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We Are Neighbours

The Impact of Supportive Housing on Community, Social, Economic and Attitude Changes

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The Research Group thanks you all!

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Executive Summary

Supportive housing makes for great neighbourhoods. That's the conclusion of this important new study of two Toronto supportive housing buildings for people with mental illness, many of whom were previously homeless, and the communities that surround them. As the City of Toronto, along with the Ontario and Canadian governments, work to develop affordable housing strategies, this research shows the important role that supportive housing has to play.

Supportive housing combines bricks-and-mortar with special supports to meet the physical and mental health needs of tenants. These support services allow people to live independently in the community. People who live in supportive housing know its value. Members of the Dream Team, who conducted this research project, have been engaged for several years in telling their personal stories about how supportive housing has been – almost literally – a life-saver.

But what about the impact of supportive housing on the surrounding neighbourhood? Almost inevitably, when a new supportive housing project is proposed concerns will be raised about "those people" and the impact of "that project" on community safety, cohesion and property values.

The Dream Team set out to test the value of supportive housing through a community-based research process that brought together supportive housing residents, housing providers and their neighbours. They used public data to show that supportive housing does not hurt property values or increase crime. But their interviews go further, to show that supportive housing tenants make important contributions to the strength of their neighbourhoods. Tenants contribute a modest amount to local businesses (most residents are not particularly wealthy, so their economic footprint is not large); they add to the vibrancy of an area through their street presence; they participate in the friendliness amongst neighbours; and they contribute to the collective efficacy of their neighbourhoods through actions around noise and speed, tidiness and crime.

In short, supportive housing residents are just the kind of great neighbours that every community needs.

Key Findings

Property values and crime rates are unaffected

- There is no evidence that the existence of the supportive housing buildings studied has negatively affected either property values or crime rates in the neighbourhood. Property values have increased and crime decreased in the period considered by the study.

Neighbours do not think the Buildings have a negative impact

- Of the 54 immediate neighbours and business people interviewed, only two business people claimed that the houses have a negative impact. They were also the business people with the least experience in the neighbourhood. Only 40% of residential neighbours and business people knew that the buildings were even supportive housing facilities. The opposition that existed to the houses when they were proposed has dissipated, with virtually no expression of negative attitudes found among immediate neighbours.

Modest local economic "footprint"

- Interviews with neighbours and 36 tenants and staff of both buildings indicate that the local economic "footprint" of each building is modest, primarily because of tenants' low income. However, because they tend to have fewer choices than people with higher incomes, they shop at local convenience stores, pharmacies, coffee shops and restaurants. Some local store operators recognize the importance of tenants' business by offering them small amounts of short-term credit.

Contributions to neighbourhood actions and vibrancy

- The study found that each building contributes to the strength of their local neighbourhoods in different ways, depending on the length of time they have been open and the character of the street.
  - Building A has been on a residential street for almost 20 years. Tenants have initiated a new approach to front yard gardening on the street and participated in collective action with their neighbours around noise and speed reduction, and garbage removal
  - Building B is on the commercial side of a mixed-use street. Tenants have stronger relationships with business operators than with residential neighbours, and have created an important, new vibrancy along what was a drab section of the street.

Contributions and crime

- Tenants in Building B in particular have experienced being targets for criminal activity. Tenants and staff in both buildings have developed internal ways to handle crime that protects both tenants and the neighbourhood.

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Recommendations

The Research Group has a series of recommendations for the three levels of government and for others with a stake in creating both more supportive housing and successful neighbourhoods:

City of Toronto	Current City planning approval practices create regulatory hurdles that make it more difficult for supportive housing projects to move ahead. While planning law requires that proper planning principles should consider buildings and physical design only and not the personal characteristics of potential residents, planning practice has often allowed opponents to engage in questions about the economic or health status of future residents.

The cumbersome regulatory process creates unacceptable delays that can, in some cases, defeat plans for new supportive housing. Supportive housing projects sometimes require approvals from a variety of authorities, in addition to planning approvals.

Toronto's proposed 10-year housing plan which was launched in 2007 sets no specific target for new supportive housing. Dr. Anne Golden recommended 1,000 new supportive homes every year as part of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force of 1999. The Wellesley Institute's Blueprint to End Homelessness in Toronto in 2006 set an annual target of 2,000 supportive homes based on the latest data.

The City of Toronto should:

1. Act on the strong research evidence that shows that supportive housing facilities are not harmful to neighbourhoods, and that they contribute to strong communities. The City should apply "as-of-right" planning rules to supportive housing, and recognize that supportive housing is a necessary part of every neighbourhood by setting targets for all parts of the city.

2. Create a streamlined, "single window" approach that assigns projects to senior city staff who are responsible for securing the necessary approvals.

3. Ensure that all planning and zoning are neighborhood building processes and recognize that housing is a human right for everyone.

4. Establish clear supportive housing targets as part of its 10-year housing strategy.

Government of Ontario	For more than a decade, provincial funding for supportive housing has been fractured among several ministries and departments. Much of the provincial responsibility for new affordable housing has been downloaded to municipalities, but without the financial support for new development. The Ontario government is downloading support services funded through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to newly created Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs). Not only has provincial funding for housing and services been inadequate, but fragmentation has created further obstacles for supportive housing providers.

The Government of Ontario should:

5. Act on its key funding responsibility and set specific targets for supportive housing in Toronto and other communities in the context of an overall housing strategy.

6. Make adequate funding available to meet those targets, and ensure that its funding flows through programs that ensure the housing and supports are properly coordinated at the local level.

7. Fund "portable" services that meet the needs of individuals who have a mental illness or disability but do not live in supportive housing.

8. Ensure that curriculum in schools and programs for mental health professionals, social workers, community workers, urban planners and all other related professions should include sections on the research related to mental health and housing.

Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs)	As LHINs take on the responsibility for funding supportive housing there is a danger that supportive housing service requirements will be forced to compete with a variety of other unmet health needs in local communities for a limited pool of provincial funding. Each of Ontario's LHINs must recognize the assets that supportive housing can bring to neighbourhoods.

In recent years, provincial supportive housing funding has tended to support larger supportive housing providers, presumably in the interest of administrative efficiency. While the big providers deserve support, funding programs should also recognize that small providers often provide services and meet a unique need and also deserve support.

Local Health Integration Networks should:

9. Ensure that their funding policies and practices are integrated with municipal and provincial supportive housing programs.

10. Be responsive to neighbourhood needs and recognize the unique contributions of a range of providers, from large to small agencies.

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Government of Canada	The federal government's newly-created Mental Health Commission of Canada was launched with the promise that it would address, among other concerns, the critical issue of mental health and housing. Before the funding cuts and downloading of the 1990s, the federal government played a key role in housing funding. Canada now stands alone among developed countries in lacking a national housing strategy that would include supportive housing. In 2005, federal, provincial and territorial housing ministers promised that they were working towards a new Canadian housing framework, but progress has been stalled since then.
	The federal government has provided some funding for pilot projects in several communities. Pilot projects can provide useful lessons, but Toronto and Canada have plenty of successful models of supportive housing. Long-term funding for housing and supports are needed, not more pilot projects.

11. The federal government should establish a country-wide housing strategy that include specific targets for Toronto and other communities, and make adequate funding available to meet those targets.

12. The Mental Health Commission of Canada must include studies of the contributions that supportive housing makes to their neighbourhoods in the Commission's campaign to eliminate stigma and discrimination against people with mental illness, and in the Commission's knowledge exchange initiatives.

Supportive Housing Providers	13. The design and programming in supportive housing should foster or strengthen several successful approaches: an atmosphere of support and security, internal communities among tenants, child and pet friendly spaces and openness to the neighbourhood. This study indicates that gardens are important, along with porches, benches, patios and community-use rooms.
	14. Housing providers should foster or strengthen a community liaison or community development function within their organizations, and support tenants who want to participate in neighbourhood-building actions and community organizations (such as a neighbourhood watch).

Community Organizations	15. Community leaders, including those in community associations and business organizations, should take an active role in building strong neighbourhoods by engaging supportive housing providers and tenants in their work. They should work to promote the assets that supportive housing tenants can bring to a neighbourhood.

Supportive Housing Tenants	16. Get involved and stay involved! Supportive housing tenants know, first hand, the value of supportive housing in their lives. The Research Group encourages tenants to use this study to validate their experience that supportive housing is good for communities.

Challenges and Opportunities in Supportive Housing Policy

	Challenges	Opportunities
City of Toronto	• No specific supportive housing targets • No inclusionary planning policies for supportive housing. • No "as-of-right" zoning for supportive housing.	• City of Toronto's proposed 10-year housing plan acknowledges the value of supportive housing • TO housing plan consultation process is an opportunity to develop specific targets
Government of Ontario	• No specific supportive housing targets • No dedicated supportive housing funding • Funding for housing and services fragmented • No overall provincial housing strategy • Support services funding being downloaded to LHINs; housing funding was downloaded to municipalities in 1998.	• Ontario's promise of a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy offers opportunity to develop supportive housing plan • Ontario is currently considering a provincial housing strategy • "Health equity" focus at LHINs and Ministry of Health and Long Term Care allows for new focus on supportive housing
Government of Canada	• No specific supportive housing targets • No dedicated supportive housing funding • Latest announcement is for "pilot project" funding only, not for permanent housing / services funding • Three major national housing and homelessness programs set to expire in 2008.	• Newly created Mental Health Commission of Canada recognizes important of housing as a critical mental health issue • Federal government has a long history of successful housing programs

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We Are Neighbours

The Impact of Supportive Housing on

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1. Motivation For The Study

A common objection to proposals for new supportive housing facilities is that their presence will be harmful to the existing community. This study interviewed tenants, staff and neighbours of two supportive housing facilities in Toronto, Ontario, in order to understand their impact on the social and economic health of immediate neighbourhoods, the attitudes of neighbours to the facilities, and how these attitudes have changed over time.

