COMMERCIAL CHANGES AND THEIR LARGER CONTEXT IN A GENTRIFYING NEIGHBOURHOOD: TRACKING THE TRANSFORMATION OF HALIFAX, CANADA'S NORTH END

by

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ABSTRACT

Commercial Changes and Their Larger Context in a Gentrifying Neighbourhood: Tracking the Transformation of Halifax, Canada's North End

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The North End of Halifax has witnessed drastic changes to its urban landscape since the beginning of this millennium. Once a historically low-income neighbourhood, the North End now attracts a more affluent demographic of both residents and tourists. Development in the area has increased alongside an influx of new high-end stores, consequently altering the neighbourhood's streetscape. By analyzing commercial change between 2009 and 2022, this thesis argues that the retail landscape contains valuable evidence of the tensions brought on by gentrification in the North End. To document retail change over the 13-year period, six primary retail streets are investigated through the use of Google Street View imagery. Classifying establishments in both years of study showed that retail gentrification in the North End has been primarily driven by the up-zoning of the neighbourhood, specifically through the introduction of new, mid- to high-rise, mixed-use buildings. Stores that target a demographic with a lower socio-economic status have notably decreased since 2009, while expensive retailers have increased. It is suggested that if governmental action is not taken to address these implications, the North End could soon cease to have any affordable commercial options.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Research Problem and Objectives

Gentrification is not a process that solely takes place in large cities. While patterns of gentrification are more apparent in bigger cities due to their diverse economies, higher rates of immigration, and rapid growth, the effects of gentrification are increasingly evident in small and mid-sized cities (Prouse et al., 2015). With a population of over 400,000, Halifax, Nova Scotia is one such mid-sized city. The North End of Halifax specifically is witnessing drastic changes, transitioning from a historically low-income neighbourhood to one that now attracts middle- to high-income residents. This shift dates back to the early 2000s, when trendy commercial establishments, such as shops, restaurants, and cafés began to appear in the neighbourhood, alongside an increase in the 'hip' young professional demographic (Roth and Grant, 2015). Development over the last decade increased rapidly, with the region's retail landscape containing valuable evidence of the displacement and tension brought on by gentrification.

Retail gentrification is a complex process that has significant implications for the social, economic, and cultural fabric of urban neighbourhoods. At its most basic, retail gentrification refers to the transformation of a neighbourhood's retail landscape, often through the influx of new, upscale businesses and the displacement of small, independent, or legacy retailers (Zukin et al., 2009). This process can have both positive and negative impacts on the character and vitality of urban areas, as well as on the well-being of the people who live and work in them. On one hand, some authors argue that gentrification can bring new economic opportunities and cultural

amenities to an area, revitalizing and diversifying the local economy, while others state that it leads to the displacement of long-term residents and businesses, as well as the erosion of a neighbourhood's distinct identity and cultural history (Atkinson, 2003).

By examining the commercial patterns over the past 13 years, this thesis aims to describe and explain the changes in the retail landscape of the North End neighbourhood of Halifax. To properly delineate these changes, three key objectives must be addressed:

I. To document the retail changes in the North End of Halifax over the 13-year period from 2009 to 2022.

II. To identify a relationship between the changes in the retail landscape and the socioeconomic status of the North End neighbourhood.

III. To address ways in which the Halifax Regional Municipality could better plan for development in the North End by providing policy recommendations.

1.2 Thesis Overview

Following this introduction, the second chapter of this thesis summarises the current literature on the field of gentrification, focusing specifically on aspects related to its effect on retail, consumption, and its consequent impact on identity and sense of place – both on the individual and neighbourhood level. Key literature that will be reviewed includes influential works such as Lees et al.'s (2008) book *Gentrification*, Smith's (1979) rent gap theory, and a wide range of Zukin's works on cultural capital and consumption spaces.

A detailed description of the methods used to conduct this study can be found in Chapter Three which outlines the study area of the thesis as well as explains the reasoning behind the data sources used. The chapter continues by defining the analysis methods used to classify and

quantify the data, ending with a description of the limitations discovered during the study. Chapter Four is where the results extracted from Chapter Three's analysis can be found. Brief conclusions are drawn at this stage, with the findings highlighting the heightened addition of commercial establishments in the study area, the spatial dispersion of establishments, and various variations at the structural, market, and landscape level.

Chapter Five contextualizes the results in a more comprehensive way, relating the findings to the literature discussed in Chapter Two. An in-depth analysis on the North End's current stage of gentrification, implications associated with retail gentrification, and municipal- and provincial-level policies is conducted at this stage. Finally, a summary of the major findings of the study, alongside recommendations for future research and concluding remarks can be found in Chapter Six of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Drawing on available literature, this review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge on commercial change, consumption patterns, and retail gentrification, highlighting key themes and debates, and situating the contributions of this thesis within the current research. The review will begin with a broad discussion on gentrification, followed by an exploration of contemporary consumerist societies, and finishing off with an examination of retail gentrification and its consequent effects. The goal of this chapter is to provide a nuanced understanding on the role of commercial change in gentrification and the impacts it has on the built environment.

2.2 Gentrification

Gentrification, a term that was first introduced by Ruth Glass in 1964, is defined as the rehabilitation of working-class urban neighbourhoods through an influx in capital that subsequently transforms the area into a middle-class neighbourhood (Lees et al., 2008; Smith, 1982). This definition serves as the baseline in gentrification literature, with Beauregard (1986) explaining that the process of gentrification often includes the renovation and consequent purchase of a region's housing stock by developers and a more affluent demographic, governmental and private investment, and an increase in tax base. Gentrification is a multifaceted phenomenon that affects politics, society, and the economy. As a result, it requires the

involvement of various actors, such as the government, private institutions, gentrifiers, and long-term residents. This section will provide a general overview of the present literature on gentrification, discussing its history, theoretical explanations, and consequences.

2.2.1 A Brief History

Lees et al. (2008) argue that gentrification first arose in postwar capitalist cities that began to replace old neighbourhoods with contemporary housing and major roadways. Extensive literature has pointed to the emergence of the new middle-class as being the primary driver of first-wave gentrification. The housing and aesthetic preferences of the new middle class created a demand for stock in the inner city (Atkinson, 2003). Per Jager (1986), this class seeks to maintain a distinction from the working-class by emulating the upper classes. Therefore, their settlement into low-income neighbourhoods required extensive remodeling. Pioneer gentrifiers were motivated to rehabilitate disinvested neighbourhoods because of green lining schemes such as sweat equity, which provided gentrifiers with monetary compensation in return for their labour in renovating their own homes (Lees et al., 2008).

The gentrification process became more ingrained in cities during its second wave, which took place between the 1970s and 1980s (Lees et al., 2008). During this time, more cultural and economic influences were introduced, meaning that investments were no longer explicitly reserved for property restorations, and development projects for galleries, museums, and theatres began to be introduced (Lees et al., 2008). Economic growth was prioritized and as a result, class imbalances became more pronounced. This trend continued and led to the third wave of gentrification. Characterized by the large-scale contribution of capital, public-private

partnerships, and government deregulation, this wave of gentrification will be further discussed in the upcoming section.

2.2.2 Rent Gap Theory

A key addition to the study of gentrification was Neil Smith's development of the rent gap theory, which provided the process with an economic explanation. Smith (1979) argues that considering the effect of developers, government agencies, and landlords would allow for a more comprehensive understanding on the back to the city movement in the 1970s. At its core, the rent gap theory explains the uneven development of land markets, with capital flowing to where the rate of return is the highest (Smith, 1979). Therefore, increased investment in the suburbs led to disinvestment in certain inner-city neighbourhoods, causing the ground rent of those neighbourhoods to be considerably less than their potential ground rent (Beauregard, 1986; Smith, 1979). A low ground rent is attractive to developers since it allows them to make a significant profit by purchasing and redeveloping residential and commercial lots for cheap, consequently bringing capital back into the city. Therefore, Smith (1979) theorizes that the rent gap between current and potential rent prices in an area explain why some neighbourhoods redevelop and others do not.

While the exploitation of low ground rents in undesirable, low-income urban areas is one of the earliest explanations for the reasoning behind gentrification, the rent-gap theory has been heavily debated among scholars. Beauregard (1986) argues that Smith's theory only addresses one aspect of gentrification, stating that an explanation is required for determining why certain inner-city areas with rent-gaps are gentrified while others are not. It is emphasized that a more cohesive theory would explore the changes in the production and consumption processes within

gentrified neighbourhoods, as well as the significant role that capitalist structures play in uneven development (Beauregard, 1986). Similarly, Lees et al. (2008) criticize the rent gap theory for disregarding the preconceived assumption that urban spaces are formed through the preferences and movement of consumers, thus simplifying the study of urban geography.

