

Chapter 9

The Impact of Immigrant Entrepreneurship on City Building: Learning from Toronto



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Abstract Toronto's ethnic retail clusters have not only sprouted across the inner city but have also speckled suburban landscapes. Driven by the increasing settlement of contemporary immigrants in the suburbs, ethnic businesses and ethnic economies have flourished and become the catalyst for neighborhood change and suburban retrofitting. Research has demonstrated that the development of immigrant entrepreneurship has contributed to social cohesion and economic vitality. What remains unexplored is the role of ethnic businesses in influencing space, (re)defining place, and (re)shaping community. Furthermore, little is known about how ethnic entrepreneurs interact with other key players in city- and community-building processes and affect policy development, or vice versa. This chapter explores eight urban ethnic enclaves in the inner city of Toronto based on existing studies and eight Chinese and South Asian retail clusters in Toronto's suburbs through extensive field research and interviews and surveys with key informants. Case studies reveal the role of ethnic entrepreneurs as city builders, and also how public policy and institutional structure promote or impede the development of ethnic entrepreneurship. The findings also point to important differences in urban and suburban settings such as built forms, physical constraints, and municipal governance and policy frameworks that may affect the interactions among various key players and spaces.

Keywords Immigrant entrepreneurship · City building · Urban ethnic enclaves · Suburban ethnic retail clusters · Toronto

9.1 Introduction

Toronto is a world-renowned multicultural city, with half of its population born outside of Canada and speaking more than 140 languages. The city's ethnocultural diversity is most noticeable in its eclectic collection of ethnic retail clusters that have not only sprouted across the inner city in such forms as Chinatown, Little

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Italy, Greektown, Little India, Little Portugal, but have also speckled the suburban landscapes. Driven by the increasing settlement of contemporary immigrants in the suburbs, ethnic businesses and ethnic economies have flourished and become the catalyst for neighborhood change and suburban retrofitting.

An emerging body of literature has illustrated this migration-driven phenomenon in both the inner city of Toronto and its outer suburbs, mainly focusing on issues related to the social and economic outcomes of ethnic entrepreneurship (Fong et al. 2007; Hackworth and Rekers 2005; Luk and Phan 2005; Qadeer 1999; Teixeira 2007). The development of immigrant entrepreneurship is known to have contributed to social cohesion and economic vitality. What remains unexplored is the role of ethnic businesses in influencing space, (re)defining place, and (re)shaping community. The spatial and physical outcomes of ethnic businesses are prolific as ethnic entrepreneurs are becoming active city builders. They are transforming existing neighborhoods by injecting economic vitality and innovation, diversifying cultural identities, and creating new social and physical spaces despite facing various challenges such as market conditions, rigid regulations, and racial tensions (Linovski 2012; Pitter and Lorinc 2016; Schmiz 2019; Zhuang 2015, 2016, 2017a, b, 2019; Zhuang and Chen 2017). Furthermore, the mixed embeddedness entrepreneurship model suggests that ethnic entrepreneurship is embedded within a wider politico-institutional context that involves various players such as policymakers and other city builders and promoters (Kloosterman and Rath 2018). However, it is not yet clear how ethnic entrepreneurs interact with these key players in city- and community-building processes, especially with city planners involved in urban development and planning policy.

Using the Toronto region as a laboratory, I explore eight Chinese and South Asian retail clusters in Toronto's suburbs based on extensive field research, 77 interviews with key informants, and 81 shopper intercept surveys. I also critically review existing studies of eight urban ethnic enclaves consist of different ethnic groups in the inner city of Toronto, including my prior research to summarize key learning and identify research gaps. These case studies reveal the role of ethnic entrepreneurs as city builders and how planning policy and institutional structures promote or impede the development of ethnic entrepreneurship. The findings reveal important differences in urban and suburban settings in terms of built forms, physical constraints, and municipal governance and policy frameworks that may affect the interactions among various key players and spaces.

9.2 A Place-Based Approach to Understand Immigrant Entrepreneurship

The topic of immigrant and ethnic entrepreneurship has long engaged theoretical discourses, mainly with regard to non-spatial matters. However, research has not yet clarified the spatial and physical outcomes of ethnic entrepreneurship and ethnic economies and how they have influenced city development and vice versa (Kaplan

and Li 2006; Wang 2013; Zhuang 2017b, 2019). Scholars are becoming aware of the need to use a place-based approach to study ethnic entrepreneurship and clarify how entrepreneurs experience and adapt to the physical spaces in which they establish their businesses (Datel and Dingemans 2008; Liu et al. 2014; Huang and Liu 2019; Schuch and Wang 2015; Wang 2013). It has also become more important for municipalities, especially suburban ones, to consider how ethnic businesses and economies have spatially and physically transformed retail structure, affected municipal infrastructures and services, and created diverse needs for public spaces and community services.