Varied sources have identified a need for more supportive housing facilities for people with mental illness in Toronto, a city region of about five million people.   Today only about 3,000 supportive housing units exist in the city, supported by over 30 agencies (Roberts 2006). Mental health and housing agencies estimate that another six thousand people with mental illness have been unable find homes in supportive facilities[1]. The Wellesley Institute's *Blueprint to End Homelessness in Toronto* estimates an annual need of 2,000 additional supportive housing units for a wide range of people with physical and mental illness (Wellesley Institute 2006).

> In this study the term "supportive housing" is used to refer to affordable, quality housing for people with mental health issues that ensures:
>
> - Secure tenure, protected under the Residential Tenancy Act
> - Integration in the community
> - Choice of housing
> - Choice and flexibility of support
> - Independence and privacy.

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[1] This figure is the professional estimate of Steve Lurie, Canadian Mental Health Association (private conversation, 03/07/08). A formal registry of people with mental illness who need supportive housing in Toronto is in the process of being developed.

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There is an immediate need for research evidence to support advocacy and policy that guides the development of supportive housing. The City of Toronto is considering a ten-year housing strategy that includes a commitment to supportive housing, but more detailed planning is required to turn this into a reality. The Provincial government is just beginning public consultations on a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy and an affordable housing plan, both of which include a commitment to supportive housing but few details. A significant portion of the provincial funds for supportive housing is now being directed through the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), and these are just beginning to grapple with supportive housing strategy. The provincial and city budgets provide some funds for supportive housing, but their initiatives rely substantially on transfers from three federal government programs – the affordable housing program, the national housing rehabilitation program and the national homelessness initiative – all of which expire in 2008. The federal government has promised a one-time infusion of $110 million for mental health and housing pilot projects across the country in 2008, but because there is no commitment beyond that, these funds cannot be used to sustain services over time.

Most supportive housing facilities that have been built in Toronto in the past decade continue have been met by community concerns about their local impact. One study opens by describing recent Toronto public meetings about the development of supportive housing as "'ugly', 'terrible', and 'offensive'", with frequent violations of the human rights of future tenants (Ross 2007). The strength and persistence of NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) concerns in Toronto has provided the second motivation for conducting a current study in this city. Community level opposition to new facilities is often organized around a short list of fears about potential negative impacts on local businesses and neighbours that focus on property values, crime, traffic congestion and noise disruptions (Hill 1993). The much broader experience of actual interactions between people who live close to existing supportive housing facilities and tenants is rarely sought even anecdotally, and has only rarely been studied systematically. Consequently the Dream Team Research Group decided to look at neighbourhoods immediately surrounding two supportive housing buildings in order to find and examine indicators of the buildings' local economic and social impact.

This project is unique in that it has been planned and conducted by a research group made up of members of the Dream Team, representatives of project partner agencies, a community-based research consultant and a University of Toronto professor. The Dream Team members are men and women who live in supportive housing who work together to advocate for more supportive housing. Their advocacy work brings them into new endeavors, and they are excited about breaking through their own and others' assumptions about what they can accomplish.

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THE *dream* TEAM

……is a group of men and women who live with mental illness, other users of supportive housing and family members, many of whom have been homeless. Dream Team members demonstrate the life-altering benefits of supportive housing by telling their stories to politicians, community groups, schools, faith groups and other institutions. They strive, through presentations, workshops and research, to have more supportive housing available in Ontario for people living with mental illness.

This was the third motivation for the project – Dream Team members not only wanted current research that systematically addressed the claims made by opponents of supportive housing but they also wanted to challenge themselves to develop objective research skills and new sets of project planning skills. The group's more experienced researchers have been challenged to facilitate and support research planning and implementation processes that involve and respect the perspectives and expertise of each research group member.   The result is that a unique perspective has informed this project, one that is not readily found in other research. It has caused us to be interested in more than the usual measures of the social and economic impact of supportive housing (crime and property values), and to include in this study the possible contributions that supportive housing and its tenants make to their neighbourhoods.

A recent review of studies on supportive housing recommends:

"…the involvement of consumers in partnerships with researchers, mutually deciding both the goals and methods of research, to ensure that the products of research are directly relevant and are true to the concerns and experiences of consumers. A final implication is for research that more effectively documents consumers' own values for their housing and their own lived experiences." (Sylvestre 2007).

2. Research Background

Although few studies document the social and economic impacts of supportive housing on surrounding communities, other social scientific research has identified what indicators make for healthy communities. In both our interviews and secondary data collection we have focused on assessing social and economic cohesion, and tenants' contributions to those aspects of their communities.

The limited academic research on the impact of supportive housing focuses on the quality of and length of stay of tenants, and the relative value of different programs. One review found that once people with serious mental illnesses are in supportive housing, they stay there and are less likely to be hospitalized (Rog 2004). Nelson's (2007) more recent review of U.S. studies makes similar observations: people with mental illness remain stable in supported situations, case management alone is not as effective as when it is combined with housing, those in supportive housing programs had a higher quality of housing than those in treatment programs that did not include housing (Nelson 2007).

The reviews by Rog and Nelson indicate consistent reduction of health care costs that are attributable to supportive housing, which is itself a significant macro economic impact. Tenants in supportive housing are far less likely than comparison groups to use hospitals and other institutions (Lipton 1988; Drake 1997; Anderson 1999; Rosenheck 2003; Tsemberis 2004; Nelson 2007). In Ontario, at least three community health and housing agencies have tracked the reduction in hospital use by people in supportive housing and have begun to quantify this impact. The Frontenac Community Health Services in Kingston reported that tenants use of hospitals fell by 60% over eight years; in Waterloo the hospital use among 120 tenants dropped by 89% over the first year they entered supportive housing facilities; in Toronto the Canadian Mental Health Association followed 56 tenants whose hospital costs dropped from $1.4 million to $173,000 – a decline of 87.3% from when they started receiving support in 2002 (Goar 2005).

Other studies have gone further to make the macro economic case for supportive housing. Most notably, a recent study in British Columbia has shown that the combination of health care, jail and emergency shelter costs for people who are homeless, many of who have mental illness, are much higher than the costs of supportive housing. It calculates that housing and full support for each homeless person would cost the province 67% of its current spending on this population (Patterson 2008).

In this study we did not replicate these cost-benefit studies. However, because of the persistent public concerns about negative effects on property values, we did examine real estate records to gain some sense of economic consequences. In brief, like other urban planning researchers and policy makers who have examined property values surrounding group homes and supportive housing in a wide variety of communities over the past 20 years, we found no negative impact. A particularly extensive study in Denver found that scattered, smaller facilities did not negatively affect property values, and that smaller, well maintained facilities established on run-down properties tended to increase property

values (Galster 2003).   Other studies have found no impact on property values of public non-profit and supportive housing, including a recent review conducted by reporters in Vancouver (Culbert 2008), two in Toronto (Boydell 1986; Smith 1992), one commissioned by the British Columbia government (Collingwood and Associates 1995), and a review of fifteen studies of group home projects in the U.S. (Martinez 1988).   Another review of nine supportive housing facilities in Pennsylvania reported property value increases in all related neighbourhoods (Anderson 1999).

Fewer studies have examined the next persistent concern: that neighbourhood safety will suffer and crime rates will increase because of supportive housing facilities. The most comprehensive study of this type of neighbourhood impact found that smaller facilities in Denver were not associated with increased rates of reported violent property damage, criminal mischief, disorderly conduct or total crimes. It did find an increased incidence of crime in the immediate vicinity of larger facilities (those with 53 or more tenants). The authors observed however, that tenants in these facilities were not perpetrators of crime, but rather provided a pool of potential victims (Galster 2002).   A recent B.C. review of police complaints related to supportive housing facilities reported no increase that could be attributed to these facilities, and in fact a very low rate of such calls (Culbert 2008).

In the early 1990s a number of studies used stated community concerns to develop indicators of neighbourhood impact. A Toronto study of three new supportive housing facilities used questions about the design and attractiveness of a facility, building maintenance, noise and disruption, and traffic congestion (Hill 1993). Hill's research team found very little negative impact (85% reported no concern about noise and disruptions, and 81% had no safety concerns related to the facility). Their more dramatic finding was how few immediate neighbours (55%) actually knew about the nature of the facility. A North Virginia study of group homes found similar results: very few neighbours with concerns and a remarkable number of immediate neighbours with no awareness of the nature of the facility (Wahl 1993). A New York study of the attitudes of neighbours surrounding a group home found a striking turn-around in a two-year period. Many of these neighbours had actively opposed the home but had quickly become very accepting, and felt that the tenants of the group home were good neighbours (Arens 1993).

No studies to our knowledge have examined the social and economic relationships between supportive housing tenants and their residential and commercial neighbours. Galster used the idea of collective efficacy in observing the extent to which facilities contribute to or impede crime (Galster 2002). In its broadest sense, the concept of collective efficacy captures the extent to which mutual trust and solidarity between neighbours can lead a local individual or group to intervene for the common good of the community as a whole. Some markers of the health and functioning of neighbourhoods can be the presence or absence of disorder and disuse (crime, run down properties, noise, street presence of drugs and prostitution, garbage, etc.). But the pre-condition of whether such markers are obvious in a neighbourhood tends to be whether neighbours have the capacity to act effectively to remove causes and signs of disorder (Sampson 1997; Sampson 1999).   In this study we have used the idea of collective efficacy to look

at the extent to which tenants and neighbours interactions can be understood to contribute to the well-being, safety and health of their neighbourhood.