2.2.3 New-Build Gentrification

New-build gentrification, often referred to as third-wave gentrification, is defined as being the development of new construction that is often the result of a reinvestment in capital caused by the public and private sector working together to enable gentrification (Lees et al., 2008). The emergence of neoliberalism in the 1980s suppressed the role that public urban policy played in planning, causing laissez-faire policies to be introduced and private interests to be prioritized (Smith, 2002). The addition of private capital into the built environment caused corporate developers to become the primary drivers of gentrification, with governments facilitating rather than restricting the process (Lees et al., 2008). Due to this economic shift, Smith (2002) argues that gentrification began to create entirely new landscapes, integrating housing with recreation, consumption, and production developments. In agreement with Smith, Zukin (1990) states that the heightened emphasis on capital caused investments to not only go toward the restoration of housing but also the development of retail and cultural amenities. Gentrification was no longer just the rehabilitation of existing residences; it now involved the construction of mixed-use infrastructure on previously developed land.

Davidson and Lees (2010) explain that scholars were reluctant to accept new-build developments as part of the gentrification process, with many still relying on its classical definition. Combining new-build construction with residential restoration caused discourses on

'positive' gentrification to emerge (Davidson, 2018). Early debates on new-build gentrification surrounded whether displacement would still be a prominent consequence, seeing as new-builds promote more indirect forms of displacement (Davidson, 2018). As these developments are often out of monetary reach for incumbent residents and heighten pressures to relocate due to rising retail and residential prices, it is evident that displacement is still a notable issue under third-wave gentrification. As Lees et al. (2008) states, the construction of luxury apartment complexes is the ideal form of neoliberal urbanism and has become the blueprint of contemporary gentrification.

2.2.4 Displacement vs. Investment

The consequences of gentrification and their relative importance are often disputed in the literature. Displacement, defined as both the physical and psychological removal of people (Davidson and Lees, 2010), is by far the most recurrent and significant impact of gentrification. The forced removal of residents due to market fluctuations and inflating prices has been described as a central component to gentrification, with authors stating that there is simply no gentrification without displacement (Atkinson, 2003; Davidson, 2018). While the presence of displacement is acknowledged as a critical consequence to gentrification, there is variance in identifying its severity.

Various scholars have highlighted not only the significance of the physical displacement of individuals, but also their loss of sense of place. For instance, Shaw and Hagemans (2015) found that even if the local residents of a gentrified community are not physically displaced, they will still face negative impacts either directly or indirectly. Gentrification leads to the suppression of affordable goods and services intended for the lower class, which in turn causes local residents to lose their sense of belonging within their community (Shaw and Hagemans, 2015). Similarly,

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Belanger (2012) concluded that the addition of new developments within a community further separates new and old residents by creating a psychological barrier between them. Belanger states that gentrifiers make little to no effort to integrate themselves into their new communities, creating tensions between them and the long-term residents. This barrier of inclusion can even be reinforced in children by elements such as education and access to resources, with Keels et al. (2013) stating that gentrifiers are more likely to enroll their children into private schools, leading to a decrease in public school populations and consequently, budgets.

Displacement is often excused as being an unavoidable side-effect to the revitalization of inner-city neighbourhoods, with private investments being held at a higher standard than socioeconomic implications (Atkinson, 2003). This is due to gentrification being promoted as a form of urban regeneration, relying on discourses that surround the betterment of the neighbourhoods economy, aesthetic, and livability (Burnett, 2014). These arguments are based on the idea that gentrification generates a net gain of population, bringing in new capital into the city from a wealthier demographic. As Atkinson (2003) notes, gentrifiers are often relocating within the same city, making it "difficult to sustain the idea that gentrification represents the fiscal gift that some see it as" (2003, p. 2345). Therefore, whether the increase in socioeconomic status of a community is looked at as a positive or negative effect, it cannot be denied that it inevitably leads to the marginalization and displacement of low-income residents.

2.2.5 Gentrifiers

According to Beauregard (1986), the quintessential gentrifier is a childless single- or two-person household made up of educated, affluent professionals – a description that aligns with most scholarly descriptions of gentrifiers. For instance, McKinnish et al. (2010) found that

gentrifiers are most often white college graduates under 40 who do not have children through their analysis of the 1990 and 2000 Census Long Form data of gentrified and ungentrified neighbourhoods in the United States. Individuals in this demographic are in a position where they are able to risk investing in an undervalued neighbourhood (Beauregard, 1986).

It has been assumed that the first wave of gentrifiers is usually made up of artists that are often ironically counter-cultural activists attracted to anti-poverty movements looking to settle in neighbourhoods that will provide them with an 'authentic' urban experience (Burnett, 2014; Deener, 2007). According to Zukin (1990), pioneer gentrifiers shift the neighbourhoods character in such a way that it attracts a second wave of gentrifiers, made up of tourists and more affluent young professionals, to settle into the area. Having a higher financial status, these 'yuppies' are able to pay high prices for consumer goods, influencing goods and services to rise to meet their demand and consequently displacing poorer, long-term residents (Zukin, 1998) Therefore, it can be understood that the progressive increase of social capital in a neighbourhood becomes enticing to a broader range of those in the middle- and upper-classes and thus enhances the social consequences attached to gentrification.

2.3 Birth of the Consumption Society

In post-industrial economies, cities have progressed from being entities of production to centres of consumption (Zukin, 1998). Beauregard (1986) points to the overproduction of commodities as being the root cause of this capitalist crisis, stating that it can only be alleviated by the development of new investments. Due to this shift, Bridge and Dowling (2001) argue that an individual's identity is largely shaped by material commodities, seeing as they are tangible embodiments of one's lifestyle and sense of self. Extending this idea of identifying formation

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through consumption beyond the individual to larger geographic areas, a neighbourhood's retail landscape could therefore be seen as a reflection of not only the consumption practices, but also the identity of its residents. To understand the reasons behind the drastic commercial changes in the North End of Halifax, it is pertinent to evaluate the literature on urban consumption. Here, the influence of neoliberalism and the prevalent desire for individuality will be reviewed.

2.3.1 The Role of Neoliberalism

The introduction of neoliberalism in the late 20th century quickly gained traction as it dispelled reservations the public had on the power of deregulation and privatization (Keil, 2002). This free-market ideology led to the normalization of the growth-oriented planning approaches we see today in contemporary cities (Peck and Tickell, 2002), with private interests leading their formation. Capitalism intensified under neoliberalism, causing cities to become massive entities of production and consumption. Henri Lefebvre's Marxist critique on everydayness explains how urban neoliberalism re-adjusted the way in which city dwellers live, stating that the everyday is the "decisive category linking the economy to individual life experiences" (Ronneberger, 2002, p.43). In other words, everyday practices enhance the modern, consumer-driven society, with the consumption of material products being seamlessly integrated into everyday life.

Keil (2002) mentions that this new form of everydayness exacerbated human's desire for differentiation. The emphasis on commercialism brought on by neoliberal policies caused the social status of individuals to be determined not only by their position within the labour hierarchy, but also by their consumption patterns (Keil, 2002). As a result, consumption became a form of stimulation, with the purchase of commodities producing feelings of satisfaction and pleasure (Ronneberger, 2002). However, as Ronneberger (2002) states, "consumption continually

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produced a promise of happiness that could never be fulfilled, and thus generated frustrations that would be contravened through still further consumption" (p.46). It is thus apparent that the value modern society places on consumerism would not be the same without the neoliberal ideology.

2.3.2 Symbolic Consumption and Individualism

Consumption is essential to fulfilling one's needs and wants. In modern economies, consumption serves as an indicator to social status, with the symbol of a product portraying its value (Witt, 2010). As such, Zukin (1990) points to cities as becoming "consumption-biased complexes" (p. 38), with cultural capital dominating socio-spatial structures. Here, the consumption of products is not dictated by their practicality or necessity (Witt, 2010) – instead, items are consumed based on the identity or social position they represent. Witt (2010) identifies the innate need for social recognition and self-esteem as a motivation for symbolic consumption, stating that the symbols are often idiosyncratic and recognizable to the specific groups they cater to.

Identity is multifaceted. The connection and overlap of an individual's social identities (such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity) largely dictate their consumption practices (Bridge and Dowling, 2001). The concept of individuality exists within a paradox of consumption, wanting to conform to societal norms while maintaining a sense of distinction from others has been viewed to influence consumer behaviours (Newholm and Hopkinson, 2009). For instance, Newholm and Hopkinson's (2009) study found that while participants were influenced to purchase clothing that represented their unique identities, they were constructing their individuality by shopping in mass markets. Therefore, whether goods are purchased due to social pressures or purely for personal enjoyment, consumption can nonetheless be seen as an essential form of self-discovery.

