition, better funded schools and more recreational opportunities began to exist outside of the inner city so those who can afford to leave do so – emphasising the formidable link between socio-economic status, education, health and opportunity.



Source: Canada Census (1951,1961,1971,1981,1991,1996)

FIGURE 7.7. PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD, 1951-1996

Average Household Income

Over the period 1971 to 1996, the average household income across Halifax was consistently higher than both the Gottingen Street neighbourhood and the downtown core (see Figure 7.8).

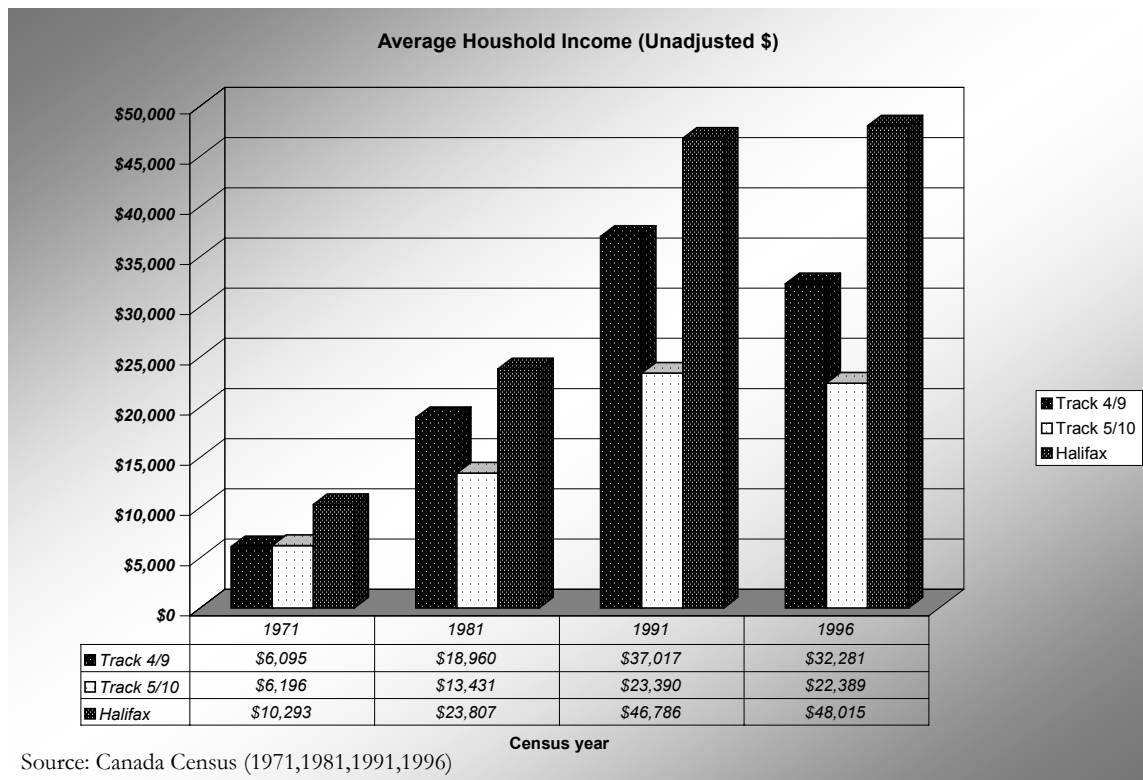


FIGURE 7.8. AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 1971-1996

Comparisons of the absolute value of the income between decades were unjustified since these figures were not adjusted for inflation. However, it is possible to glean some information from the relative ratios between the three areas. In 1971, both the neighbourhood and the adjacent area were earning at the same level. Beginning in 1981, household income increased at a far higher rate in the downtown core when compared with the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. As a result, a dramatic economic gap developed between the residents of the downtown core and those of the study area. Consequently, by 1996, residents of the neighbourhood earned approximately \$10,000 less than their counterparts in the downtown core and about \$26,000 less than the average across Halifax. In the 25 years from 1971-1996, the residents of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood continually earned less than their counterparts in the city of Halifax, while the gap continually grew wider. For example, in 1971, for every \$1 Halifax residents earned, Gottingen Street neighbourhood residents earned only .60. The ratio continued to drop so that by 1996, the study area residents made only .47 to every \$1 earned

by residents of Halifax as a whole, thereby dramatically increasing the poverty levels. Table 7.3 illustrates this alarming statistic.

TABLE 7.3 RATIO OF EARNINGS, STUDY AREA RESIDENTS TO HALIFAX RESIDENTS

	1971	1981	1991	1996
Gottingen Street Neighbourhood Residents	.60	.56	.50	.47
Halifax Residents	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

Source: Canada Census (1971,1981,1991,1996)

Housing Tenure

During the study period, modest shifts were detected in tenancy rates across Halifax and in the downtown core. Significant changes in the neighbourhood, however, became evident in 1971. From a tenancy rate of 78 % and 67% in 1951 and 1961, respectively, the neighbourhood witnessed a rise in these figures over the next 35 years - 83% in 1971 and 87% for the years 1981 – 1996 (see Figure 7.9). The significant change in 1971 correlates with the concomitant removal of residential homes east of Gottingen Street in the early 1960's, and their replacement by parking lots. In addition, the construction of public housing in the mid 1960's, and both Brunswick Towers and senior citizen towers in the mid 1970's, contributed to the growth and maintenance of the high tenancy rate of 87%.