Research on the dimensions of strong neighbourhoods has further suggested an interconnected set of four indicators that we have used to consider tenants' participation in their neighbourhoods. These studies indicate that strong neighbourhoods require:

- o **Inclusion** – active community involvement; democratic processes; strong sense of belonging; a welcoming community; respect for diversity; tolerance of differences.
- o **Vibrancy** – an active street life (e.g. cafes, shops and services); opportunities for community interaction (e.g. street festivals); a strong sense of 'place identity' and pride.
- o **Cohesion** – a sense of mutual responsibility and strong bonds of reciprocity (e.g. neighbours looking out for each other's children); trust (e.g. not having to worry about locking doors); and negotiated solutions to conflicts.
- o **Safety** – both subjective feelings of safety (people feeling they can go anywhere, feeling comfortable in public), as well as objective measures of safety (e.g. freedom from crime, absence of pollutants and contaminants, safe buildings). (Freiler 2004).

3. Data and Methods

The project began with an inclusive series of workshops that sharpened the research focus, reviewed research methods and familiarized the whole research team with existing literature. An Enabling Grant from the Wellesley Institute made these workshops possible. The team then conducted the full project, collecting primary data in the form of interviews, and analyzing secondary data from time-series of property values, crime reports, and demographic profiles of the neighbourhoods.

3.1 Selecting Buildings A and B

After surveying the literature on supportive housing impacts, the project team sought to identify two supportive housing facilities and neighbourhoods for this study. The main constraints in identifying facilities were finding two that (i) were located in the same community, (ii) were distinctive in their history and integration into the community, (iii) were opposed by the community when proposed, and (iv) could be studied with the cooperation of tenants and supporting agencies. The project team reviewed information from more than twenty potential facilities and conducted interviews with agency managers to gauge potential fit for our study. A key issue was raised during this process about how to interview residential and business neighbours without bringing the facility to the attention of a potentially biased but unknowing community, and how to protect the privacy of tenants. After a substantial amount of work to ensure that all research efforts would meet our criteria and satisfy this concern, the Research Group selected two facilities in a neighbourhood adjacent to downtown Toronto. Building A and Building B are ideal because they are quite different facilities with very different histories. Building A was a twenty year-old facility with fifteen units, sited on a residential street where there had been some opposition but no formal hearings. Building B was a two year-old, twenty six unit facility located on a busy commercial street. There had been active opposition to this building.

3.2 Developing The Interviews

The detailed interview scripts and schedules for tenants and staff were developed in an intensive workshop process with the Research Group. The resulting open-ended questionnaires reflected the supportive housing experience of the team members and were rigorously examined for whether the questions would make sense to tenants. The questions ask for respondents' observations about the neighbourhood, and about interactions with neighbours. After a four-month period of designing, planning and training, Dream Team members conducted the interviews in pairs or with a more experienced researcher. Team members' empathy with tenants, their very practical interest in people's responses and familiarity with the details and language of supportive housing made it possible for many of these interviews to become more like conversations, rather than question and answer sessions.

....planning, interviewing and meeting support were areas of my strengths and continued to grow during the project. I think I learned to listen better, more empathetically and become empowered to help others (the team, tenants) become empowered. (Esther)

The development of neighbour and business interviews was similar, producing a short, closed-form fixed survey as well as open-ended questions. The agencies involved were concerned that the research process itself would not ignite community concern about the buildings, what Galster describes as that potential for "socially destructive experimenter effect" (Galster 2002). Consequently the neighbour and business interviews used a two stage process, starting with general questions about the neighbourhood and attitudes towards public housing, then a screening question that provided respondents with an opportunity to identify the building, and on to more specific questions only if the respondent knew the building. Fliers delivered in the week before the interviews took place notified neighbours and businesses that interviewers would be knocking on their doors. Our team's interviewers were not "insiders" in these interviews, and were potentially at risk of being on the receiving end of direct anger, or of hearing negative opinions. We prepared with sessions about how to handle difficult interviews and provided on-site support and debriefing for interviewers.

> Before we did the door-to-door interviews, I was a bit worried. I was at those community meetings before it was built, and knew what some people on this street had opposed the building. I didn't know if I could handle someone who was angry or who had NIMBY attitudes. But everyone we spoke with was very polite with us. (Phillip).

Because of the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood, the fliers and interview schedules for neighbours and businesses were translated into Chinese, and three Chinese interpreters were added to the team.

> The part of the study I liked the most was doing the interviews with my Chinese partner. She was really nice, and people liked talking to her. (Dennis).

Group interviews were conducted toward the end of the study with tenants and staff from both buildings in order to review the study's primary findings, to update our information and ask for feedback about the accuracy of our observations.

> That was the most amazing session! I don't know of any other research that would check back with the tenants like this. That meeting had so much energy, and several people offered to help us publicize the report. (Mark).

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All interviewees were guaranteed confidentiality in this study. This is particularly important because the privacy of those in supportive housing is important, and consequences of publicly identifying individuals as having mental illness can still be harsh. Further, the number of tenants in supportive housing is not large, and individuals needed to be assured that their information would not be shared within the community. Consequently the neighbourhood is not named, and details that might specifically identify the neighbourhood have been omitted from this report. The buildings are not specifically identified, and individuals are not referred to by their real names. Tenants, neighbours and businesses were offered honoraria for their participation.

Front Porch Interview, June 2007

3.3 Interview Respondents

In the summer of 2006, all tenants of each facility were given an invitation to participate in the study. Flyers in each facility and personal communication from the facility staff also advertised the study. In September ten of fourteen tenants of Building A responded to a flyer and agreed to be interviewed. Interested tenants in Building B attended an information session – a process that was made possible by a relatively large common space in the building – at the end of which thirteen of twenty-four tenants agreed to an interview. We also interviewed five Building A staff, and five Building B staff.

The residential and business neighbours were interviewed in June 2007. Neighbours interviewed lived within one block of Building A (n=14) and Building B (n=24). The businesses interviewed (n=14) were within a five to ten minute walk from both buildings. We also interviewed staff at a local community support agency near Building A, and staff at a school next door to Building B.

3.4 Introduction to Building A

Building A has been in existence since the late 1980s, and was one of the first supportive, independent housing facilities for people with mental illness in Toronto. It was built for this purpose, with fifteen bachelor apartments on three floors plus the basement, with laundry facilities and a small common room in the basement. Its exterior was designed to fit a residential street, with sizable front and back yards that are similar to those of other homes. The street is tree-lined with a mixture of small single story row homes, attached and detached two story brick homes, and new in-fill single-family three-story homes. It is a single block long, with a major traffic thoroughfare at one end and a commercial street at the other. When the building was built, the character of the street was predominantly working class, but it has begun to gentrify in the last decade. Tenants come from shelters and insecure private housing, and have become long-term, stable residents: one tenant has lived there since the building opened; three had been there for eleven years; the most recent tenants had moved in at least two years before the study. Seventy percent of tenants were male, thirty percent were female, and their average age was 50.

The development of this property met the criteria for the official plan for the neighbourhood and did not require any zoning changes, which meant that it proceeded with no formal hearings. During the planning and construction, agency staff and board members went door to door on the street to inform neighbours about the nature of the building. They anticipated negative reactions, and while there were some concerns, no one made a complaint to city council and many neighbours were pleased about changes to a run down property. The concern they met with most frequently was that there would be no live-in staff at the building. A staff member remembers that they met that concern with, "… discussions about our agency's commitment to independent living." (Marion, 22/11/06). A grand opening was held after tenants moved in, with 200 people gathered in

the back yard, including the Minister of Housing and the Mayor. After the open house the agency did not hold other events to foster relationships between neighbours and tenants.

Because of its size and the initiatives of both the agency and tenants, Building A has a culture that is more like cooperative housing than a standard rental apartment building. Tenants are aware of each other's concerns and habits, and while there are what many describe as the usual interpersonal difficulties, several said they rely on their fellow tenants for support when they have problems.   There are a couple of particularly articulate activists in this building who have provided initiative and leadership.   In the summer tenants organize barbeques for the each other in the back yard, and these events have given birth to a tenants' association.

3.5 Introduction to Building B

Building B is a low-rise apartment building that was created in the early 2000s. The property had been used as a mixed living space and small factory, and required a major renovation. It has 26 apartments on two floors, disabled access to both floors, a rooftop sitting area, laundry, a front office and a large common room with cooking facilities. The exterior is clean and new, with little indication that its use is either residential or commercial from the outside. The front foyer opens directly onto the street, and there is no street-level open space on the property. It is located between the front gardens of a junior high school and a cluster of small storefront offices and businesses. The street is a busy thoroughfare, on a transit route, with several apartment buildings, the school and small businesses on the same side of the street as Building B, and homes on the opposite side. Most tenants moved into the building from shelters, and had lived in the building since it had opened. They were a slightly younger group than Building A tenants, with an average age of 43. A number of the tenants were employed.

The neighbourhood's revitalization committee has encouraged higher density residential development along this street as a way to revitalize and upgrade areas that need improvement. The property had been slated to become a condo but that project had been unable to provide sufficient parking for the proposed use.   The Building B proposal required only minor variances to the existing zoning. The minor variances still meant, however, that the approval process had to be public. The agency sent their plans to the city's Committee of Adjustment, neighbours were notified and public hearings were held. The two meetings that took place were, from the accounts of those who attended, very acrimonious.   A neighbourhood community association opposed the development, with one or two immediate neighbours acting as primary spokespersons. One argument was that the neighbourhood already had too many social housing projects, and that the neighbourhood was becoming a ghetto of social housing. They were also critical of the design of the building itself, the size of the units and the proximity to the school (although no one from the school supported these objections). Eventually the objections dissipated into a weak presentation to the Committee of Adjustment, and the development was

approved. The agency held an open house after tenants moved in, and invited immediate neighbours although very few attended.

