

Executive Summary

This report examined a pedestrian street initiative in the inner-city Toronto neighbourhood of Kensington Market, testing whether it addresses the pressing concerns of gentrification for the residents and businessowners. Kensington Market's monthly occurring Pedestrian Sundays take place during the summer season in which the historic store-front streets of the neighbourhood are closed off from motorists and opened for pedestrian usage. Kensington Market's community planning of the Pedestrian Sundays initiative bear the potential to inform wider and institutional changes to promote pedestrian-inclusive planning in Toronto (McClellan and Rahder, 2013). Recent criticisms have emerged that the initiative may be advancing the neighbourhood's gentrification by attracting an urban professional demographic and transforming the event from a community-oriented event to a primarily tourist attraction (McClellan and Rahder, 2013).

Determining the procedural mechanisms of the initiative was crucial to reveal who has the most to gain from the initiative, who influences it, and whether the initiative is sustainable. The guiding research question undertaken in the report was to what extent is Kensington Market's Pedestrian Sundays' initiative informed by the concerns and values expressed by local businesses and residents? The report comprised a synthesis of two main components: first, the process and policy behind the initiative was examined. Second, the level of the initiative's incorporation of local business and residential concerns and advice was assessed using criteria for community participation. The planning of the initiative showcased a nexus of informal planning practices (e.g. grassroots public participation) and the more formal, traditional forms of urban planning (e.g. municipal oversight, public engagement). The stakeholders responsible for planning Pedestrian Sundays included a combination of long-term residents, local business owners, and community association representatives. It was found that the initiative originated through local activists' efforts in coordination with neighbourhood associations, and eventually co-opted by Kensington Market's Business Improvement Association (BIA). The BIA's establishment of a Street Events Committee permitted community funding of the event, and surveys and meetings are held throughout the year to engage community members to discuss matters relating to the Market, including Pedestrian Sundays.