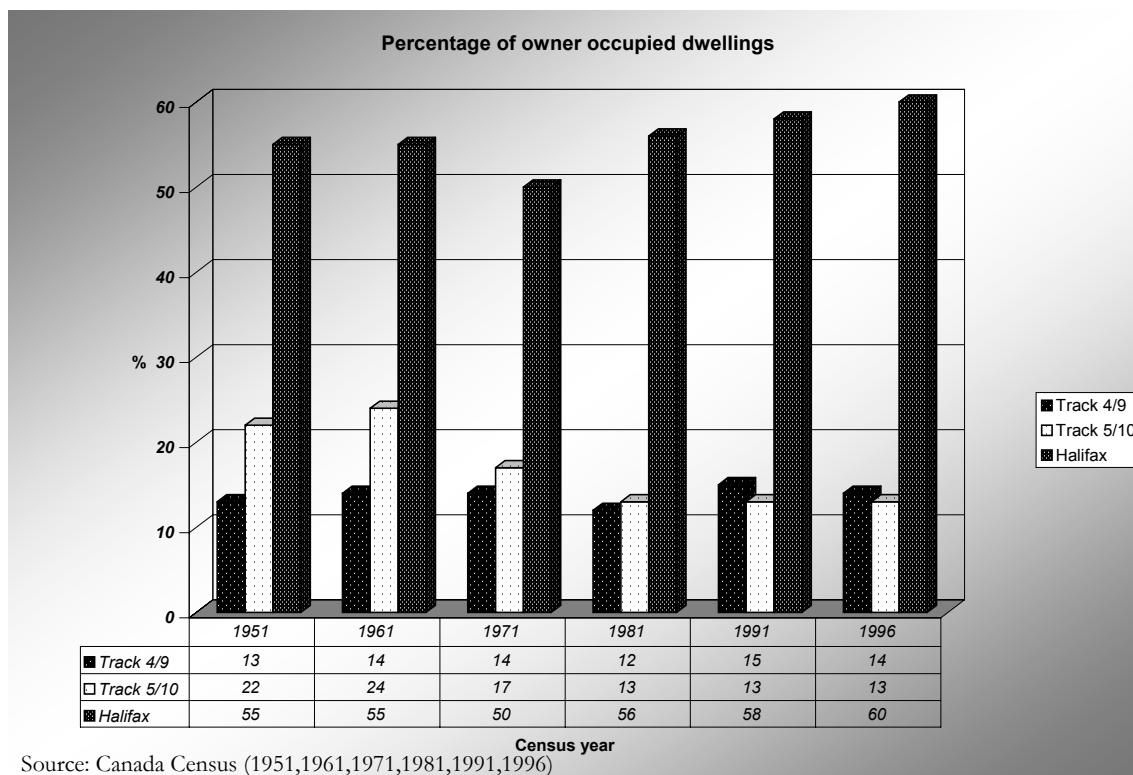


FIGURE 7.9. PERCENTAGE OF DWELLINGS OCCUPIED BY THE OWNER, 1951-1996

7.2. The Relationship between Policy, Planning and Neighbourhood Change

In chronicling the evolution of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, certain connections can be made. Two key findings present themselves in the analysis. First, there exists a relationship between policy and/or programmes, planning and demographic change in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, driven by policy decisions. Second, a sequential pattern is observed between the variables, evident in the ten-year intervals. In this regard, the largest changes on the commercial corridor (1960-1980) occur the decade during and after the largest demographic changes (1960-1970). Significant policy and program decisions and implementations of the 1950's and 1960's precede these major neighbourhood changes. The previous chapters of this study have provided the context to inform this analysis, thus a

summary account of the most significant relationships/connections identified in this research is provided below.

7.2.1. Significant policy/programme implementations, 1950's - 1960's

As discussed in Chapter 3, the 1956 NHA Amendment which gave the Urban Redevelopment Program the flexibility to manifest itself through “highest and best use” redevelopment led to the redevelopment of approximately eight city blocks in the downtown core (1958-1963), displacing more than 1,600 people. With the intended purpose of rehousing those displaced, Mulgrave Park public housing development was built north of the study area in 1962. The Scotia Square development was built in phases from 1965-1975, and although this mega project is a mix of retail, office and residential space, the population of the downtown core continued to steadily decline until 1991 when a 5% population increase was observed. Any increase in the population of the downtown core resulting from this development would be observed in the 1981 census data. However, a significant decrease in the population was observed in this year, thereby suggesting that the Scotia Square development did not even replace the population it had displaced in the early 1960's, let alone increase it. While this occurred in the downtown core adjacent to the study area, the displacement also negatively impacted Gottingen Street, as also displaced was the commercial district's customer base. An editorial written in 1988 expressed the following:

“In the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, department stores, small shops, grocery stores, theatres and restaurants thrived as thousands of metro residents would flock to the busy thoroughfare. Residents of the area would do all their business with street merchants because they had a vast selection from whom to choose. The residents did not require what other shopping districts might offer because they had it all within a few city blocks. But...Halifax's Gottingen Street fell into disrepair and disinterest. When the city relocated many of Gottingen's customers to suburban residences as part of the development of Scotia Square, those customers discovered shopping areas closer to their new homes.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Editorial (author unknown). “A chance for Gottingen Street”, *The Mail Star*, 18 May 1988, page number unknown.