2.4 Retail Gentrification

While literature on gentrification largely focuses on the effects of transforming residential landscapes, it is important to recognize the significant role that commercial land uses play in gentrified neighbourhoods. Retailers are an important element of the built environment, occupying some of the most visible spaces in the urban landscape, and influencing the cultural, structural, and economic fabric of urban communities. Although there are various types of urban retail change, the emergence of corporate chain stores in the inner-city are not of interest in this thesis, seeing as big businesses are a characteristic of areas undergoing the fourth wave of gentrification (Lees et al., 2008). Rather, the proliferation of independent, high-end, bohemian businesses is a more accurate representation of the retail change being experienced in the North End, a region which I argue is currently experiencing third-wave gentrification. This literature review will focus on alterations to the neighbourhood fabric, resentment and sense of place, the role of hipsters, and employment structures to properly contextualize the effects of retail gentrification.

2.4.1 Altering the Neighbourhood Character

By definition, gentrification involves changes in patterns of consumption (Burnett, 2014; Hubbard, 2018), causing the retail landscape to adapt in order to satisfy the consumption practices of the more affluent target market (Bridge and Dowling, 2001; Zukin et al., 2009). This adaptation gives rise to the 'symbolic economy', as exemplified in the small-scale, independently owned shops, restaurants, cafés, and boutiques (Deener, 2007; Zukin, 1998). In the same way, Ilkucan and Sandikci (2005) note that the new consumption identity in Cihangir, a gentrified

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neighbourhood in Istanbul, Turkey, led to the development of real estate agencies, gourmet food sellers, beauty salons, and many other establishments previously not found in in the neighbourhood. Because of this, it is argued that gentrification is a by-product of consumption and urban lifestyles (Ilkucan and Sandikci, 2005).

The loss of corporate retail capital in inner-city shopping districts after the Second World War caused cities to become characterized by small, locally-owned stores that catered to the working-class (Hubbard, 2018). This quickly changed after disinvested urban neighbourhoods began to be exploited for their low land values, and high-end hipster businesses superseded. These new consumption spaces are intertwined with residential developments; being low-rise, central, and dense in nature reflects an earlier stage of downtown development (Zukin, 1990). It has been found that symbolic ownership plays a large role in retail gentrification, with Deener (2007) stating that gentrifiers gain control over the aesthetic presentation, public perception, and social and economic value of shopping districts, thereby reducing their previous character. The progressive addition of high-end boutiques attracts a different set of residents who change the perceived identity of gentrified neighbourhoods, with 'dangerous' areas becoming authentic and contemporary (Deener, 2007; Hubbard, 2018).

The character of the North End of Halifax has changed drastically. Once being marginalized and avoided by city dwellers, the North End Business Association (n.d.) now describes the North End as being a "palette of saltbox houses, urban and community gardens, independent businesses and eclectic arts scene [that] has become home to a wonderfully cosmopolitan mix of people, giving the area a special vibrance and character". While some may see the development of these new consumption spaces as beneficial to a neighbourhood's revitalization and reputation by attracting new investments in the form of businesses, real estate

development, and visitors, Zukin et al. (2009) argue that it further reinforces a barrier between economic and social classes. This notion aligns with most critiques of gentrification, where localized inequality and social exclusion are condemned as notable negative effects.

2.4.2 Resentment and Sense of Place

Promoting the value of social mixing is a typical narrative that is used to justify gentrification (Burnett, 2014). Class diversity increases as the ownership of local stores in historic working-class neighbourhoods are replaced, and the retail landscape develops into an amalgamation of upper-middle-class and working-class consumption centres, often at the expense of the established neighbourhood character and characters. In a study on 'boutiquing' in New York City, Zukin et al. (2009) emphasize that when the ethnic ownership and character of local establishments changes, a different sense of place is generated – causing long-term inhabitants to feel uncomfortable in their own neighbourhood. Likewise, Shaw and Hagemans (2015) evaluate how forced social mixing leads to a loss of sense of place among incumbent residents, stressing that replacing common infrastructure removes a sense of familiarity from the landscape. Therefore, even if gentrification does not physically displace incumbent residents, staying in gentrified areas will still have negative impacts that affect low-income residents.

Moreover, it has been found that preserving a gentrified area's newfound bohemian atmosphere is prioritized by newcomers being outwardly anticorporate – an effort that is not reciprocated when it comes to recognizing the consequences that trendy, expensive, and independent boutiques have on long-term, low-income residents (Deener, 2007). To avoid the alienation and displacement of local communities that comes along with redevelopment of this

nature, Zukin et al. (2009) suggest that public policy must adapt to encourage the growth of new retail while ensuring the protection of long-term local shops.

2.4.3 Hipsters and Consumption

Hipsters are a subculture that has gained popularity in recent years, known for their distinct fashion style and alternative tastes. However, the hipster archetype is best described through particular consumption patterns and behaviours, rather than a specific cultural identity (Hubbard, 2016). Hubbard (2016) explains that hipsters have an ironic "bankrupt" ideology of consumption, meaning that they are enticed by revitalized second-hand goods and organic, fair-trade products to differentiate themselves from both the lower- and middle-class. They value both cultural and economic capital and advocate against materialist consumption practices (Deener, 2007; Ilkucan and Sandikci, 2005). However, while hipsters embody this sense of authenticity and progressiveness, they are inextricably linked to the very processes they condemn by consuming goods and services that are only attainable to the more affluent (Hubbard, 2016, 2018). Therefore, retail spaces in gentrified neighbourhoods capitalize on these 'hip' urban dwellers that seek an alternative to mainstream consumption practices, encouraging the addition of wealthier residents into the neighbourhood, and consequently displacing low-income residents over time (Hubbard, 2016).

2.4.3.1 The Fetishization of Low-Income Neighbourhoods

Gentrified neighbourhoods are often fetishized in popular culture and media for their perceived cultural vibrancy, diversity, and edginess. As a result, they are often depicted as desirable places to live, work, and consume – particularly for young urban professionals. As

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Cocola-Gant (2018) mentions, gentrified landscapes become enticing to tourists due to their sanitised areas, variety of consumption options, and middle-class sense of place. The proliferation of bohemian consumption spaces such as boutiques, coffee shops, and art galleries give middle-class tourists "safe passage through 'dangerous' areas" (Zukin, 1990, p.41).

The fetishization of gentrified neighbourhoods obscures the negative impact of gentrification, such as the displacement of long-term residents and the rising cost of living. For instance, Burnett (2014) finds that poverty remains a prominent issue in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, an area with a vast amount of avant-garde consumption spaces. Burnett argues that poverty tourism has played a significant role in the expansion of this area, with its perceived danger amplifying its attractiveness. Therefore, not only do incumbent residents face the risk of being displaced, but they are also unwilling participants of promotional campaigns (Burnett, 2014).

2.4.4 Employment Structures

It has been made clear that the addition of wealthier residents into gentrified areas causes the retail landscape to adapt in order to meet the new consumption requirements. Authors have found that this can lead to the closure of existing businesses that serve the needs of the original community as well as the job-loss of employees (Bridge and Dowling, 2001; Zukin et al., 2009); especially those with low-income and low social status (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001). However, it has also been argued that long-term residents can at times benefit from the economic revitalization of their neighbourhood by bringing in new employment opportunities (Meltzer and Ghorbani, 2017).

Through the analysis of several different census and statistic sources to track New York City neighbourhoods between 2002 and 2011, Meltzer and Ghorbani (2017) aim to understand whether gentrification leads to the job-loss or job-gain of incumbent residents. Ultimately, it is found that employment effects are localized, meaning that while gentrified neighbourhoods experience an overall increase in jobs and commercial activity, previous low-income residents are affected greatly by job losses. In fact, local low- and moderate-wage jobs were seen to decline by 63%, with residents often having to travel greater distances in search of employment opportunities (Meltzer and Ghorbani, 2017). Studying the effects of social exclusion in deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods, Atkinson and Kintrea (2001) explain that a reason for the high levels of unemployment in low-income neighbourhoods is the stigma associated with the negative reputation of potential workers that inhabit these areas. Therefore, low-income residents living in, or within proximity to gentrifying neighbourhoods, experience significantly more job losses than those in non-gentrifying areas.

2.5 Methodologies in Gentrification Research

Through a systematic review of gentrification literature published since the 1970s, Finio (2022) examines the methodology used to quantify gentrification and the consequences that have been observed over time to provide suggestions for future studies in the field. It is found that gentrification is often measured over similar time periods and geographic scales. For instance, most studies measure gentrification over a ten-year time scale and focus on cities or neighbourhoods using census tract information. Finio argues that larger spatial definitions of gentrified neighbourhoods do not account for variance and lead to imprecise results, seeing as processes such as displacement occur at the local level and require a smaller geographic scale to

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be studied. Thus, it is recommended that future research should use multiple definitions of gentrification and mixed method approaches to fully evaluate its effects (Finio, 2022).