4. Changes in the Neighbourhood

4.1 Recent History

The study's two buildings are located in a neighbourhood adjacent to the downtown core. Over the last several decades the neighbourhood has been in a transition from one that was home to a substantial number of manufacturing plants and their workers, to a higher cost residential area with new pockets of cultural industry, small retail businesses and big box stores.   There is less employment in the neighbourhood, but there are new advantages in housing that is close to the city's core. One of its challenges is that its industries still release one of the highest concentrations of toxins of any ward in the city (Toronto Environmental Alliance 2006).

A revitalization committee has promoted the intensification of its residential population along the neighbourhood's four or five main streets through zoning that encourages street level business with residential spaces on second and third stories, the preservation of historic architecture, and the redevelopment of industrial sites and buildings for residential use (Revitalization Committee 2002).

4.2 Changes In Demographic Profile

Census data provides a number of important descriptions of changes in the neighbourhood over the past few years.

- o The number of people living in the neighbourhood decreased by 9.1% between 2001 and 2006.
- o The population is older: the proportion of young children age 14 and younger living in the neighbourhood decreased from 16% in 2001 to 14% 2006. The proportions of people aged 20 to 39 dropped, and the proportions of those between age 40 and 64 increased in this same period.
- o Over one third of the population was Chinese in 2001. It is one of the city's destination points for new immigrants: in 2006 between 18% and 24% of the area's immigrants had arrived recently.
- o Households had higher income: the proportion of households with income less than $20,000 a year dropped from 32% in 1996 to 22% in 2001. The proportion of households with incomes over $100,000 increased from 7% to 12.4%.
- o The proportion of residences that were owned increased from 49% in 1996 to 54% in 2001, with the parallel decrease in rental units from 51% in 1996 to 46% in 2001. (City of Toronto 2008; City of Toronto 2008).

4.3 Changes in Crime

The data we reviewed provides no indication that Building B has been associated with an increase in crime. Rates of violent crime have consistently dropped across the city since the mid-1990s, and the same is generally true for this neighbourhood. We have used the Toronto Police Services crime rate data, which is only available for the last ten years. Consequently this analysis is relevant only to the introduction of Building B, which took place in the early 2000s. In the ten-year period between 1997 and 2006 the volume of dispatched calls dropped by 27%. Incidents of sexual assault were down 32% from their highest point in 2001; incidents of other assault were down 11.5%, also from their highest point in 2001. Breaking and entering, robbery, theft under $5,000 and motor vehicle theft all had their highest rates in 1997. Only three types of crime increased and reached a peak in 2004 – 2005: theft over $5,000, fraud and weapons offences (Toronto Police Service 1997 - 2006). These are crimes in which tenants are least likely to be involved. The details of these figures can be found in Table 1. Crack cocaine is considered the most popular street drug in Toronto, in part because of its relatively low prices (City of Toronto 2005). Our interviews indicated that it was readily available in this neighbourhood, however, crime related to its use remains undocumented.

4.4 Changes in Property Values: Building A's Street

There is no evidence to suggest that Building A has affected the real estate values of its neighbours. Property values on Building A's street have paralleled the fluctuations in the

Toronto real estate market between 1988 and 2007, and do not differ significantly from those of an adjacent street. The information about the adjacent street is included here only as a comparison of trends, not as a specific comparison of values. The original housing stock is similar on the two streets, but they are not directly comparable: Building A's street has houses on both sides with one-way through traffic; the adjacent street is a cul de sac, with housing on one side and an open green space and a small manufacturing property on the other. The values of houses across from the green space on the adjacent street tend to be slightly higher than those on Building A's street. A fire in the early 2000s destroyed houses very close to Building A, and they have now been replaced by large new detached and semi-detached homes.

Charts 1, 2 and 3 show annual averages of sold prices for the three different types of housing from 1988 to 2007. Housing prices dropped dramatically across the city between 1989 and 1992 and have climbed relatively steadily since the mid-1990s. Average sold prices on the two streets reflect these city wide trends. Chart 1 indicates that the value of row or town homes has increased more dramatically on Building A's street (an increase of 262%, compared with 134% on the comparison street). Chart 2 shows that the value of semi-detached homes has been consistency higher on the adjacent street, with a couple of exceptions for particularly extensive renovations in 2003 and 2006. Chart 3 shows that the value of detached homes was consistently higher on Building A's street until 2007 and the sale of two newly renovated homes across from the green space on the adjacent street.

4.5 Changes in Property Values: Building B's Street

The value of residential property on Building B's street has increased substantially since the early 2000's and does not significantly differ from those of an adjacent street. There is no indication that Building B has negatively affected property values. The two streets we compare here for residential values are very close to each other: both are on transit routes, with residences on one side facing a school and a small businesses section at the corner. The residences on both streets are primarily semi-detached and row or town houses. Detached houses are not included in this analysis because the sample is too small: only four detached homes sold on Building B's street in this period, and none on the adjacent street. Charts 4 and 5 show a consistent increase in average annual sales for row or town houses and for semi-detached houses on both streets from 2002 – 2008.

We also reviewed sales of stores with offices or apartments on the second floor on Building B's street in the same six-year period. Only eight had sold and the nature of these properties varied considerably, making it difficult to see any trend. Their sold prices varied between $250,000 and $920,000.

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5. Economic Footprints And Relations With Neighbourhood Businesses

The two buildings are close enough that tenants from both are able to use the same businesses. Consequently, here we present the observations related to both buildings together, first from the perspective of the business people we interviewed, and then from the perspective of the tenants and staff.

5.1 Neighbourhood Businesses: Impact of Supportive Housing

We surveyed the businesses that were most likely to be used by tenants on two main streets close to both houses.   We interviewed fourteen people who were either proprietors or employees, half of whom had owned or worked in their location for twenty years or more.   The businesses were convenience stores, pet stores, dollar stores, bakeries, a bank branch, coffee shops and small restaurants.

Table 2 reports our findings of the business interviews, showing that as a group, these respondents were slightly more cautious about changes in the neighbourhood than immediate residential neighbours of the buildings. Two of these people were the only ones we spoke with who thought that neighbourhood property values had gone down. This perception could have been related to the concerns raised by several other store managers about increased taxes or rent on their storefront properties.   Their assessment of the quality of their businesses colleagues in the neighbourhood was less generous than that of residential neighbours. Their comments suggested that this reflected concerns about their own business, about fewer businesses serving a particular language or ethnic group, and/or the closure of manufacturing plants in the neighbourhood. On the more positive side, they were more likely than our residential respondents to say that the extent to which they knew their neighbours had increased, that they helped each other more than they used to, and that neighbourhood crime had decreased.

Only 42% of the business people we spoke with knew of Building A or Building B.   Table 3 shows that their assessment of the influence of tenants on neighbourhood changes was polarized.   This chart reports on typical NIMBY opinions: for instance, 'supportive housing contributes to lower property values' or 'lowers the quality of businesses and services'. While this was a small sample, we found it notable that a few of the business people voiced the most negative opinions that we found in the door-to-door interviews. We also noticed that these respondents were among the newest to the neighbourhood. Those who thought that property values had gone down also thought that supportive housing had contributed to the decline.   They were also the only people in the study who thought that tenants contributed to an increase in crime.

This opinion was countered by others, including those with over twenty years of experience in the area, who said that the buildings contributed to an increase in property values, an increase in the quality of businesses, and to a decrease in crime.

5.2 Tenants: Neighbourhood Economic Footprint, Building A

In our interviews, Building A's tenants and staff described how they made contributions to the local economy. Tenants all live on very limited incomes so their ability to spend is not large, but perhaps more than other neighbours with higher incomes and wider choices of locations to shop, they use the local restaurants, coffee shops, bakery, butcher, dollar store, pharmacy, pet store and convenience stores for small purchases. Tenants tend to do their monthly shopping at a low cost supermarket several blocks from the building. Their use of local stores contributes both to individual businesses and to the regular street life and vibrancy of the neighbourhood.

One or two convenience store operators know individuals well enough to provide them with small monthly credit, and a story about one store where staff went out of their way to assist a tenant with physical disabilities.

> At [convenience store] some people can go in there and get accounts if they're short. I used to go in there with a woman once a week, and the people who worked in the store, all she would have to do is stand at a point and they would get everything for her. She would say 'I need this, I need that, I need this' and the guy in the store would go get everything for her, pack it, tie it up in the bag, put it in her bundle buggy and all she had to do is pay the bill. (Mika 22/11/06).

The pet store operator not only sells to tenants, but she acts as a source of advice and support when there are problems.   Family members and support workers take tenants to local coffee places, and sometimes to the restaurants for gatherings and meetings.

> I go out for coffee three times a week with my friend. …. I have difficulty in social situations, and I try to get out three times every week. (Riley 06/10/06).

This tenant went on to express concern that a new bistro on the street might drive up the price of coffee in the other stores, which would make it difficult for him to keep up this practice.

The agency purchases maintenance materials in bulk from sources across the city. It has, however, contracted an immediate neighbour for repairs to Building A's roof, and has a cost sharing arrangement with a neighbour about a common fence.

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It is important to note, when thinking about the economic and social impact of Building A, that it also has an important function as a work location for a number of non-tenants, including support workers, agency maintenance workers, a physician, and occasional home care workers.

5.3 Tenants: Neighbourhood Economic Footprint, Building B

Building B's tenants also make a modest contribution to the local economy. They have created a new pocket of street activity, and a new kind of vitality on a street that had dwindling activity.   Tenants use the local restaurants, green grocers, coffee shops, bakery, butcher, dollar store, pharmacy, health food store, pet store and convenience stores for small purchases.   Tenants told us that they exchange information all the time, like an informal 'buying club', about where to find the best prices between the larger low cost supermarket, local green grocers, dollar stores and even regular flea markets.   Most used the van provided by the agency to do their major shopping at the supermarket and purchased smaller items in the immediate neighbourhood.

Proprietors at the corner store and the corner restaurant will provide tenants with a small amount of credit.