The Maitland Street parking lot scheme approved in 1958 was also a result of the Urban Redevelopment Program intended to increase commercial activity on Gottingen Street by providing more parking for customers.¹⁰⁷ As the headlines of the October 23, 1958 issue of *The Halifax Mail Star* read, the project was granted federal approval¹⁰⁸, and by 1962 the destruction of “properties for parking lots”¹⁰⁹ was complete, and the displaced families were also relocated to Mulgrave Park. Although the entire parking scheme of seven parking lots within 8 blocks would displace 660 people in total, the one block bounded by Gottingen/Maitland/Cornwallis/Falkland alone would displace 345 people.¹¹⁰ In addition to the issue of displacement, the creation of parking lots had no positive impact on the vitality of the Gottingen Street commercial district (see Figure 7.1 and Table 7.1). Under the guise of slum clearance and the urban redevelopment program, the expropriation of Africville properties and the forced relocation of this historic community’s more than 400 residents began in 1964 and continued until 1967.¹¹¹ In 1966, the 250 unit, Uniacke Square public housing development was built on Gottingen Street to rehouse this community. This particular redevelopment scheme included the present day Halifax North Memorial Library, and the George Dixon Recreation Centre – two of the strong community institutions.

7.2.2. Major demographic changes, 1960-1970

Initially apparent with redevelopment was the physical change on the affected area – buildings torn down, land sitting empty or derelict, new buildings eventually erected. Less apparent to the eye but more detrimental, was the population change. For a thriving commercial district, the loss of foot traffic and consumers was devastating. As portrayed in Table 7.2, the population change between 1961 and 1971 was astounding. Following the major redevelopment implementations, by 1971 the neighbourhood’s population dropped by almost 50%. The loss of over half the consumers would necessarily negatively impact the business

¹⁰⁷ Slade, R. “Properties for Parking Lot to Cost \$109,000”, *The Halifax Mail Star*. 25 March 1958, p.1.

¹⁰⁸ Author unknown, “Gottingen Car Parking Receives Top Approval”, *The Halifax Mail Star*. 23 October 1958, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ This phrase comes from the title of article referenced above.

¹¹⁰ Slade, R. “Properties for Parking Lot to Cost \$109,000”, *The Halifax Mail Star*. 25 March 1958, p.6.

¹¹¹ Although the majority of the forced relocation occurred from 1964-1967, the last resident that left his home was Aaron “Pa” Carvery in 1969.

sector. In 1987 Joel Jacobson, an editor for a local paper, writing on the effect of redevelopment stated:

“Then came Scotia Square and the destruction of housing on Brunswick Street and Barrington Street and the elimination of many small streets in the area where dwelt hundreds of regular Gottingen customers who were relocated....”¹¹²

With such a profound loss of neighbourhood residents, inevitably the dynamics of the commercial district changed. In addition, the employment rate decreased by 17%, and the number of renters increased by 7%, thus decreasing the level of owner occupied units and autonomy amongst the residents in the area. The significant demographic changes of the 1960's were the beginning of instability and a decline trend throughout the duration of the study period. Successfully, the population instability stifled the commercial diversity, giving way to austere concerns for the neighbourhood's future.

7.2.3. Most observable changes on Gottingen Street Commercial Corridor, 1960's – 1980's

This research's findings assert that the devastating loss of population during the 1960's contributed to the loss of street diversity that first became evident in the 1970 commercial inventory. In the ten year period from 1960-1970, Gottingen Street lost more than 30% of its commercial activity. By the year 2000, the commercial district lost 72% of the commercial activity that existed in 1960 (see Table 7.1 and Figure 7.1). From the diversity of professional services, retail stores that were open late on weekends, theatres and restaurants that brought people into the commercial district both day and night, “functionally and visually the street became monotonous.”¹¹³ As the level of retail, entertainment and professional activity declined and financial institutions became extinct, the homogeneity of the increased social service agencies and vacancies evident on the street quickly became the norm.

For many residents and business owners, the final blow came when the only grocery store in the neighbourhood closed its doors in 1987:

¹¹² Jacobson, Joel. ‘City Beat’, *The Mail Star*. 31 August 1987.

¹¹³ Jacobs, J., 1961, p. 243. Jacobs suggested this phenomenon occurs as part of the self-destruction of diversity in streets or districts. Although the impact is the same, in the case of Gottingen, the street's monotony was not created by self destruction.

“The venerable old gathering spot for hundreds of shoppers in the 1940’s, 1950’s and 1960’s has taken its lump in the last 20 years.... One can recall stores like Heinisch’s, Gordon B. Isnor’s, Rubin’s, Woolworths, Kline’s, Western Furniture, Roza Brothers, Donaldson’s Stationers, Allen’s Hardware, Discount Shoeland, restaurants like French Casino and Edwards Fine Foods and the Vogue Theatre. Lawton’s Drug Store chain started on Gottingen Street as did Capitol Stores and Glubes, which blossomed into major factors in metro business...All that remains from those glory days are solid competitors like New York Dress, Metropolitan Stores, Argyle TV, Coombs, the Casino Theatre, Glubes, and the Royal Bank. A Sobeys’s store became Foodland and, this weekend, that too will be gone.”¹¹⁴

This research suggests that signs of decline on the commercial district were in fact the last indication that the neighbourhood was in distress. The physical decay evident on Gottingen Street is a symptom of the decisions and demographic transformations that precede it. As a result, tackling the neighbourhood's decline from just a physical dimension may prove unsuccessful, unless the factors that led to the physical state are addressed. Dealing primarily with the symptoms, and not the causal factors, may only be successful for some time before the recurring symptomatic state of decline continues to present itself. Attempts to revitalise the commercial sector alone will not suffice unless the factors that led to its demise are addressed. Therefore, close attention must be given to a neighbourhood's demographic profile before and after the undertaking of large-scale projects - such as those that impacted this study area. (I.e. redevelopment projects of the 1960's, and even the federal building project of the early 1990's that was to act as a catalyst for revitalisation, but in effect, had no impact).