An example of mixed method gentrification research can be found in Belanger's (2012) study. Here, information from a variety of sources including data from interviews, Statistics Canada censuses, questionnaires, and observations is extracted to analyze Lachine Canal Park in Montreal, Canada and explore how gentrification affects the use of public spaces in the built environment. Similarly, Chaskin and Joseph (2013) examine tensions in three mixed-income communities in Chicago through the use of interviews, field observations, and data analysis to criticize the idea of positive gentrification. By collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, researchers are able to draw valid conclusions that are backed up by multiple pieces of evidence, further reinforcing the reliability of their results.

In this thesis, Google Street View will be used to analyze the retail landscape of the North End. While this is a relatively new methodology in urban research, there is still evidence of its applications, with Rundle et al. (2011) using the publicly available software as a way to audit neighbourhood environments. The authors note that street view as a simpler, safer, and less expensive way to conduct research in the built environment, stating that Google Street view "…yields a large gain in productivity, and this gain in productivity is expected to be even larger for studies conducted over larger or geographically dispersed areas" (Rundle et al., 2011, pp. 97-98). However, limitations such as temporal variability and limited visibility due to privacy concerns must also be accounted for (Rundle et al., 2011).

CHAPTER 3

Methods

3.1 Study Area

As previously mentioned, the study area comprises the North End of Halifax, located in the northern part of the Halifax Peninsula. The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) defines the North End (i.e., District 8) as being bounded in the east by the Halifax Harbour, in the north by the Bedford Basin, in the west by Oxford Street/Connaught Avenue, and in the south by Cornwallis Street/Cogswell Street. However, I argue that this definition of the area includes a substantial portion of the West End of Halifax and the northernmost extent of the North End, which are characterized as being primarily residential, generally middle-income family neighbourhoods rather than commercial or mixed-use areas. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, the North End will be bounded in the west by Robie Street, in the south by Cogswell Street, in the north by Duffus Street and in the east by Barrington Street (Figure 3.1).

The North End became an area marginalized by the rest of the city after the Second World War, when an economic boom allowed previous working-class residents to relocate to the suburbs (Silver, 2008). Sprawl of this magnitude led to a decrease in property values and a weakened commercial base, which greatly impacted the neighbourhood's reputation. In the 1960s, two public housing developments – Mulgrave Park and Uniacke Square – were constructed to house the residents who were forcibly displaced from Africville as well as an increasing impoverished population, further reinforcing the neighbourhood's negative standing within the city. The North End continued to be stigmatized until the start of the 21st century,

when developers began to see worth in its low land values and proximity to the city centre. Desirable infrastructure began to be constructed that attracted a wealthier class of residents, including young professionals looking for alternatives to suburban life. Today, the North End continues to be a site of revitalization, and consequently, gentrification.

Primary retail streets in the North End, specifically Agricola Street, Almon Street, Gottingen Street, Kaye Street, Robie Street, and Young Street, will be surveyed for this thesis. The HRM's Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy (2022) outlines the land use designations of the areas within Peninsular Halifax. In this Plan, the previously mentioned six streets consist of areas classified as either Centre Designation or Corridor Designation; in which the former is applied to "concentrated nodes of commercial and mixed-use developments…", and the latter to "lands located along streets containing established or emerging commercial uses…" (HRM, 2022). Therefore, these streets are crucial components to the landscape of the North End; they are the spaces that allow community members to gather, socialize, and support their local economy, which in turn foster residents with a strong sense of belonging and give the neighbourhood its distinct identity.

Figure 3.1 Study Area Boundary and Primary Retail Streets
Data obtained from Halifax Open Data, Street Centrelines file (2023).

3.2 Data Sources

3.2.1 Google Street View

Google Maps was the primary imagery data source for this thesis. The software offers

Street View alongside a historical imagery viewer, allowing users to view changes in a location

overtime. The timeline for tracking commercial change in the North End was established based

on the imagery availability of the software. In Halifax, the earliest imagery available on Google

Street View is from 2009. Therefore, imagery dating back to 2009 was compared to imagery

from 2022, which is the most recent year of imagery provided by the software. This thirteen-year

period is large enough to examine commercial change on a medium-term scale, allowing the

small sample of retail streets to be analysed thoroughly and its results subsequently providing

sufficient information on the overall change of the North End's commercial landscape. To better understand the changes in the retail landscape, each establishment found on Google Street View was categorized by specific classifications that are discussed in Section 3.3.1.

3.2.2 Census

Gathering information from the University of Toronto's Computing in the Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS) Data Centre, census tract data will be compared to identify how the North End has changed in terms of its socioeconomic status and demographics during the thirteen-year period. Seeing as the Canadian federal government replaced the 2011 long-form Census with the voluntary National Household Survey, census tract data from 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021 will be compared to show a general long-term change in demographics to account for population and variable discrepancies. Specifically, the variables that will be compared in all four years are total population and median total income. Comparisons between the 2006, 2016, and 2021 census will include prevalence of low income based on the low-income measure and occupied private dwellings by structural type of dwelling.

Moreover, it is important to highlight that retailers are not directly indicative of changing the social makeup of a neighbourhood. Therefore, this thesis will not argue that the development of retail and commercial change due to gentrification is a direct causation to changes in the socioeconomic makeup of a neighbourhood. Instead, any demographic changes within the census tract will merely be correlated to the changes found in the commercial streetscape of the North End within the results and discussion chapters of this thesis.

3.2.3 Supplemental Data

Site visits and local knowledge to develop a landscape assessment will also be used to form a deeper understanding of the current retail landscape. Vacancies in developments will be sought out to determine if properties are being used to their full extent, and the movement of stores from previous locations to the North End will also be examined. Online sources including Yellow Pages, Yelp, Map Quest, and The Coast were used to form a more cohesive understanding on the commercial change of the neighbourhood, and they were especially helpful for analysing the retail landscape in 2009, as they helped decipher the average price range and consequent target market that they catered to. Moreover, data was acquired from the Halifax Regional Municipality Open Data Catalogue to create maps on ArcGIS Pro. Specifically, the shapefiles that were downloaded from the catalogue were Zoning Boundaries, Street Centrelines, and Census 2021 Census Tracts.

3.3 Methods Employed

3.3.1 Classification of Establishments

In order to find the establishments, Street View imagery was used to travel through each of the selected streets in both years of study. Beginning with the 2022 imagery, movement along the street was paused at each frame and every storefront within view – whether occupied or vacant – was taken note of on an excel spreadsheet. Each establishment was first categorized by making note of its name, address, general service offered, and target market. For the general service offered category, establishments were classified as being one of the following seven options: business, community, entertainment, food and beverage, non-profit, retail, or service. In brief, companies that do not provide direct services to customers such as radio stations and

television networks were classified as 'business', public facilities and religious or cultural associations were classified as 'community', recreational establishments were classified as 'entertainment', any establishment associated with the sale of food such as restaurants, bars, and cafés were classified as 'food and beverage', non-profit organizations were classified as 'non-profit', any establishment selling goods, for instance fashion boutiques, pharmacies, and furniture stores were classified as 'retail', and for-profit organizations that provide services such as architecture firms and hair salons were classified as 'service'.

The target market category had five classfications: high socioeconomic status (HSES), middle socioeconomic status (MSES), low socioeconomic status (LSES), mass market, and niche market. Classifying establishments by their target market involved a substantial amount of subjective interpretation. Since comparing the average price of commodities sold at each establishment was not enough to determine a target market, the commodities themselves were taken into account when classifying this category. For instance, a café that charges $8 for a latte is most likely attracting a higher-income demographic than a diner that offers a $10 breakfast menu. Furthermore, the mass market category was applied to establishments used regularly by the general public, such as convenience stores and gas stations, while the mass niche category was applied to establishments targeted to a specific market, such as cultural associations and comic bookstores. Prices were verified by analysing the establishment's website and online customer reviews.

Next, the size of each establishment was visually classified as being small, medium, or large, and the structure in which each establishment resides was categorized by its general age, maintenance level, and whether it stands alone or is part of a larger development. Establishments in structures that were estimated to be built within the last 20 years were classified as new build,

establishments in structures that appeared to be built before 1930 were classified as old build, and the middle build classification was used for establishments in structures that were approximately built between the years 1930 and 2000. It is important to note that structural ages were solely evaluated based on estimation, not by archival work. Moreover, miscellaneous variables such as whether the establishment is local or a franchise, unoccupied, has off-street parking, has cultural ties, or advertises political affiliations were also collected.