> And the pharmacist up the street he's nice, too. He gives me my prescription even if I don't have my drug card right away or if I need those pills or something and I don't have the money he will give it to me on credit… because he *trusts* me [said with some emphasis]. (Amy 28/09/06).

The agency purchases much of its furnishings and maintenance supplies through a centralized purchasing process. The community kitchen coordinator was the exception because she purchased most of the food for the twice weekly meals from the local supermarket. She said that she was beginning to negotiate with the local green grocers so that she could open an account with them.

Building B is also a work location for several support staff, and as an off-site work location for support workers, agency maintenance workers and occasional home care workers.

6. Neighbourhood Cohesion and Efficacy, Building A

6.1 Building A Tenants: Cohesion On The Street

Regular interactions between neighbours and tenants that reflect good will and support are evidence of neighbourhood cohesion. Building A tenants provided us with a number of examples of these kinds of interactions.

One man has developed a relationship with a neighbourhood potter. He goes once a week to her studio for sculpting lessons or to use the kiln.   A dog groomer that tenants met at the dog park has made an arrangement where she clips their dogs' nails for considerably less than they would pay elsewhere.   Neighbours gave a tenant a couch they were no longer using. One tenant told us that she fell on her way to the store, and a neighbour woman helped her up and then walked her to her destination to be certain she was all right. Another neighbour occasionally uses their car to help tenants carry heavy grocery loads.

Most of the tenants in Building A have pets. Those who have dogs are out with their animals several times a day, and are part of the informal relationships that develop between neighbours who regularly walk their dogs along the same routes and dog parks. This includes casual greetings to each other and the animals, noticing when someone has not been out for several days, and helping when there is a problem with one of the animals. Several tenants referred to the dogs as "good ambassadors" between the Building and its neighbours.

> Everybody knows [my dog]. They often don't know my name, I'm just [my dog's]'s person, and that's fine.   One day in the dog park two big dogs started a fight with her and my neighbours came to help me pull them off …. The guy with the Dalmatians always stops to talk and give his dogs a chance to be friendly with mine. (Kerry 06/10/06).

Like any other community, the neighbourhood cohesion is not perfect. Although tenants reported that most neighbours were very friendly, there were exceptions.

> I've been trying to say 'Hi' to this one neighbour woman for three years, but I've given up. She doesn't want to say 'Hi' and that's her business. (Kerry 06/10/06).

> I saw the owner of one of these stores arguing with his sisters for being particularly rude to a person with mental illness. He is always nice, but the sisters aren't. (Linda 09/06/07).

One tenant raised a concern about the changes that increased property values might have on the cohesion of the street.

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There used to be just working people here, but now you have to pay half a million to buy a house. What do people who pay half a million have to say to us? (Kerry 06/10/06).

6.2 Building A Neighbours: Cohesion On The Street

Fourteen neighbours on the street of Building A responded to our requests for interviews. Most described a very cohesive street that they enjoyed living on. Several described how the higher property values of the last five years had encouraged people to sell, resulting in fewer families with young children living on the street. Several noted that they knew fewer people today than in the past. They described the middle section of the block (Building A is in the middle of the block) as stable and cohesive. Along the block there were clusters of residential neighbours who were regular visitors to each other's homes, and who reported that they helped each other more than in the past.

Even in this situation where some neighbours are close, **only 35% of those we spoke with knew that Building A was supportive housing**. This may be because the building has been there almost twenty years and now "fits in". There is also a polite neighbourliness, where people generally do not ask too many questions about their neighbours' daily lives. We found one neighbour who was among those who had been concerned when the building was built.

> We've come to terms with the building. At first everybody was a little leery about it, because they didn't understand. Once it was up, it didn't cause any problems. It's a good-looking building, the people don't bother nobody, they stay within themselves, they don't bother anybody. It doesn't cause any problems. (Neighbour A04 09/06/07).

Another long-time neighbour went further, describing Building A tenants as:

> They're good neighbours. I love having them around. We meet people in the building every day. Tenants are involved in the neighbourhood - they're just everyday people, a lot of people would not know that they had any problems at all, they're friendly, they always say hello when they go by. (Neighbour A03 09/06/07).

Neighbours give one tenant particular credit for her neighbourliness. She was a gardener who took on replacing the front lawn with an array of ground cover, flowers and shrubs, and encouraged the agency to replace an iron fence with a lower hedge. As she worked, she talked with neighbours and they began asking her about their own yards. She also built up gardens and composting in the large back yard, which is used by all tenants who wish to grow their own plot of vegetables.

They could never get anything to grow anything in there. This girl, she planted all that, in a natural way….they all contribute in their own way. (Neighbour A3, 09/06/07).

One lady that looks after the garden, we chat every day. I say 'Hi' to everybody coming and going every day. (Neighbour A04 09/06/07).

6.3 Building A Tenants: Contributions To Collective Efficacy

There are several examples of tenants in Building A being involved in both informal and formal actions that go beyond casual friendliness and have contributed to the nature of their immediate neighbourhood.   In these examples it is clear that both the tenants and the supportive housing agency are participants in change, and in the neighbourhood's capacity to make changes. It also appears that the residential nature of the street and the length of time the building has been there have helped make these actions possible.

i) Street leadership: the garden

The first observation that most tenants, staff and neighbours usually make about this building is that it has a lovely front garden, and that the garden has been a point of connection between tenants and neighbours.   One support worker described the Building as a "front porch community".   Tenants and staff observed that the gardening by one tenant in particular not only produced a lovely garden, but over time the plant swaps and advice she shared with neighbours showed up in changed gardens all along the street.   The gardening encouraged tenants to want to be out in the front yard, so they asked the agency for chairs for the front porch. The tenant who initiated the garden says:

I grew up in an immigrant family in a small town. We had to do the same thing. We put out chairs on the front porch, we say hi to people. You have to start it first. That's when people start to understand. Mental illness can make you very self-centered, but you have to work at it. We have to tell people what it's like. Don't be afraid to ask us questions, there isn't a stupid question. (Belinda 03/10/006).

ii) Noise and speed reduction

Neighbours involved tenants in two organized community actions.   The first was an effort to reduce weekend noise from a live concert venue that opened at the end of the street. Two neighbours started the process with complaints to their city councilor, and then organized a letter writing campaign. The organizers included Building A tenants, and they feel some ownership in the resulting changes to the venue and reduction of

weekend noise. More recently the same neighbours initiated action on the speed of vehicles that tended to use the residential street as a short cut.   The resulting speed bumps were being installed on the street during our first interviews, and again, some tenants had signed a petition and felt some responsibility for the change.   The tenant activist talked about being involved in issues that were important to others, as a way of building solidarity for supportive housing issues:

> It's difficult for some people to get out there, to sign a petition and agree with other people's political views…. If you want to get anything done it's the grassroots who's going to talk to your alderman, and sign petitions on the street.   [It's important that we're involved] because when we want something done for us, all of a sudden the alderman listens because they'll see not just people from supportive housing, it's the people who have handed out the other petition. (Belinda 03/10/006).

iii) Managing disorder

The handling of garbage can create tensions between neighbours, and the neglect of garbage can signal that a neighbourhood does not have the capacity to look after problems. In this case the relationship with neighbours was strong enough that several came to the assistance of tenants when it became clear that a neighbour on the next street was deliberately dumping garbage on Building A's property. Their intervention was successful.

> Neighbours went with us to talk to one neighbour who was dumping his garbage in our back yard. I guess he thought this was public property, and that because we were crazy people we wouldn't notice. The neighbours heard him say this, but they said 'No, no, the crazy person lives in your house.' (Belinda 03/10/006).

A staff member remembered one time in particular that neighbours had called the agency because a tenant was in some distress. They knew how to reach the agency (a phone number at the front of the building) and did not call the police. When arrived she was aware that a number of neighbours "were watching to see how I handled the situation" and that they appeared to be assured by her intervention (Marion, 22/11/06).

In some contrast, one couple towards one end of the block were struggling with a problem with an immediate neighbour who had opened up their roof to shelter raccoons. Consequently there were many animals in residence and significant excrement in the yard. They had made the appropriate complaints to the city, with few results. They were not aware of the cohesion and effectiveness of the middle-of-the-block neighbours and the possible resource this might be to them.

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iv) Safety and crime

There is not a formal neighbourhood watch on the street, but several neighbours report that they keep an eye out for each other. Tenants told us that neighbours had let them know when there were break-ins in the neighbourhood. One tenant spoke about the prevalence of crack cocaine in the neighbourhood and told us that he could identify certain local dealers. He said that consequently he accompanied women in this building and other friends in the neighbourhood at night, for their mutual protection.

The agency has acted as an important intermediary in situations that had the potential to escalate into ones that involved the police or others in on the street. One tenant described a situation where a homeless person that none of them knew managed to get into their foyer to sleep several nights in a row. They handled the situation by calling the agency and trying to find him housing, rather than calling the police. There have been periods in the house's history when there were tenants who used drugs and instances of domestic abuse. The people involved no longer live in the building, either by choice or after an internal conflict resolution process that gave them opportunities to resolve issues with their fellow tenants.

7. Neighbourhood Cohesion and Efficacy: Building B

7.1 Building B Tenants: Cohesion On The Street

Building B tenants presented a story that reflected its location. Because it was set amongst businesses, across a busy street from residences, the connections with immediate business neighbours were stronger than those with residential neighbours.

Most tenants described the neighbourhood as friendly.

> When we go out there are general greetings, handshakes, smile, warm embraces, touches on the shoulder, and what not. (Herbert 8/02/07).

This general friendliness appeared to extend to situations where it was obvious that a tenant was unwell. One woman shared a very personal story of feeling accepted in the neighbourhood:

> I came from a violent situation and I had a breakdown when I first moved here, so I used to be loud.   And nobody would bother me, I yelled on the street, and nobody complained. And now they see that I'm OK and the neighbours are nice. They realized that I obviously went through something. (Sophie 27/09/06).