The sequential relationship between these three variables is best illustrated in Figure 7.10.

7.2.4. Summary

Evidence of the correlation and sequential relationship indicated above does not however negate recognising the impact of internal neighbourhood events - events that further traumatised the neighbourhood. These insidious events, such as the multiple murders in the 1980's, the police strike of 1981 which led to vandalism and mayhem, and the "race riot" of

¹¹⁴ Jacobson, Joel. 'City Beat', *The Mail Star*. 31 August 1987.

1991, were all detrimental events that left their mark on the perception of the area, stigmatising the entire neighbourhood. The Gottingen Commercial Area, Market Strategy Study of 1986 revealed that indeed, an image problem was associated with Gottingen Street.¹¹⁵ The impact of perception on a neighbourhood will be discussed further in section 7.3.

In summary, the heavy-handed policy implementations triggered the rapid decline of this once vibrant district. However, endogenous events (strikes, looting, murders, and race riot) and clinging public perception of the area and its residents solidified its trajectory, pushing the neighbourhood further in the direction of decline.

¹¹⁵ Smith et al., 1986.

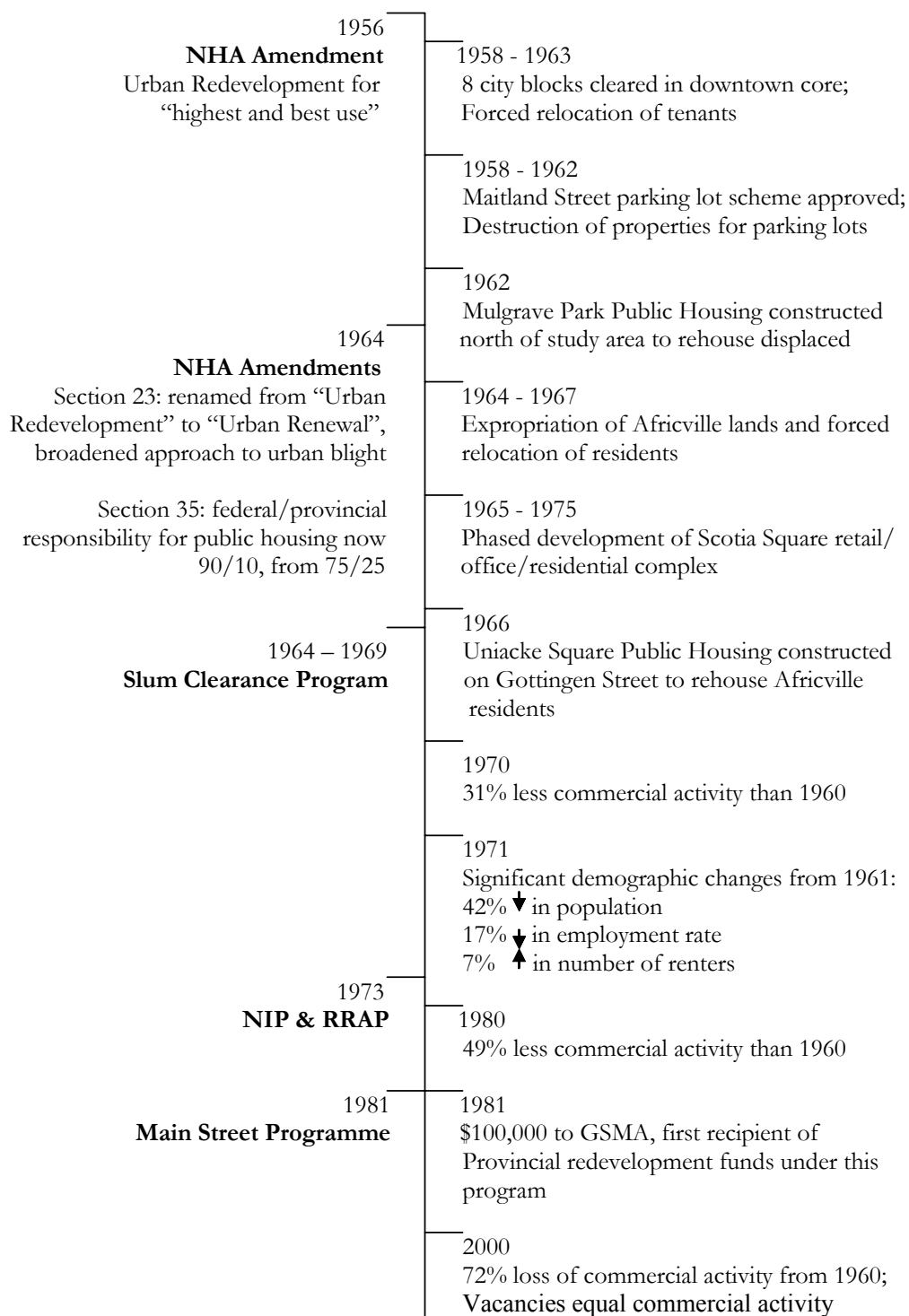


FIGURE 7.10. SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS AND IMPACTS ON THE GOTTINGEN STREET
NEIGHBOURHOOD, 1950-2000

7.3. Lessons Learned from the Gottingen Street neighbourhood case study

The lessons learned from the historical analysis of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood are neither independent nor mutually exclusive from one another. Just as the factors are varied, complex and context dependent, so too are the lessons learned. In particular, four lessons from this case study will be reflected upon. In no particular order, they are: 1) the city's role, 2) the link between sociology and land use planning, 3) the role of money, and 4) the power of perception.