Lastly, each establishment was categorized on whether it is considered to be a hipster establishment. Hubbard (2016) states that hipsters are "…ambivalent figure[s], urban yet pitched against the values of the consumer society, dismissive of fashions but also highly fashionable" (p. 2). In other words, hipsters are individuals who have enough disposable income to purchase high-end goods that are progressive and rich in cultural capital but separate them from those with a lower socioeconomic status. Therefore, organic and vegan stores, up-scale coffee shops and bars, consignment shops, and any establishment related to the arts, such as art galleries and art collectives were classified as being hipster establishments.

The previously mentioned categories were recorded on two Excel spreadsheets, one for 2009 and another for 2022. A total of 243 establishments were collected in the 2009 sample, while 255 establishments were collected in the 2022 sample. It is important to note that while criteria were determined to make the categorization and analysis of the retail establishments as objective as possible, subjective interpretations were still used in the classification process. However, as Burnett (2014) states, subjectivity and local knowledge can at times be more accurate than estimations based on variables such as price point.

3.3.2 Quantifying Change

ArcGIS Pro version 2.9 was used to create the maps for this thesis. Before the maps could be created, the records stored in Excel were geocoded by imputing each address into the 'Geocode Addresses' tool. Two output Shapefiles, one for the 2009 addresses and another for the 2022 addresses, were created from this process. These Shapefiles were later uploaded into a separate ArcGIS project where the 'Select by Attribute' tool and 'Create Layer from Selected Features' tool were used to separate the data and create specific layers that contained relevant information for each map. Further quantitative analysis included the creation of tables that demonstrate both the numerical and percentage change between the variables collected in the Excel spreadsheets.

3.4 Study Limitations

While Google Street View proved to be a powerful research tool for studying landscape change over time, various limitations were encountered. To begin, imagery years are not consistent in the software, with years variating approximately plus or minus two years while traveling throughout the study area. Agricola Street proved to be a specifically difficult location to analyze, as imagery years abruptly changed dramatically by block, sometimes being up to four years in difference of each other. This limited my ability to study the changes in the landscape in a consistent way, as it allowed the accidental collection of out-dated establishments to occur. To lessen errors, local knowledge was used to add missing stores when the imagery was dated. For instance, the latest imagery available at the end of Agricola Street dates all the way back to 2018. Here, it is clear to a local that the construction of Café Lara is at its beginning stages, so the café was added to the spreadsheet even though it was not yet present in the imagery.

The image quality of Google Street View was at times not high enough to identify small-scale features, especially when travelling through the 2009 imagery. Not being able to read certain signages proved it difficult to analyse and categorize the stores in the most objective way possible, further limiting the ability to accurately measure changes in the landscape. Similarly, many establishments classified as vacant were marked as 'unknown', due to low quality imagery making it difficult to assess whether the location was still in business, a private property, or certainly vacant. Therefore, it is important to state that some stores in the landscape may not be accounted for in the data.

As previously mentioned, categories such as target market, hipster, and structural age were largely based on subjective interpretations. Even though it was important to maintain an unbiased outlook when classifying establishments, it should be mentioned that subconscious biases and preconceptions could have influenced the collection of data. This indicates that there could be ambiguities present in the data classification, which could lead to findings that do not accurately represent the establishments in the study.

CHAPTER 4

Results

4.1 Spatial Trends in the Commercial Landscape

In total, 243 businesses were identified in 2009 and 255 locations were identified in 2022. Of the 243 locations in 2009, 176 establishments were occupied, and in 2022, 229 establishments of the total 255 locations were found to be occupied; this means that there was a 30% increase in occupied establishments during the study period. Unoccupied locations in both years included empty lots, parking lots, vacancies, and construction sites. While the number of commercial establishments has increased over the course of the thirteen-year period, the general location of commercial clusters has remained the same (Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2). In both years, establishments tend to concentrate in the southern-most end of Gottingen Street, the intersection of Young Street and Kaye Street near the Hydrostone Park, Agricola Street after Macara Street, and a section of Robie Street that is bounded by Almon Street and North Street. Despite the concentration of businesses in these areas, outliers are present throughout the rest of the study area in similar locations in both years, showing that the retail landscape has been resistant to geographic change.

A significant increase in commercial clusters can be seen in areas where newly built structures are located (Figure 4.3). The most notable increase is on Gottingen Street, between Uniacke Street and Cunard Street. This section of the street is home to Vélo Apartments, an up-scale, mixed-use apartment complex that contains local shops on its main floor. Other evident clusters can be found in newly built mixed-use structures across the study area, such as on Almon

Street, which has two new developments, and on Kaye Street before Isleville Street, where the Garden Stone Place development is located. The number of establishments located in newly built structures was found to have increased by 1,020% during the timeline of this thesis, while middle build and old build structures decreased by 13% and 7% respectively (Table 4.1). Therefore, the commercial clusters in 2022 were found to be predominantly located within new build structures classified as larger developments.

As previously noted, these larger developments are often high-end, mixed-use apartment and condominium buildings that contain consumption spaces on the bottom floor. Larger developments were found have increased by 192% in the commercial landscape between 2009 and 2022 (Table 4.2). Thus, it could be interpreted that larger developments are replacing stand-alone structures seeing as the latter decreased by 11% over the course of the thirteen years. While most of the commercial structures in the landscape in both years have resided within middle-aged, stand-alone structures, it is evident that the North End is increasingly accommodating new multi-use developments, which have altered the physical cohesion of the streetscape.

Figure 4.1 Commercial Establishments in 2009

Figure 4.2 Commercial Establishments in 2022

Figure 4.3 Establishments in Newly Built Structures in 2022

Table 4.1 Age of Structure

Age of Structure	2009	% of Total	2022	% of Total
New Build	5	(2%)	56	(23%)
Middle Build	167	(78%)	145	(61%)
Old Build	41	(19%)	38	(16%)
Total	213	(100%)	239	(100%)

Table 4.2 Type of Structure

Type of Structure	2009	% of Total	2022	% of Total
Larger Development	24	(11%)	70	(29%)
Stand-Alone	189	(89%)	169	(71%)
Total	213	(100%)	239	(100%)

4.2 Variations in the Market

Over the study period, the socioeconomic markets targeted by the retail landscape have witnessed notable change (Table 4.3). The percentage of establishments in the North End that target individuals with High Socioeconomic Status (HSES) increased by 188% during the study period, while the percentage of establishments targeted toward individuals with Low Socioeconomic Status (LSES) decreased by 17%. Moreover, mass market establishments in the landscape decreased by 3% within the time frame. It is remarkable to see the increase of HSES establishments in the landscape between 2009 and 2022. A dramatic change in the markets could suggest an alteration of the general services provided by establishments as well. However, the percentage of business, community, entertainment, and non-profit establishments have remained relatively equal over both years. Collectively, they made up 14% of their respective retail landscape in 2009 and 13% in 2022 (Table 4.4). More evident fluctuations are evident in retail, service, and food and beverage establishments. The amount of retail establishments was found to increase by 9% in 2022, while service and food and beverage notably increased by 39% and 60% respectively. In both 2009 and 2022, these three establishment types make up over 80% of their respective retail landscapes.

As previously mentioned, hipsters are individuals who aim to differentiate themselves from the middle class, causing them to often be attracted to independent or alternative commercial establishments that align with their countercultural sensibilities. As described in Chapter Three, hipster stores in the North End's commercial landscape were identified by subjectively making note of locations that exude the anti-establishment sentiment that hipsters are attracted to. As shown in Table 4.5, hipster establishments increased by a noteworthy 260% in the North End during the thirteen-year period, indicating that local, organic, and artisanal stores

have increasingly been infiltrating the area. Notably, local establishments have remained

dominant in the landscape, making up 79% of all stores in 2009 and 81% in 2022 (Table 4.6).