Relations between tenants and neighbourhood business people appear to be more substantial than those with residential neighbours. Ron said that he had made a point of getting to know several business people on the block.

> I can see that the business community are concerned about what's going on in the neighbourhood and the people that live here. And I can see that they'd like to get to know us a little better, they want to make sure that they are safe too." (Ron 29/09/06).

Tenants told us that in a number of instances this concern had extended beyond the usual commercial transaction.   The school principal had an agreement with the House that visitors and staff could use the school's parking lot. A man who operated a business in the building next door had given one tenant a set of books, and a framed picture to another. He also occasionally shared treats, and had bought coffee for one of the tenants the day we interviewed her. "He's very nice, this neighbour he's really nice." (Amy 28/09/06).   And another story:

> The bar owner at the corner helped me out one night when I was waiting for the TTC at the corner a guy propositioned me, and he, yes, the owner, walked me home because he saw that I was feeling uncomfortable." (Jackie 27/09/06).

The woman who operated a local pet store was a favourite with several tenants. She had helped out when one tenant's dog passed away, and had come to know other tenants in the building. A tenant died several months before our interviews, and at that time:

> …. she was very supportive, and she was upset because she knew him. She took me for coffee and we spoke. (Jackie 27/09/06).

The same incident also moved a worker at the corner coffee shop who expressed her sympathies to the whole Building. Several people pointed out that their postman knew the building well, and that he had helped them out. Jackie told us that when she heard that a key staff person was leaving:

> … I turned to the postman for support. He was very good with feedback. He's been our postman for two and a half years. He's like, you know people come and go and may be this will help her grow and you'll learn new experience from new people. (Jackie 27/09/06).

> I think we've touched our community and given the opposite of what they expected. (Jackie 27/09/06)

When we asked about whether this neighbourhood was different than others, another tenant said that there was:

> … more compassion. Like for example if I go to [corner restaurant] and say '[owner's first name], can I get a sub, I'll pay you tonight?' He'll say fine, not a problem. But if I did that in the other area where I used to live, they would've thrown me out of the restaurant. (Liz 8/02/07).

Two tenants described a mutual respect and a form of assistance between businesses and customers.

> If they talk to me like a normal person then I will be their customer. We have a couple of them. [Restaurant] is one of them. One guy there is really great. If he wasn't there, I probably wouldn't bother going in, no matter how good the burgers are – I really like the customer service. I love being treated like a person. And, the girl who works the night shift at [the coffee shop] is really good. A lot of people go into there because of her interactions with them. She'll talk for a few minutes. There are other places around here that really don't want to bother, they just take your money. (Sean 29/09/06).

> I get to know them and they get to know me and they start to talk a little bit and eventually you become a regular person and you strike up conversation and you make the people feel more important than just a store person." (Beth 28/09/06).

7.2 Building B Neighbours: Cohesion On The Street

Twenty-eight neighbours from across the street from Building B and from an adjacent residential side street agreed to our short interviews. Their survey responses described a neighbourhood that was both cohesive and in considerable change, but that had little interaction with Building B tenants.   They were slightly more likely than Building A neighbours to say that the extent to which they know each other had increased, and that they helped each other more. They reported that they were aware of more children on the street.   Many were pleased about the new businesses in the area, but had some concerns about who is able to afford the increased price of homes in the area. One woman told us:

> It [increased prices] makes us feel somewhat uncomfortable. When we moved it was somewhat seedy, and we were comfortable with that. We're not sure we will be comfortable with yuppies, and were a bit weird with [a new coffee shop], but we've got used to it." (Neighbour B 05 02/06/07).

Most were aware of a large new mixed income housing project that was in an early construction phase several blocks from them. Several complained about the bar at the major intersection, with one suggesting that turning it into a co-op or supportive housing would make a major improvement in the neighbourhood.

The noise from Building B's street was considerable, which limited the extent to which people could have conversations in their front yards. Two men said that they couldn't open their front windows because of the noise. We noticed that the neighbours were not particularly aware of each other from one end of the block to the other, but that there were pockets of neighbours who actively supported each other. One cluster of neighbours had built a fence together, pitched in to clean up one neighbour's yard and celebrated New Year's together.   A man in one of these clusters told this story:

> This lady up here yelled because it was getting late and I was cutting wood, so I asked her to come and talk.   So we got to know each other, because I need her to be my good neighbour because she can see everything that goes on. She was stuck for a parking place, I said park in my drive. …… When you're good to people and you usually get it back. We call it the emotional bank account. (Neighbour B15 02/06/07).

Another residential neighbour said that she exchanged lawn mowing with her neighbour, and that they had discussed sharing the costs of wireless Internet access. Another cluster were seniors who lived in a city-owned building. Many of them had known each other for years and were supportive of each other, although they did not tend to move out in the community very much.

The interactions between residential neighbours and Building B tenants appear to be mostly characterized by polite greetings and acknowledgements.   Of the neighbours we

spoke with, 45% knew that the building was supportive housing.   The administrator we spoke with at the school had been there when the building was proposed, and told us:

> There were never any issues. It went very smoothly, there have been no issues at any time. We don't even see the people that are living in there, it's very quiet, we've never had any issue. We couldn't be any closer, proximity, but honestly it's fine. No concerns whatsoever from the school's point of view. We've never had any complaints, from the neighbours, from families, from the kids. So, as far as I'm concerned, they're good neighbours.

> ...They're just people that live here. Which is really the way you want it to be. It's just a building where people work, or live. I don't know whether you'd want any other interaction. The last thing you want is the stereotypical fear, when people move into supportive housing that it's negative. It hasn't been like that at all. (School administrator 03/07).

One neighbour knew people in Building B because when she took her daughter out in a stroller she often went by the building. She said she didn't need to know more about them than any of her other neighbours, but was open to being friendly if they were friendly to her. She said the interaction was very gentle, that some tenants greeted her when she went by, and she was beginning to chat a bit with those who were most open with her.

Several residential neighbours expressed a sense of isolation and some concern when they spoke about people with mental illness (not those who live in Building B). They were actually looking for guidance and some more information about mental illness. One woman was looking for assistance in a situation where a neighbour in a single-family residence had mental illness, but where there was no support.

> " ...it is a little scary for me. I'm a woman living alone. He is verbally abusive, and if he has mental health issues, I don't know how they might affect me. I'm pretty sure it's something [the neighbour] can't control. It would be nice if someone there told me what's going on." (Neighbour: B02 02/06/07).

Even the community-building neighbour who spoke about the "emotional bank account" was concerned about being "caught off" guard by someone with a condition that he didn't understand.

> "We have to be part of the solution in terms of being an intermediary, and helping them out, but you have to be aware." (Neighbour B15 02/06/07).

7.3 Building B Tenants: Contributions to Collective Efficacy

Tenants in Building B have created a very active house community that is supported and facilitated by the design of Building B and the agency's support.   Their capacity to handle

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their own concerns is a significant contribution to the neighbourhood.   They participate in regular meetings, a weekly community kitchen and have organized their own food bank - events that draw in people from other supportive housing as well as their own building. Very few tenants have moved out since the building opened, and their growing collective experience has meant that they are able to handle many day-to-day issues.   They meet regularly to discuss their concerns as tenants, and an agency staff member works with them to organize internal community-building activities. Their significant community is their building – when we asked about interactions with "the community", almost all responded by talking about relations within the building, rather than connections with the immediate neighbourhood.

i) Managing disorder

One tenant-initiated event was a group street clean up on Earth Day. The tenants and staff are careful to maintain a clean appearance at the front of the building, and look after two planters at the front during the summer.   The side of the building has been graffiti tagged a couple of times. The agency has repainted it, as some cost.

ii) Safety and crime

Building B tenants and staff have demonstrated that they are capable of effective collective action to prevent crime and to handle crime when it takes place, although this may not be obvious to neighbours. In the month before our interviews a tenant was evicted because he was selling crack cocaine, and was bringing people into the building who worried other tenants. It was not a situation that the police were able to deal with effectively, although staff and tenants called and consulted with them.   Tenants and staff had many meetings about it, and while the agency believes that everyone has a right to housing, including people with addictions, they could not ignore the extent to which his actions were jeopardizing the safety of others in the building. The agency provided him with options for treatment, but when he did not act on them he was evicted and court orders were taken out to keep his associates away from the house.

Even though the building is reasonably secure, tenants reported a number of instances where they were the targets of crimes perpetrated by people from outside of the building. As a group they are usually aware of events that have happened to each other, and have developed an informal, internal neighbourhood watch. In one case tenants and staff were instrumental in the arrest of a man who did not live in the building for a sexual assault that had taken place in the building. The most consistent concern, however, was drug trafficking. Tenants did not rely only on staff to take initiatives. Ron told us that:

> I wrote a police report saying, look, these people are around on cheque day, they are feeding on the vulnerable." (Ron 29/09/06).

It was not obvious to us as researchers how Building B might make its capacity to maintain safety for tenants better known among neighbours, but it was clear that its actions not only protected tenants, but also the rest of the community.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study reinforces earlier research findings that supportive housing does not harm neighbourhoods. Our in-depth examination of these two supportive housing facilities and neighbourhoods in Toronto illustrates how tenants make important contributions to their neighbourhoods. Tenants in these buildings contribute a modest but significant amount to their local economies; contribute to the vibrancy of their area through their street presence and watchfulness; contribute to the friendliness amongst neighbours; and contribute to the collective efficacy of their neighbourhoods through actions around noise and speed, tidiness and crime.

The community-based approach of this study expanded the scope of existing supportive housing impact research to include neighbourhood contributions, and made it possible to build a particular trust with tenants. It has also contributed to the capacity of Dream Team members to be even more effective in public discussions and debates about creating more supportive housing for people with mental illness.