7.3.1. The City's (Public Sector) Role; Beyond Planning Blight

The municipal government was heavily involved in this neighbourhood during the former part of this study by virtue of the federal decision to invest into urban areas. However, in the last twenty years (1980-2000), the city's position was negligible at best. The city was criticised for its lack of involvement, apparent interest, and leadership. By and large, it turned its back on the neighbourhood, and was repeatedly criticised for its disregard of this community's future. In 1988, Richard Matthews, Halifax's director of development and planning, disagreed claiming that the city had no policy of "benign neglect". Rather, its approach was to "wait and see" how the street would evolve, instead of designing a future for it.

In defence of his department's stance, Matthews also claims that despite the development of Scotia Square, Gottingen Street is no worse off than it was fifteen years earlier.¹¹⁶ However, the present study disproves his claim, as from 1970-1990 commercial activity dropped by almost 50%. In addition, two thousand less people lived in the neighbourhood; consequently it is inconceivable to suggest that the situation did not worsen. The Department of Development and Planning shirked its responsibility to plan by essentially taking the non-committal and precarious approach of market driven revitalisation. Their approach was not only in theory as the government also owned abandoned land in the study area. In the 1980's, the much anticipated federal project was seen by many as the catalyst for future developments. Land assembly (through expropriation) for the federal building began in 1984, thus leaving the

lot vacant for many years in anticipation that this project would one day spearhead growth in the neighbourhood.¹¹⁷

In the journal *Atlantic Insight*, Robin Metcalfe wrote:

“Four businesses were torn down to clear the site. Then a Conservative federal government was elected. Construction was “deferred,” then cancelled. The vacant lot was planted with grass and development plans stalled.”¹¹⁸

Since the government and media equally touted the project as the catalyst that would revitalise the street, it is most certain that this gave land speculators an opportunity to literally sit and wait for this development to jumpstart growth, while in the meantime doing minimal maintenance on their own properties. Ten years after the project was initially announced, the federal building was finally built in 1993, but not before the four expropriated businesses and the vacant land significantly contributed to the blighted streetscape.

In their report of July 13, 1988, Halifax city staff suggested that Gottingen Street could, in the future, act as a ‘relief-valve’ for the Central Business District (CBD). The idea of a ‘relief valve’ operates on the notion that one day land would eventually become scarce in the downtown core. When this occurred, development would eventually shift to Gottingen Street. In the meantime, development proposals (for example, a \$15 million commercial-retail project that requested \$500,000 - \$600,000 from the city), were not approved. It seems the only investment that interested the city was funding yet another study. In 1988 city staff suggested that \$50,000 should be spent on yet another study of the area – only two years after the \$45,000 Market Strategy Study was conducted.¹¹⁹

It is only the city staff who made these recommendations to council that could justify this position. An external view of the situation, however, posits that the planning mode of thought and action in Halifax at the time (i.e. the culture of planning) was part of the problem.

¹¹⁶ Smith, L. “Street Beats with New Life”. *The Chronicle-Herald*. 1 April 1988. p. 2E.

¹¹⁷ Gordon, R., “Federal building will spearhead Halifax growth”. *The Chronicle-Herald*. 17 February 1984.

¹¹⁸ Metcalfe, R., “Real estate versus real life”. *Atlantic Insight*. January 1988. p. 29.

The Notion of Planning Blight

These research findings support the notion that ‘planning blight’ was a factor in the changes experienced by the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. As defined by Bourne, planning blight is typified “when a planning authority or other public agency through such actions as designating an area of clearance or renewal invites uncertainty and undermines the incentive for improvement”.¹²⁰ In broader terms, Ahlbrandt and Brophy assert that “the public sector plays a pivotal role in determining the future of a neighbourhood through its service (delivery) and investment decisions”.¹²¹ Both conceptualisations recognise the range of functions that the public sector can play to impact a neighbourhood through its policy and programme decisions. The outcomes of planning blight are unequivocally physical, economic and social in nature as the long term impacts of public policy present themselves in the neighbourhood. In the case of the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, the 50 year study period exemplified a broad range of investment decisions and actions that all contributed to planning blight. As such, the heavy federal investment of the 1950’s and 1960’s, and the lack of municipal involvement (and even misguided investments) in the 1980’s and 1990’s were equally causal factors in the neighbourhood’s change. The NHA amendment that allowed redevelopment “for best use”, saw homes demolished for parking lots east of Gottingen Street, and in another site, Africville, homes demolished for supposed industrial use. In addition, the interest, or lack thereof, that the public sector takes in a neighbourhood may influence how the private sector will decide to operate. During the 1980’s, this phenomenon was certainly witnessed in the study area, surrounding the federal site on the corner of Gottingen and Cornwallis streets. While the site sat vacant for nine years pending bureaucratic decisions, private owners speculated on their properties, waiting to see what would transpire.