This trend suggests that the North End is in the third stage of gentrification, with the retail

landscape containing stores with an upscale yet bohemian character that attract a high

concentration of young, middle-class professionals (Clay, 1979). A more in-depth analysis of this

phase will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Table 4.3 Target Markets by Socioeconomic Status

Target Market	2009	% of Total	2022	% of Total
HSES	26	(15%)	75	(33%)
MSES	30	(17%)	33	(15%)
LSES	12	(7%)	10	(4%)
Mass Market	61	(35%)	59	(26%)
Niche Market	43	(25%)	47	(21%)
Total	172	(100%)	224	(100%)

Table 4.4 General Services Offered

General Service	2009	% of Total	2022	% of Total
Business	4	(2%)	4	(2%)
Community	6	(3%)	7	(3%)
Entertainment	6	(3%)	7	(3%)
Food and Beverage	38	(22%)	61	(27%)
Non-Profit	11	(6%)	12	(5%)
Retail	55	(31%)	60	(26%)
Service	56	(32%)	78	(34%)
Total	176	(100%)	229	(100%)

Table 4.5 Hipsters

Hipster Shops	2009	% of Total	2022	% of Total
Yes	20	(11%)	72	(31%)
No	156	(89%)	157	(69%)
Total	176	(100%)	229	(100%)

Table 4.6 Local vs. Franchise Establishments

Establishment Type	2009	% of Total	2022	% of Total
Local	139	(79%)	186	(81%)
Franchise	37	(21%)	43	(19%)
Total	176	(100%)	229	(100%)

4.3 Correlation Between Maintenance and Structural Age

As previously noted, the commercial landscape is mainly composed of middle-aged structures in 2009 and 2022. Thus, it is of no surprise that they also host the majority of all establishment types in both years (Table 4.7). In both years, new build structures primarily consist of retail and service establishments. However, a notable increase in the number of establishments within new build structures is observed in 2022, with 5% of retail and 4% of service establishments being located in new builds in 2009, and 28% of retail and 27% of service establishments being located in new builds in 2022. A notable contrast between the study years is the type of structures in which hipster establishments tend to be located in. In 2009, 35% of stores classified as hipster were located in old builds, 65% were located in middle builds, and 0% were located in new builds. Thirteen years later, 19% of hipster stores occupy old builds, 43% occupy middle builds, and 38% occupy new builds. It is clear that in 2022, new build structures

have become more enticing to hipster establishments – a finding that is somewhat surprising given the anti-mainstream identity of the subculture.

Moreover, the level of maintenance of the streetscape was also found to have changed over the course of the thirteen-year period. It was noted that establishments with high maintenance increased by 80% in 2022, while establishments with medium and low maintenance decreased by 16% and 60% respectively (Table 4.8). In Chapter Five, discussion surrounding these findings suggests that the introduction of new high-end developments into the landscape has motivated surrounding stores to invest more time and resources into their maintenance.

Table 4.7 General Service Type by Structural Age

Type	2009 Structure Age						2022 Structure Age					
	Old		Middle		New		Old		Middle		New	
Business	1	(25%)	3	(75%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	4	(100%)	0	(0%)
Community	2	(33%)	4	(67%)	0	(0%)	2	(29%)	4	(57%)	1	(14%)
Entertainment	1	(17%)	5	(83%)	0	(0%)	3	(43%)	4	(57%)	0	(0%)
Food and Beverage	6	(16%)	32	(84%)	0	(0%)	9	(15%)	37	(61%)	15	(25%)
Non-Profit	3	(27%)	8	(72%)	0	(0%)	2	(17%)	8	(67%)	2	(17%)
Retail	10	(18%)	42	(76%)	3	(5%)	9	(15%)	34	(57%)	17	(28%)
Service	8	(14%)	46	(82%)	2	(4%)	13	(17%)	44	(56%)	21	(27%)
Hipster	7	(35%)	13	(65%)	0	(0%)	14	(19%)	31	(43%)	27	(38%)

Table 4.8 Maintenance

Maintenance Level	2009	% of Total	2022	% of Total
High	74	(35%)	133	(56%)
Medium	114	(54%)	96	(40%)
Low	25	(12%)	10	(4%)
Total	213	(100%)	239	(100%)

4.4 Unoccupied Space and Miscellaneous Categories

Unoccupied spaces noticeably decreased during the study period (Figure 4.4). Ten empty lots were replaced by new developments, five under construction sites finished construction, and eleven vacant locations became occupied by running businesses (Table 4.9). Further, the miscellaneous categories collected during the study were found to have altered between 2009 and 2022. The number of stores with ethnic and/or remained equal in both years, while political activism signage increased by 567%, and off-street parking decreased by 11% (Table 4.10).

Figure 4.4 Unoccupied Spaces: 2009 vs. 2022

Table 4.9 Unoccupied Space by Type

Unoccupied Space	2009	2022
Empty Lot	14	4
Parking Lot	6	7
Under Construction	10	5
Vacant	20	9

Table 4.10 Miscellaneous Categories

Miscellaneous Categories	*2009*	*% of Total*	*2022*	*% of Total*
Ethnic/Cultural Stores	16	(9%)	16	(7%)
Political Activism	3	(2%)	20	(9%)
Off-Street Parking	55	(31%)	49	(21%)
Total	176	(100%)	229	(100%)

4.5 Census Tract Changes

Changes in census tracts 10.00, 20.00, and 21.00 were analyzed seeing as they covered the extent of the study area (Figure 4.5). By examining the census tract changes over the last fifteen years, it is clear that the demographics have altered during the study period. Some findings were expected, such as the total population increasing. It is also of no surprise that the number of people living in apartments with less than five and five or more stories increased, due to the fact that the HRM is prioritizing up-zoning and densification in the inner city (Table 4.14).

The median total income in the census tracts seems to have increased at roughly the same rate every five years, while the prevalence of low income in the population oscillated, sometimes increasing and other times decreasing. However, when comparing the 2006 census to the 2021 census, it is clear that the percentage of the population with low-income status decreased. Moreover, the number of people living in single-detached, semi-detached, and row homes seem to have remained relatively equal throughout 2006, 2011, and 2021. Having said that, it is important to remember that these numbers have stayed the same even though the population has increased. Therefore, in retrospect, the number of people living in these dwellings have actually decreased.

Figure 4.5 Census Tracts
Data obtained from Halifax Open Data, Census 2021 Census Tracts (2023).

Table 4.11 2006 Census

Census Tract	Total Population	Median Total Income ($)	Prevalence Low Income (%)	Single-Detached Home	Semi-Detached Home	Row House	Apartment: Less than Five Storeys	Apartment: Five or More Storeys
10.00	4699	15564	32.60	115	160	410	735	1000
20.00	2672	24015	25.30	205	45	45	475	5
21.00	3090	21596	24.10	430	20	250	445	110

Table 4.12 2011 Census

Census Tract	Total Population	Median Total Income ($)	Prevalence Low Income (%)	Single-Detached Home	Semi-Detached Home	Row House	Apartment: Less than Five Storeys	Apartment: Five or More Storeys
10.00	5029	17564	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
20.00	2665	26970	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
21.00	3325	24764	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 4.13 2016 Census

Census Tract	Total Population	Median Total Income ($)	Prevalence Low Income (%)	Single-Detached Home	Semi-Detached Home	Row House	Apartment: Less than Five Storeys	Apartment: Five or More Storeys
10.00	5036	23844	36.70	105	135	430	845	1160
20.00	2562	31317	17.80	205	35	45	460	75
21.00	3314	34160	25.40	425	25	255	485	200

Table 4.14 2021 Census

Census Tract	Total Population	Median Total Income ($)	Prevalence Low Income (%)	Single-Detached Home	Semi-Detached Home	Row House	Apartment: Less than Five Storeys	Apartment: Five or More Storeys
10.00	6019	32000	28.70	115	145	450	940	1420
20.00	3602	44000	14.80	200	45	40	500	870
21.00	3544	40800	19.60	435	30	250	500	220