8.1 Recommendations

The Research Group has a series of recommendations for the three levels of government and for others with a stake in creating both more supportive housing and successful neighbourhoods:

City of Toronto	Current City planning approval practices create regulatory hurdles that make it more difficult for supportive housing projects to move ahead. While planning law requires that proper planning principles should consider buildings and physical design only and not the personal characteristics of potential residents, planning practice has often allowed opponents to engage in questions about the economic or health status of future residents.
	The cumbersome regulatory process creates unacceptable delays that can, in some cases, defeat plans for new supportive housing. Supportive housing projects sometimes require approvals from a variety of authorities, in addition to planning approvals.
	Toronto's proposed 10-year housing plan which was launched in 2007 sets no specific target for new supportive housing. Dr. Anne Golden recommended 1,000

new supportive homes every year as part of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force of 1999. The Wellesley Institute's Blueprint to End Homelessness in Toronto in 2006 set an annual target of 2,000 supportive homes based on the latest data.

The City of Toronto should:

1. Act on the strong research evidence that shows that supportive housing facilities are not harmful to neighbourhoods, and that they contribute to strong communities. The City should apply "as-of-right" planning rules to supportive housing, and recognize that supportive housing is a necessary part of every neighbourhood by setting targets for all parts of the city.

2. Create a streamlined, "single window" approach that assigns projects to senior city staff who are responsible for securing the necessary approvals.

3. Ensure that all planning and zoning are neighborhood building processes and recognize that housing is a human right for everyone.

4. Establish clear supportive housing targets as part of its 10-year housing strategy.

Government of Ontario	For more than a decade, provincial funding for supportive housing has been fractured among several ministries and departments. Much of the provincial responsibility for new affordable housing has been downloaded to municipalities, but without the financial support for new development. The Ontario government is downloading support services funded through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to newly created Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs). Not only has provincial funding for housing and services been inadequate, but fragmentation has created further obstacles for supportive housing providers.

The Government of Ontario should:

5. Act on its key funding responsibility and set specific targets for supportive housing in Toronto and other communities in the context of an overall housing strategy.

6. Make adequate funding available to meet those targets, and ensure that its funding flows through programs that ensure the housing and supports are properly coordinated at the local level.

7. Fund "portable" services that meet the needs of individuals who have a mental illness or disability but do not live in supportive housing.

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8. Ensure that curriculum in schools and programs for mental health professionals, social workers, community workers, urban planners and all other related professions should include sections on the research related to mental health and housing.

Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs)	As LHINs take on the responsibility for funding supportive housing there is a danger that supportive housing service requirements will be forced to compete with a variety of other unmet health needs in local communities for a limited pool of provincial funding. Each of Ontario's LHINs must recognize the assets that supportive housing can bring to neighbourhoods. In recent years, provincial supportive housing funding has tended to support larger supportive housing providers, presumably in the interest of administrative efficiency. While the big providers deserve support, funding programs should also recognize that small providers often provide services and meet a unique need and also deserve support. **Local Health Integration Networks should:** 9. Ensure that their funding policies and practices are integrated with municipal and provincial supportive housing programs. 10. Be responsive to neighbourhood needs and recognize the unique contributions of a range of providers, from large to small agencies.
Government of Canada	The federal government's newly-created Mental Health Commission of Canada was launched with the promise that it would address, among other concerns, the critical issue of mental health and housing. Before the funding cuts and downloading of the 1990s, the federal government played a key role in housing funding. Canada now stands alone among developed countries in lacking a national housing strategy that would include supportive housing. In 2005, federal, provincial and territorial housing ministers promised that they were working towards a new Canadian housing framework, but progress has been stalled since then. The federal government has provided some funding for pilot projects in several communities. Pilot projects can provide useful lessons, but Toronto and Canada have plenty of successful models of supportive housing. Long-term funding for housing and supports are needed, not more pilot projects. 11. The federal government should establish a country-wide housing strategy that include specific targets for Toronto and other communities, and make adequate funding available to meet those targets. 12. The Mental Health Commission of Canada must include studies of the contributions that supportive housing makes to their neighbourhoods in the Commission's campaign to eliminate stigma and discrimination

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against people with mental illness, and in the Commission's knowledge exchange initiatives.

Supportive Housing Providers	13. The design and programming in supportive housing should foster or strengthen several successful approaches: an atmosphere of support and security, internal communities among tenants, child and pet friendly spaces and openness to the neighbourhood. This study indicates that gardens are important, along with porches, benches, patios and community-use rooms. 14. Housing providers should foster or strengthen a community liaison or community development function within their organizations, and support tenants who want to participate in neighbourhood-building actions and community organizations (such as a neighbourhood watch).
Community Organizations	15. Community leaders, including those in community associations and business organizations, should take an active role in building strong neighbourhoods by engaging supportive housing providers and tenants in their work. They should work to promote the assets that supportive housing tenants can bring to a neighbourhood.
Supportive Housing Tenants	16. Get involved and stay involved! Supportive housing tenants know, first hand, the value of supportive housing in their lives. The Research Group encourages tenants to use this study to validate their experience that supportive housing is good for communities.

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8.2 Challenges and Opportunities in Supportive Housing Policy

	Challenges	Opportunities
City of Toronto	• No specific supportive housing targets • No inclusionary planning policies for supportive housing. • No "as-of-right" zoning for supportive housing.	• City of Toronto's proposed 10-year housing plan acknowledges the value of supportive housing • TO housing plan consultation process is an opportunity to develop specific targets
Government of Ontario	• No specific supportive housing targets • No dedicated supportive housing funding • Funding for housing and services fragmented • No overall provincial housing strategy • Support services funding being downloaded to LHINs; housing funding was downloaded to municipalities in 1998.	• Ontario's promise of a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy offers opportunity to develop supportive housing plan • Ontario is currently considering a provincial housing strategy • "Health equity" focus at LHINs and Ministry of Health and Long Term Care allows for new focus on supportive housing
Government of Canada	• No specific supportive housing targets • No dedicated supportive housing funding • Latest announcement is for "pilot project" funding only, not for permanent housing / services funding • Three major national housing and homelessness programs set to expire in 2008.	• Newly created Mental Health Commission of Canada recognizes important of housing as a critical mental health issue • Federal government has a long history of successful housing programs

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8.3. Limitations of the Research

This project has not, to our satisfaction, answered several questions presented by the history of opposition to House B and other facilities. These questions include: why do neighbour attitudes quickly become more accepting after tenants have moved in; under what conditions do people who have accepted one supportive facility revert to negative stereotypes about people with mental illness when they are presented with a change in that facility or with a facility that they do not know; and under what conditions does this second set of attitudes change? Examining these questions would require a longitudinal project that could follow the neighbourhood involvement and attitudes of individuals connected to more than one new supportive housing project.

Table 1: Neighbourhood Police Division Reported Incidents 1997 – 2006
Source: Toronto Police Service, Annual Statistical Reports, 1997 - 2006

	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998 na	1997
Dispatched calls	35,091	33,382	35,529	37,331	36,505	40,679	42,155	38,575		**48,222**
Bicycles stolen	474	372	407	417	361	369	345	511		**581**
1st degree murder	0	1	0	**3**	0	1	1	0		1
2nd degree murder	0	0	1	1	**2**	1	1	0		1
Manslaughter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Attempted murder	5	1	3	1	4	**6**	2	5		5
Sexual assault	105	129	137	113	125	**154**	131	150		135
Other assault	1580	1660	1572	1576	1674	**1786**	1725	1592		1742
Robbery	315	301	271	218	240	321	257	310		**331**
Break & Enter	917	888	1255	869	994	886	1012	1093		**1370**
Motor vehicle theft	361	413	326	523	576	684	570	670		**843**
Theft over $5000	83	99	**187**	104	46	87	74	69		61
Theft under $5000	3307	3107	3021	2886	2755	3091	3022	3143		**4089**
Fraud	611	642	**676**	363	340	299	374	315		373
Offensive weapons	350	**388**	288	262	264	230	209	225		215
Other	3869	3644	3311	2975	3201	3484	3533	3409		**4101**
Criminal code Traffic	131	191	187	224	210	**288**	234	203		226

Chart 1: Row/Town House Sales, Annual Average 1988 - 2007
Building A Street and Adjacent Street
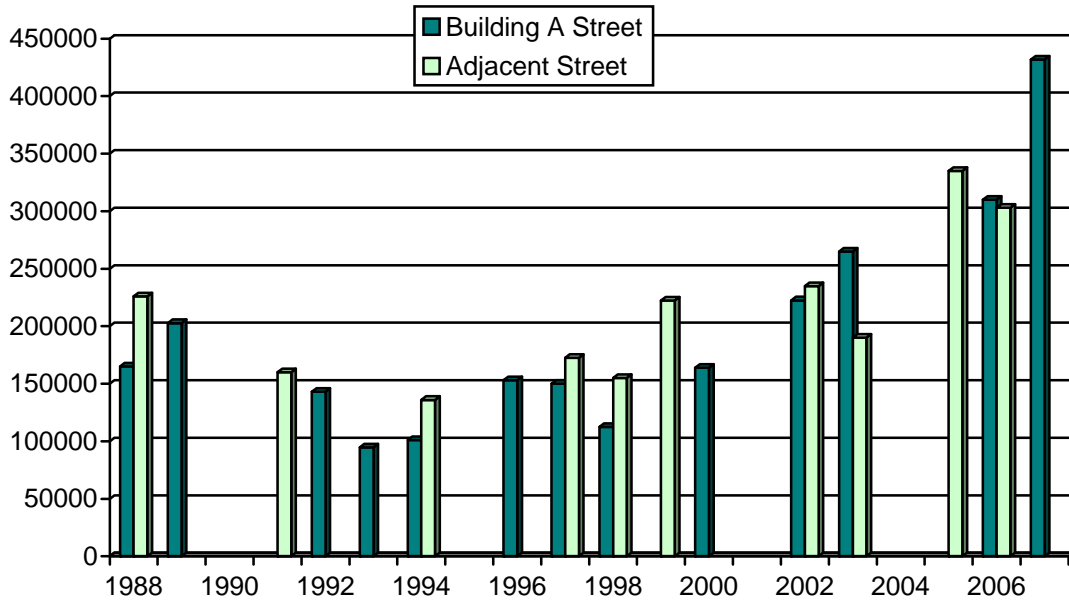Source: Toronto Real Estate Board