¹¹⁹ Wild, L. “Staff opposes Gottingen St. boost”. *The Daily News*. 19 July 1988.

¹²⁰ Bourne, L. 1981, p. 180.

¹²¹ Ahlbrandt R. & Paul Brophy, 1975, p. 24.

Planning and policy decisions have an opportunity to leave an indelible mark on the landscape; and its implications at the neighbourhood level have been remarkable to the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. The indicators of neighbourhood decline are not only a symptom, but as mentioned above, a causal factor in their own right. Evidence that the dynamics of a neighbourhood can be completely altered by policy decisions (a manifestation of planning blight) implies that there is a greater need for policy sensitivity to its effects at the local level. According to Bourne's definition, then, urban renewal was planning blight. Local government must understand the nature of its communities at every level, and armed with this knowledge play a conscientious lead role in future neighbourhood development – not the marginal function that it chose during the latter part of the study period. This lead role must of course be in concert with the community in order to affect change. To this end, a commitment from all levels of government is required.

Lessons from the Gottingen Street neighbourhood also suggest that planning should be incremental and not large scale. The fragile state of the neighbourhood is a clear indication that any planned change should proceed in such fashion. Regardless of its current condition, incremental change is a gentler way to approach neighbourhood planning and development. Intended or not, the scale of neighbourhood level planning and development inevitably affects social change to a large degree.

7.3.2. The Link between the Sociology of Place and Land-use Planning

The social and commercial changes of the neighbourhood have certainly correlated with its physical changes, confirming the interconnected natures of a place. As the physical decline became evident and the population diminished, the commercial sector suffered, average income of residents decreased, tenancy rates increased, and unemployment rates increased. By and large, individual and community autonomy decreased. Combined with the low levels of education in the community, the outlook has been bleak at times. In past attempts to revitalise the neighbourhood, its multifaceted scope has not been addressed equally, or in a coordinated manner. For example, physical improvement projects, such as new benches,

new paint, new planters, street signs and increasing parking plazas have done nothing to:

1) affect the socio-economic well being of the community members, 2) to improve the vitality of the commercial corridor, 3) to develop vacant lots, or 4) to address perception and/or crime in the area. This observation does not diminish the importance of aesthetic value to such physical improvements; however, when the decline is so deeply entrenched in instability and uncertainty, the intervention strategies cannot be superficial alone.

There exists a need to understand a neighbourhood; its people, its history, its economics, its diverse relationships - in essence the sociology of the place. Such understanding recognises that the condition of the people and the geo-political-cultural dimensions of the place are inextricably connected, and thus must be addressed as such. To simultaneously tackle the issues from all fronts requires coordination and time. There will be no quick fix, no silver bullet. The solutions should not be one dimensional nor quick fixes, such as the idea that one building could act as the panacea for revitalisation. It is imperative that land use planning decisions are sensitive to the neighbourhood's sociology, its realities, so that decisions minimise negative impacts such as social upheaval, economic distress and physical blight. Since physical land use issues and socio-economic concerns are interwoven, the practice of planning should be as well. Both spheres must be addressed with consideration for one another. A community based, holistic approach to neighbourhood planning necessitates the understanding of demographic data to support strategies, policies, and/or projects.

7.3.3. The Role of Money - The Relationship between Investments and Neighbourhood Change

One of the key research questions is why, despite investments, has the Gottingen Street neighbourhood spiralled into and remained in a state of decline for such a lengthy period of time? This is an important question to consider because it is policy directives that determine public spending; therefore the role of money is a key analytical point in this thesis.

One may assume that areas of disinvestment show signs of decline, while locales with heavy investment demonstrate signs of revitalisation. The dual experience of this neighbourhood has been both of disinvestment (for example, by lenders and insurance companies), but also of large public investments. The research findings reveal that a positive relationship did not exist between financial investments and revitalisation of the study area. In a couple of instances, financial investments occurred in extremely large portions; however they too lacked significant positive impact. Subsequently, one can surmise that it is not the amount of the investment that is significant; rather it is how the investment occurs, and for what purpose. With a contextual understanding of place (e.g. demographic analysis, neighbourhood assets and weaknesses, involvement of stakeholders in decision-making process) strategic investments may prevail.

Table 7.5 below highlights some of the major public investments into the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. This table does not claim to represent a complete survey of all such investments during the 50-year study period; however its purpose is to highlight the investments associated with major policy decisions. A column does not exist for the 1950's, as it is the decade when major decisions occurred, with the major implementations beginning in the 1960's. This study's conservative estimate is 30 million dollars over the fifty-year period.¹²²

¹²² Between 1972 and 1998, total investment in the neighbourhood (public and private, including homeowners) was approximately 80 million, based on building permits issued. Source: C/GD A Business Plan, June 1998.