4.6 Increasing Density Through the HRM Centre Plan

As previously mentioned in Chapter Three, the HRM's Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy aids in decision-making about future development in the City of Halifax (HRM, 2022). For this thesis, three urban structure designations are of interest: Centre Designation (CEN-1 and CEN-2), Corridor Designation (CORR), and Higher-Order Residential Designation (HR-1 and HR-2), since they encourage the development of mixed-use, low-, mid-, and high-rise buildings. Using ArcGIS Pro, these three zoning designations were isolated and compared to the new build establishments in the study area (Figure 4.5). By studying the map below, it is clear that most new build establishments lie in CORR and CEN-2 zones while fewer are located in CEN-1 and HR-1 zones. CORR and CEN-2 zones allow a wide mix of uses, including residential, office, retail, personal service, restaurant, and institutional uses (HRM, 2022). However, their difference lies in their approved sizes. Corridor zones connect Centre and Higher-Order Residential areas and permit the development of low- to mid-rise buildings (HRM, 2022). On the other hand, Centre zones permit the development of larger-scale development in the form of mid- and high-rise buildings in areas deemed appropriate for increased density – often spaces that are separated from low-density areas (HRM, 2022). While encouraging densification through the construction of mixed-use infrastructure has numerous social, economic, and environmental benefits, it seems as though the City of Halifax is prioritizing the development of high-end apartment buildings with expensive residential and commercial rents, rather than more affordable options. The effect that these designations have had on the retail landscape in the North End will be explored and discussed further in Chapter Five.
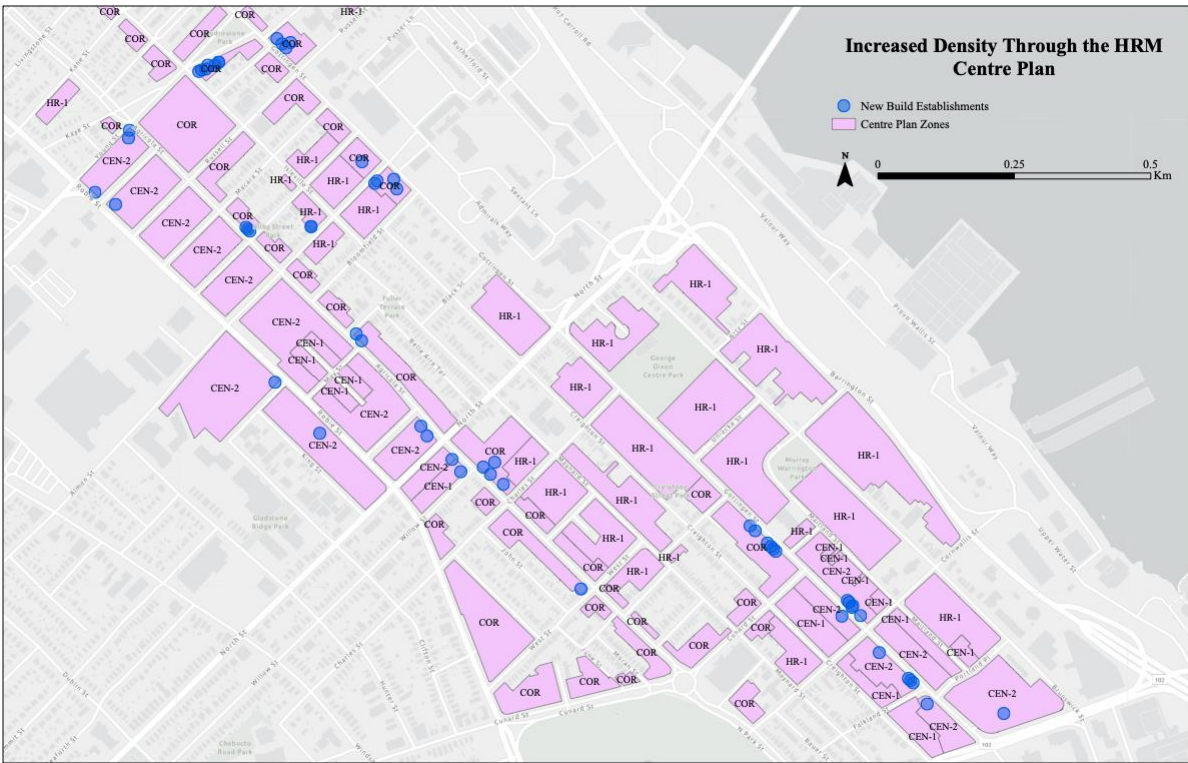
Figure 4.6 New Build Establishments vs. Centre Plan Designations
Contains data acquired from Halifax Open Data, Zoning Boundaries layer (2023).

4.7 The Movement of Stores

Gentrification is often seen as solely an inner-neighbourhood problem, when in fact, that is not the case. In terms of retail gentrification, the movement of businesses from a city's downtown to a gentrifying neighbourhood can significantly impact the wider city. While quantitatively assessing business movement within the wider city has proven to be out of the scope of this thesis, preliminary qualitative research in the form of local knowledge and content analysis has shown that spatial relocation has occurred. Businesses have relocated from the downtown core as the desirability of the North End has increased. Specifically, the Seahorse, Biscuit General Store, Attica Furnishings, Kew Furniture, and the Foggy Goggle have all relocated to the North End from the downtown core at some point during the study period.

While the introduction of these stores revitalizes the neighbourhood by heightening economic activity and creating new job opportunities, the process of gentrification could be accelerated by attracting a wealthier demographic of residents to shop there, consequently pushing out incumbent residents and store owners that are no longer able to afford the prices of the changing retail landscape. Moreover, losing commercial establishments in the downtown core could lead to urban decay. In the case of Halifax, empty storefronts, office buildings, and deteriorating infrastructure can be seen scattered throughout the downtown streetscape. For instance, Attica Furnishings moved from Barrington Street to Robie Street in 2016, after 10 years of being downtown (Saunders, 2016). Its previous location, 1566 Barrington Street, is a large, fully restored heritage building with much potential. However, it remains empty to this day, having only housed pop-up shops and temporary stores over the years. If percommercial spaces continue moving into gentrified neighbourhoods, downtown Halifax will soon be a ghost town. Therefore, planning policies are required in order to distribute the benefits of development in such a way that is even and fair across the city.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

5.1 Stage of Gentrification

The academic literature highlights gentrification as having four stages, or "waves" (Clay, 1979; Lees et al., 2008). The first two stages are characterized as the increased movement of pioneer gentrifiers who renovate vacant homes for their own use through sweat equity. Once enough attention has been directed toward the neighbourhood, a more prominent form of urban renewal begins, classified as the third stage of gentrification. People who see housing as an investment move in, such as developers and the new middle-class, which causes physical changes in the landscape to become more visible and prices to escalate rapidly (Clay, 1979). As reported in Chapter Four, the amount of redevelopment in the North End has risen substantially throughout the study period, mostly in the form of high-rise, mixed-use apartment and condominium complexes that are often out of financial reach for incumbent residents – a key characteristic of the third stage of gentrification. Further evidence that the North End is in the third stage of gentrification can be attributed to changes in the census tracts. As shown in Chapter Four, the number of people living in multi-unit housing has increased, further highlighting the addition of new developments into the landscape. Moreover, the median income has risen steadily over the years, showing that people with a higher income bracket have moved in into the area.

Although the number of local establishments in the landscape have increased and franchises have remained the minority over the last thirteen years, high-end, independently owned stores aimed toward people with a higher socioeconomic status, such as fashion boutiques

and specialty doughnut shops, are growing at a fast rate and displacing small-scale "mom and pop" stores that serve a lower socioeconomic or mass market demographic. Independent coffee shops, restaurants, bars, and boutiques are popular commercial spaces for the typical gentrifier, seeing as they counter a mainstream and corporate retail culture and promote an illusion of being distinctive and sophisticated. It is here where it is important to remember the process of gentrification and the current stage that the North End is in. While the neighbourhood is in its third stage of gentrification, with hipsters and young professionals enjoying the progressive identity and perception of the area, as private interests increase, the fourth stage of gentrification will likely soon commence. In this fourth wave, a higher proportion of big-businesses and developers will move in, promoting the addition of popular and recognized franchises into the landscape. This will alter the bohemian neighbourhood identity that third wave gentrifiers created, causing the retail landscape to become somewhat mainstream and lessen its individuality within the city.

5.2 Hipsters in New Builds

Contrasting the idea that hipster stores exude a sense of originality and differentiation, establishments classified as hipster were found to often be located in newly built high-rise developments, rather than old or middle build structures. Moving to high-end locations indicates that 'hipster' is somewhat of a shallow term, seeing as the areas in which they primarily locate counters their alternative and bohemian nature. This phenomenon could be the result of a variety of factors. On one hand, store owners could be attracted to spaces that are aesthetically pleasing and have lower maintenance responsibilities than older options. Alternatively, their choice to be located in new high-rise apartment buildings could be attributed to the convenience of reaching

the demographic that lives on the upper floors, often being a more affluent market with a higher socioeconomic status.

Analysis in Chapter Four revealed that the city of Halifax is up-zoning many areas in the North End to promote densification and accommodate growth by enabling the development of low- to high-rise buildings that offer multi-unit dwellings on the upper floors and commercial opportunities on the ground floor. By extrapolating from the current trends observed in this area, mass implementation of this type of development into the landscape will result in few options for new establishments to set up shop, and only those able to afford their corresponding lease rents will be able to enter the commercial landscape. This will further contribute to and exacerbate both the spatial homogeneity and gentrification of the neighbourhood.

5.3 Altering the Target Market

General service types in the retail landscape have remained relatively equal throughout the study period, while the economic markets being targeted by the establishments have noticeably altered. As displayed in Chapter Four, commercial establishments that target those with a higher socioeconomic status increased substantially, suggesting that the neighbourhood as a whole has become a desirable location for upscale businesses to settle. This heightened addition has caused expensive stores to not only surpass the amount of low socioeconomic and middle socioeconomic shops, but also mass-market establishments. The commercial affordability of the North End is therefore dwindling, suggesting that if this trend continues, cost-effective establishments could be completely eradicated from the landscape.