Chart 2: Semi-Detached House Sales, Annual Average 1988 - 2007
Building A Street and Adjacent Street
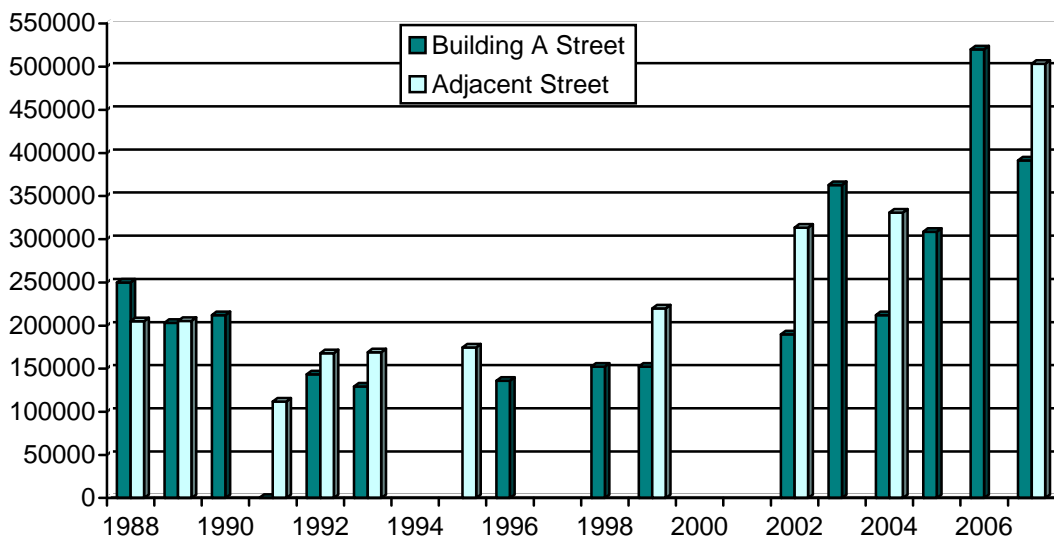Source: Toronto Real Estate Board

Chart 3: Detached House Sales, Annual Average 1988 – 2007
Building A Street and Adjacent Street
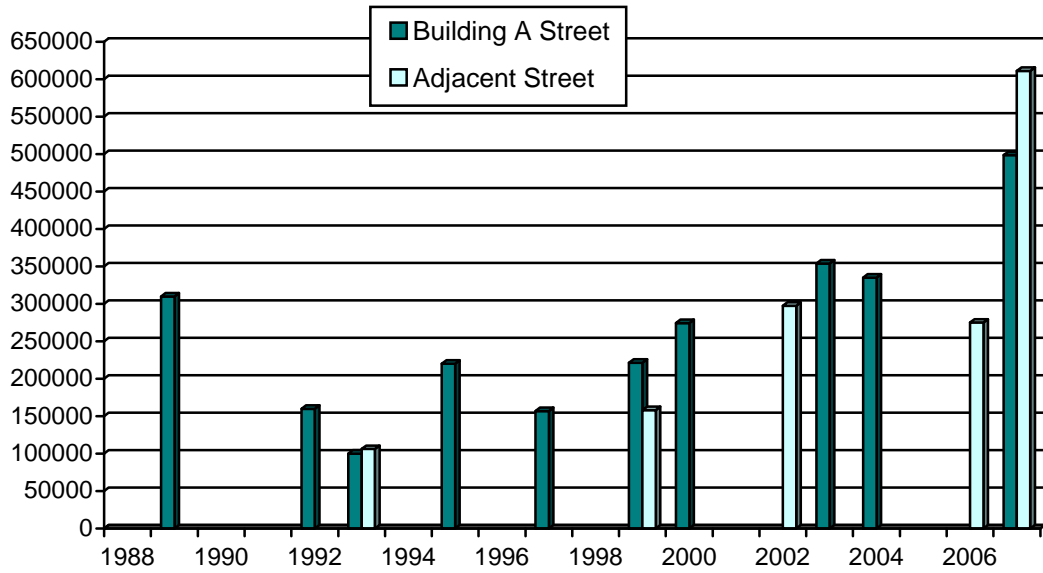Source: Toronto Real Estate Board

Chart 4: Row/Town House Sales, Annual Average
Building B Street and Adjacent Street 2002 – 2007
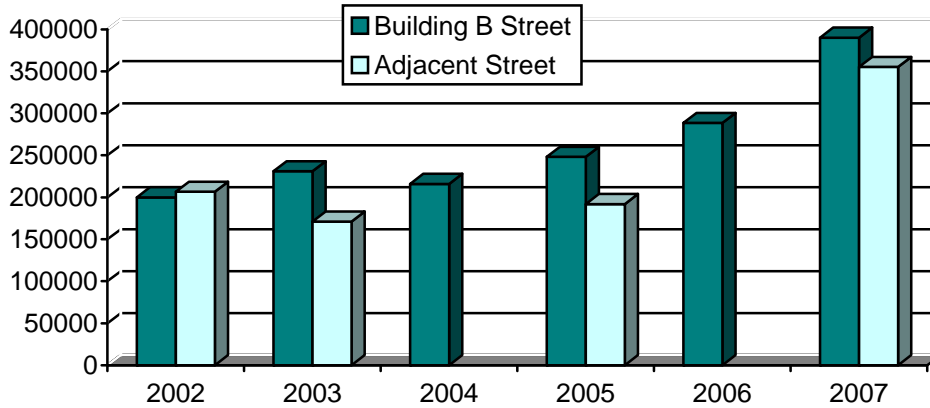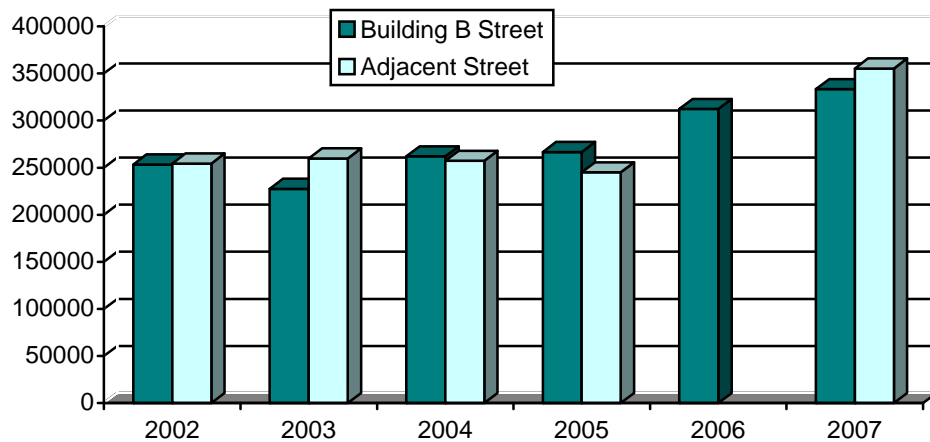Source: Toronto Real Estate Board

Chart 5: Semi-Detached House Sales, Annual Average
Building B Street and Adjacent Street 2002 – 2007
Source: Toronto Real Estate Board

NOTE: a semi-detached house sold for $397,000 on Building B Street in early 2008.

Table 2: Perception of Neighbourhood Changes, % of Respondents

	Businesses N = 14	Building A Neighbours N = 14	Building B Neighbours N = 24
Neighbourhood property values a) decreased	14		
b) stayed the same	7	14	13
c) increased	78	86	82
Numbers of children playing a) decreased	14	35	13
b) stayed the same	42	29	43
c) increased	28	35	43
How much neighbours know each other			
a) decreased	7	35	8
b) stayed the same	14	29	33
c) increased	78	42	50
How much neighbours help each other			
a) decreased	21	7	8
b) stayed the same	21	28	45
c) increased	50	42	38
Quality of business in the neighbourhood			
a) decreased	28	14	13
b) stayed the same	21	14	17
c) increased	50	64	66
Crime in the neighbourhood a) decreased	42	35	25
b) stayed the same	28	35	54
c) increased	21	21	13
Recreation services in the neighbourhood			
a) decreased	7	7	8
b) stayed the same	50	50	50
c) increased	42	43	29
Other services in the neighbourhood a) decreased			
b) stayed the same	71	56	71
c) increased	28	35	21
Noise a) decreased	21	21	21
b) stayed the same	56	35	50
c) increased	7	7	17
% Of Respondents Who Knew Building A Or B	42	35	45

Note: all respondents did not respond to all questions

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Table 3. Do Building A and B Influence Neighbourhood Changes: Residential and Business Neighbours' Opinions

Because of the supportive housing facilities and their tenants ….	Businesses n=14 Percent	House A Neighbours n=14 Percent	House B Neighbours n=24 Percent
Neighbourhood property values decreased	14%	0%	0%
Numbers of children playing decreased	0%	0%	0%
How much neighbours know each other decreased	0%	21%	0%
How much neighbours help each other decreased	0%	0%	0%
Quality of business in the neighbourhood decreased	7%	0%	0%
Crime in the neighbourhood increased	14%	0%	0%
Recreation services in the neighbourhood decreased	0%	0%	7%
Other services in the neighbourhood decreased	0%	0%	0%
Noise increased	7%	0%	0%

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