TABLE 7.4 MAJOR PUBLIC INVESTMENTS IN GOTTINGEN STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD,
1950-2000

Project	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	Total
Maitland Street Clearance & Relocation for Parking Scheme	\$110,000				\$110,000
Africville Relocation	\$600,000				\$600,000
Urban Renewal Uniacke Square Public Housing Halifax North Memorial Library	\$670,000				\$670,000
Scotia Square Redevelopment & Mulgrave Park Public Housing	\$6 M				\$6 M
NIP Area 1		\$1 M			\$1 M
RRAP		\$1.9 M			\$1.9 M
George Dixon Centre		\$500,000			\$500,000
Gottingen Commercial Area Market Strategy Study			\$45,000		\$45,000
Mainstreet Program (provincial/municipal)			\$500,000		\$500,000
Uniacke Square Redevelopment (housing, post office, library)			\$10.25M		\$10.25M
Uptown Gottingen Property Improvement Program				\$80,000	
Federal Office building				\$7 M	
Municipal parking garage (contribution to federal office building)				\$500,000	
Investment By Decade (unadjusted)	\$7.4M	\$3.4M	\$10.75M	\$7.6M	\$29.15M

Source: Fraser, 1982; Gordon, 1984; Metcalfe, 1988; Sewell, 1994; Slade, 1958; Smith, 1986; Smith, 1988, Sword, 1992

Analogous to the uses of a knife, money is a powerful tool, its double edge used either positively or negatively to affect a neighbourhood. Reflecting on Jane Jacobs' characterisations of gradual and cataclysmic money, her observations are very relevant to the Gottingen Street area. In her seminal work, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs states:

“Money has its limitations. It cannot buy inherent success for cities where the conditions for inherent success are lacking and where the use of the money fails to supply them. Furthermore, money can only do ultimate harm where it destroys the conditions needed for inherent success. On the other hand, by helping to supply the requirements needed, money can help build inherent success in cities. Indeed, it is indispensable.... For these reasons, money is a powerful force both for city decline and for city regeneration. But it must be understood that it is not the mere availability of money, but how it is available, and for what, that is all important.”¹²³

The use of money failed to supply conditions needed for Gottingen Street’s renaissance, such as: more people, the return of diverse and interesting street life brought on by a stable population, a diverse mix of retail/commerce/residential, and opportunities for evening use. It is, however, Jacobs’ last point that is most poignant to this study. As mentioned earlier, millions of dollars were invested into the Gottingen Street neighbourhood, yet a rebirth continued to elude this once vibrant commercial district.

The Role of Financial Institutions

Another significant factor is the lending practices of financial institutions. Financial institutions deem what areas and properties are mortgages worthy and/or insurable. Redlining occurs when banks refuse to give loans in neighbourhoods perceived by lenders to be in decline, thus perpetuating what has been identified by some as a “cycle of decline”.¹²⁴ Although now regulated in the United States through mechanisms such as the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) and the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA), the practice of redlining and disinvestment by banks and insurance agencies has a notorious history in North America’s inner city neighbourhoods.

The inner city, Gottingen Street neighbourhood has also faced the issue of redlining. Although there may be many, a couple of examples illustrate this point. In 1984, due to its location, the computer company Dymaxiom experienced great difficulties in securing finances

¹²³ Jacobs, p. 292.

for their company on the corner of Gottingen and Cogswell Streets. Although the building had been renovated, only one local mortgage company would consider them for a 75% mortgage.¹²⁵ Others were not so lucky. In 1997, successful downtown entrepreneur, Victor Syperek, was not able to secure a reasonable loan to open a business venture on Gottingen Street. "Just because it was Gottingen Street they really weren't interested...many lending institutions don't look at its potential."¹²⁶ This lack of confidence does not support entrepreneurial ventures that could help rebuild the commercial district. Moreover, the institutionalised perception of the area serves as a systemic barrier by actively keeping the area in a state of stagnation. As Jacob suggests, such decisions become self-fulfilling prophecies of decline.

Charles Finn, in a study commissioned by the Boston Redevelopment Authority on mortgage lending, states: "Banks, as an important source of capital, play a pivotal but often invisible role in determining whether a community will thrive or decline...Mortgage and construction lending decisions are often made based upon expectations about neighbourhood growth or decline – expectations about risk. Thus, banks' expectations of neighbourhood growth or decline often become reality – a 'self-fulfilling prophecy.' Without a steady flow of credit, neighbourhoods deteriorate. Economic opportunities for residents of these neighbourhoods are reduced, even during periods of economic growth. During periods of economic decline, disinvested neighbourhoods suffer disproportionately."¹²⁷

The dual nature of money is such that *how* it is used (drastic amounts of money invested into one project) and not used (disinvestment) can have an equally tranquilizing effect on the potential for a neighbourhood's steady growth.

¹²⁴ Peterman, p. 45.

¹²⁵ Ross, D. "Why Gottingen Street has got to come back before too long", *Real Estate Guide*, 11 February 1984.

¹²⁶ Lambie, C. "Lenders lack 'faith' in Gottingen Street", *The Daily News*, 12 May 1997.

¹²⁷ Finn, 1989, p.1.

7.3.4. The power of perception

Popular perception of a neighbourhood is a powerful determining factor in the success or failure of its commercial district, as it is perception that drives decision-making. If one has choice, perception is a major determinant in where people will live, shop, and where business owners decide to locate.

This was certainly true for the Gottingen Street area. Surveys have found that since the post 1960's, a negative image has been attached to the street. As mentioned earlier, there were traumatic neighbourhood events in the 1980's that further stigmatised the neighbourhood. However those occurrences did not ignite the negative image. The isolated incidents of the 1980's served to solidify the existing negative perception of the area precipitated mostly by the building of public housing on Gottingen Street in the 1960's. Area businessmen ascribed the mid-1970's decline to the introduction of Uniacke Square public housing north of the commercial corridor.¹²⁸ In 1988, Robin Metcalfe authored a special report on Gottingen Street. In it she states:

“Some local businesses blame Uniacke Square for the areas decline. Many white Haligonians see it as a “ghetto,” although its condition, however shabby, is hardly that of a tenement slum. The author of the marketing study published in 1986 called Gottingen Street “the black eye that’s hurting the rest of the community.” “Maniac Square” is a popular nickname. Haligonians rarely acknowledge the underlying racism.”¹²⁹

Throughout the study period (1950-2000), community groups and the intermittent merchant's association fought this image by organising festivals, and other such community awareness initiatives - but the strong public image generally diluted their efforts. Negative perception of an entire neighbourhood is often perpetuated by fear, fear of the unknown. It is the writer's opinion that underlying causes stem from issues of class and race.