Although rental costs were not analysed in this study, Halifax's current rental affordability crisis is widely accepted and discussed by the general public. Therefore, it is argued

that evidence of Neil Smith's (1979) rent gap theory can be found in the North End's retail landscape. By comparing the target markets, it can be deduced that the neighbourhoods previously low ground rents were taken advantage of to maximize the area's economic potential. As the desirability of the neighbourhood increased, more high-end stores appeared in the landscape, with a notable number of new establishments appearing as this thesis is being written. Elevated rental prices for commercial lots have allowed upmarket stores to settle into the area and have discouraged the addition of locally owned businesses that may not have sufficient financial resources. Suppressing the amount of affordable goods and services in the area creates barriers for long-term, low-income residents to access proper merchandise and commodities, giving low-income residents an additional burden to be concerned about.

5.4 Neighbourhood Identity

Physical alterations within the study area have contributed to changes in its public perception. The general maintenance of the streetscape increased between 2009 and 2022, indicating that stores with sufficient funds to keep-up with maintenance costs have moved into the neighbourhood while stores with lower maintenance have either increased their maintenance to keep up with the changing landscape or have moved out of the area completely. Pressure from the addition of pristine, new, mixed-use developments could be influencing store owners to keep up with the aesthetics of their establishments to entice residents and tourists into shopping at their location. This trend can be understood as a positive feedback loop, in which the visual enhancement of a business is seen to entice a wider clientele, causing neighbouring businesses to follow the trend, thus raising the level of perceived cleanliness of the area.

Redevelopment has also altered the North End's sense of place. To put this into perspective, we will take a look at the Vélo Apartments development on Gottingen Street, which stands directly in front of the Uniacke Square public housing development. It is hard to ignore the physical and social juxtaposition of these two developments as one walks along this part of the neighbourhood, with the street acting as an invisible boundary separating two drastically different ways of life (Figure 5.1). Similar yet less dramatic examples are present in other areas where new mixed-use complexes have been developed, such as the Brewery Park Hotel on Agricola being adjacent to a vacant and neglected building. The staggering contrast between new buildings and the established surroundings of the North End suggests that little to no consideration is being taken to promote their architectural integration into the neighbourhood, exacerbating a loss of sense of place within the area.

Furthermore, vacancies have notably decreased between 2009 and 2022, indicating that the development of sumptuous infrastructure and their corresponding establishments have increased the commercial demand of the North End. This has caused the public perception of the neighbourhood to change from an area to be feared and stigmatized, to now being regarded as a desirable, progressive, and affluent location (Roth and Grant, 2015). Therefore, the gentrification of retail in the North End has correlated with a perceived change to the identity of the area, a change that is not only visible, but also felt.

Figure 5.1 Photograph of Gottingen Street
Vélo Apartments on the left side of the image and Uniacke Square on the right side. Taken by author on November 16, 2022.

5.5 Policy Implications and Recommendations

Encouraging densification through the construction of mixed-use infrastructure is typically seen as good city planning to manage urban growth. Creating tall and compact structures that concentrate people and businesses in smaller areas creates more opportunities for residents to access goods and services, successively reducing the need for automobiles, being more efficient in terms of infrastructure provisioning, increasing economic potential, and promoting social interactions. However, I argue that the way in which the City of Halifax is implementing densification in the North End is more harmful than it is beneficial. Areas

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designated as Centre or Corridor in the HRM Regional Centre Plan are undergoing construction to fit their corresponding requirements, as they are zones that permit both high- and low-density mixed-use developments. As this thesis has shown, the infrastructure being introduced into the landscape are largely high-end apartment buildings with expensive residential and commercial rents rather than more affordable options. Both the HRM and Province of Nova Scotia's have yet to effectively address solutions to the rising cost of living in the area, demonstrating that the municipal and provincial governments are not only enabling, but also promoting gentrification.

The Regional Centre Plan does include information that shows support in favour of affordable housing by offering incentives such as bonus or incentive zoning, lowering parking requirements, allowing the repurposing of heritage properties, and fostering support for partnerships (HRM, 2022). Incentive or bonus zoning apply to developments in the Downtown, Centre, Corridor, and Higher-Order Residential designations that exceed a total floor area of 2,000 square meters and give developers more development rights in exchange for offering public benefits, where at least 60% of the developer's money-in-lieu payments will go towards affordable housing. While this is a step in the right direction, there is no indication of what is being done to protect small, long-standing businesses within the North End. The data in this thesis has shown that there are no establishments targeted towards individuals with a lower socio-economic status in any of the new middle- and high- rise developments, proving that such retailers are unable to pay the leasing rents of the changing streetscape. Because of this, government officials should be aware that the new development being promoted by up-zoning fosters a space for retail gentrification.

To mitigate the effects of retail gentrification, planners should consider implementing zoning regulations that promote the establishment of affordable retail options. Providing

subsidies or mandating rent controlled commercial spaces by requiring a certain percentage of storefronts in the North End to be specifically set aside for affordable businesses can ensure that all residents will have access to a broad range of essential goods and services, regardless of their income. Seeing as the implementation of inclusionary zoning and rent control is handled at the provincial level, it is imperative that the province begins taking those into consideration. However, it is recognized that this recommendation is easier said than done. Difficulties surrounding how to effectively establish parameters on what exactly constitutes an affordable business may arise. Additionally, lowering commercial space rents in new developments could also impact residential rents, seeing as a Halifax developer has stated that the bonus or incentive zoning being implemented by the city causes other non-affordable units in a building to have a higher price than usual to make up for development costs (Montague, 2021).

Other solutions include creating areas that promote the addition of informal retail options into the urban landscape. Spaces with little to no rent costs that allow recurring flea markets, farmers markets, and food truck events to occur lower the barriers for affordable businesses to participate in the local economy. Similarly, working alongside community land trusts such as the Halifax Affordable Housing Community Land Trust, planners can acquire and develop retail spaces in the North End while ensuring that they remain affordable and accessible to residents of all incomes. Therefore, when implemented and managed correctly, densification and redevelopment can lead to the formation of sustainable, equitable, and livable communities.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Findings

Between 2009 and 2022, retail gentrification in the North End of Halifax has been found to be driven primarily by the redevelopment of the neighbourhood, specifically through the introduction of new, mid- to high-rise, mixed-use buildings. Development of this nature is correlated with the rising unaffordability of commerce in the neighbourhood, with establishments increasingly prioritizing the higher-income demographic. In the same way, the median income of the area has risen over the years, showing that a more affluent population has moved in alongside up-scale stores. With a higher amount of the population locating in multi-storey structures, it can be deduced that this new demographic is moving into said dwellings, while the low-income population remains living in single- or semi-attached homes.

Commercial change over the thirteen-year period has altered the identity and sense of place of the neighbourhood. Once being a predominantly low-income commercial area that was stigmatized by the rest of the city, today it is the new "it" location. The North End is the place to be for young folks, artists, and professionals. It is a neighbourhood saturated with upscale bohemian and alternative restaurants, bars, cafés, and boutiques. Alternatively, homeless shelters, public housing units, and food banks remain scattered across the neighbourhood, which begs the question: do the people that require those services have affordable retail options to acquire goods and services? As this thesis has proven, the answer is not many. Therefore, if the trends identified in Chapter Four and Five continue, affordable retail options will soon cease to exist in the North

End. It is estimated that the North End neighbourhood will begin its transition into the fourth stage of gentrification in the coming years, as big corporations notice and become enticed by the economic value of the area. This new wave will cause the North End to experience yet another change to its identity. Its hip, anti-establishment culture will be overtaken by chain businesses and mainstream consumers.

6.2 Subjectivity in the Study

As it has been noted, establishments in this study were at times classified through subjective interpretations. While categories such as general service offered and whether the establishment was local or a franchise were able to be classified objectively, other categories like target market, whether the establishment is 'hipster', and structural age were largely classified subjectively. Even though subjective interpretations can limit research, I argue that they can also provide a valuable perspective in certain contexts, proving especially useful in the social sciences. Gentrification is a complex phenomenon, and objective measures can often overlook the nuances and complexities of the human experience. Thus, this study could not have been possible without subjectivity, as it allowed me to develop more insightful analyses to my findings.

6.3 Future Research

Today, cranes and construction equipment can be seen from nearly every corner of the North End. Redevelopment is at an all-time high, and Robie Street in particular is witnessing a great deal of it. Thus, future research should consider studying the effect that new developments have on the commercial makeup of the neighbourhood once all construction has terminated.

Furthermore, recreations of this study should consider using a greater sample size. Analysing the commercial change of a neighbourhood with a higher number of streets could increase the study's validity and reduce the risk of sampling errors such as the ones outlined in Chapter Three. Finally, conducting a higher-level quantitative study on the spatial movement of stores from central business districts to gentrifying neighbourhoods and its consequent effects could prove valuable for swaying policy makers into lessening retail gentrification in the inner city.

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