The social and historical constructs of ‘race’ and ‘class’ have played monumental roles in urban change across North America, and have left their legacy in inner cities, many of which are still

¹²⁸ Small, 1984.

in recovery. Many mechanisms exist in the United States to combat the imprint left on inner city neighbourhoods, where, due in part to the larger populations, the magnitude was so much greater. However, some of the systemic issues plaguing the North End stem from a similar history. Nova Scotia's unique history as the home of Canada's largest indigenous Black settlements dates back to the early 1700's. Since the earliest settlements, the historic Black communities of Nova Scotia have lived in isolation from the broader community. The institutionalised racism was omnipresent in all facets of life such as employment and education. For example, it was only in 1955 that the desegregation of schools occurred in Nova Scotia. It is within this socio-political climate that the residents of Africville experienced forced relocation from their community on the outskirts of the city, to public housing in the heart of the inner city. The imposed integration was bound to create tensions. In an era when the double burden of race and poverty were significant factors, the stigma perpetuated by fear of the unknown definitely had a negative impact on the neighbourhood's vitality and image.

Although the negative image reflects the preconceptions of the perpetrators (often they are from outside the neighbourhood), it is an exceedingly huge hurdle to a neighbourhood's rebirth. Changing perception and stereotypes is an insurmountable task – one much bigger than the field of planning itself. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged and addressed in planning, not avoided. Planners must engage in this reality as it is the effects/outcomes of perception that play an important role in determining the neighbourhood's future.¹³⁰ As Gregory Squires puts forth, actions such as mortgage redlining and racial steering in either the sale or rental of housing magnifies the problem to the point that these negative images can affect the spatial structure of neighbourhoods and cities.¹³¹ These actions based on perception then define the urban form by class and race dimensions.

There is another debilitating aspect to perception, and that is its internal role on neighbourhood residents. The physical barrier to the adjacent downtown core and

¹²⁹ Metcalfe, R., "Real estate versus real life", *Atlantic Insight*, January 1988, p. 29.

¹³⁰ Brophy (1975) writes about how any positive changes in a neighbourhood need to be highlighted because it is ingrained attitudes about the neighbourhood that determine its future. He goes on to suggest that the appropriate group to market the neighbourhood should be a predominantly citizen based organization, as it is their neighbourhood.

¹³¹ Squires, 1994.

economic barriers to employment of those experiencing a high rate of poverty undoubtedly affect their collective psyche. Awareness of their own socio-economic situation, compounded with how they are viewed by outsiders can perpetuate a sense of helplessness. In addition, the large concentration of community agencies in the neighbourhood are accessible for those who need them, however the accessibility may also create an insular environment – further reinforcing the sense of despair and need.

7.4. Conclusion

The inductive method of inquiry suggests that from the specific lessons of a study, general observations may be inferred. Moving from the specific to the general, the research and lessons learned from this study necessitate reflection on neighbourhoods, planning, and the approach to planning.

Chapter 8

REFLECTIONS

The neighbourhood is an important part of a city's sustenance, vibrancy and sustainability. When its equilibrium is disturbed, it can undergo volatile changes, and hence be caught in a precipitous state of decline. As the analysis indicates, there exists a definitive relationship between policy, investments and decline in the Gottingen Street neighbourhood. The social, economic and physical impact on the neighbourhood was a slow, ravaging process during the period 1950-2000.

The present study emphasises a strong case for the importance of neighbourhood level data collection, analysis and documentation as a precursor to informed decision making. Key decisions made outside the Gottingen Street neighbourhood had negative impacts on the people and the place, leading to increased levels of poverty and neighbourhood decline over the study period years. A paucity of information inevitably leads to ineffectual decision-making and implementation – its effects catapulting onto the social and commercial vitality of a neighbourhood. On the other hand, sound research can lead to informed decisions and implementations.

Although planning blight had a detrimental impact on the neighbourhood, this observation does not negate the importance of the role of the public sector. Let's consider this statement further. First, in its decision-making process, neighbourhood planning alone may not consider the broader context of a region. Second, reliance on the private sector may further undermine the needs of the peripheralised segments of the city. It is obvious that planning has the ability to leave an indelible mark on the landscape; the question though is how to improve its capabilities.

Leoni Sandercock writes of the need for a ‘macro lens’ and ‘micro lens’ view and approach to planning.¹³² This dual approach is able to address the city’s overall development, while concurrently addressing neighbourhood development. Ultimately, it is the *balance* between these two approaches that will support effective decision making, and (optimistically) more equitable neighbourhoods and cities. Presently, Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is at an important point in its planning history where this balance must be addressed. In the current fervour towards regional planning, the neighbourhood, as a unit of planning, must be incorporated into the vision of the region.

¹³² Sandercock, L., 1998. Sandercock refers to this as the zoom lens view and aerial view of communities.

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