To explore how ethnic entrepreneurs operationalize and participate in ‘places,’ Schuch and Wang (2015) developed a framework describing physical, cultural, social, economic, and political effects on ‘placemaking.’ They observed the positive effects of immigrant entrepreneurship on neighborhood revitalization, which led them to advocate for ‘place-based’ and ‘people-based’ revitalization planning strategies that recognize immigrant businesses as important local focal points while mobilizing these entrepreneurs as community leaders. Other scholars have suggested that business location, as well as features in the existing built environment, can aid the placemaking efforts of immigrant communities. Hume (2015) investigated the placemaking practices of Bosnian refugees in St. Louis, Missouri, and concluded that their success was in no small part due to the human-scale design of the neighborhood, and flexibility in terms of where businesses were located. These refugees settled in a working-class neighborhood with many abandoned homes, factories, and storefronts—and entrepreneurs had the flexibility to locate their businesses in close proximity to this residential neighborhood, ensuring Bosnian patrons who could not afford cars could still access the retail strip. Residents said the commercial district ‘felt like Sarajevo’ because it incorporates European-inspired conditions that favor walkable, accessible, and community-oriented design, in direct contrast to American car-oriented sprawl.

Ethnic retail places play important roles in the social, economic, and physical construct of local communities and neighborhoods. For co-ethnic community members, a well-established ethnic place provides cultural goods and services and ethnic resources but also serves as a cultural symbol to connect people with their heritage. For the community at large, a concentration of ethnic businesses can help revitalize and diversify the local economy, generate a new place identity, promote tourism development, and prompt governmental promotion and investment (Liu et al. 2014; Loukaitou-Sideris 2002; Rath and Swagerman 2016; Schmiz 2016; Schmiz and Kitzmann 2017). Perhaps more importantly, immigrants can alter their built environment to claim space in an unfamiliar setting, projecting their cultural identity through signifiers like language, national colors, and architectural features (Hume 2015; Schuch and Wang 2015; Smith and Furuseth 2008). Cultural symbols, visual references to immigrants’ pasts, and even plant choices can be used in subtle ways to attract more immigrants to public spaces and create more inclusive environments (Rishbeth 2001). Additionally, non-physical elements, such as ‘collective performative acts,’ can be important components of placemaking and support a community’s claim to a streetscape (Harney 2006). Attire, festivals, and outdoor prayer can all

contribute to a sense of place (Kaplan 2015), and these behavioral forms of placemaking may be connected to a lack of space available for a community to claim. For example, Marte's (2011) study of Dominican 'food routes' created by immigrants in New York demonstrated the importance of food in providing emotional contact among migrants who lack public gathering places. Marte's observations highlight the need to consider symbolic and behavioral strategies that create a sense of place and provide social value for immigrants in urban spaces, along with design, location, and land use.

The study of placemaking, developed over the last half-century, has primarily focused on urban settings, as has existing literature about the effects of immigrant businesses on streetscapes. Borrelli and Kalayil (2011) explored Chicago's well-established South Asian district and how the local businesses sought to revitalize the area, which was once marred by crumbling infrastructure and congestion, ultimately establishing it as a tourist destination. Lu and He (2013) examined the relationship between Sydney's downtown Chinatown and its 'Little Shanghai,' an easily accessible area located near downtown. They found that although Little Shanghai had a less central location, it attracted more people due to its cheaper prices and more 'authentic' feel. The authors argued that the evolution of Little Shanghai's streetscape was the result of local businesses engaging in knowledge-sharing with the host society, resulting in better inter-ethnic communication. Both of these studies focused on how immigrant entrepreneurs created a sense of place in urban areas, where success was related to accessible urban amenities and infrastructure, and diverse clientele.

In contrast, ethnic entrepreneurs in the suburbs must grapple with geographic isolation from the urban core. It is not yet clear how suburban ethnic entrepreneurs use (or are limited by) their spaces, or how they have transformed and given meaning to their suburban landscapes. Stereotypes of suburbs as homogeneous or 'placeless' have obscured the complex nature of 'suburban urbanism,' especially as it relates to immigrant communities (Phillips and Robinson 2015).

9.3 Research Approach

This chapter presents some of the findings of a large-scale study on suburban ethnic retailing and the role of ethnic entrepreneurs in suburban placemaking. In the larger study, I surveyed 112 Chinese and South Asian retail clusters, with approximately 4000 businesses in two inner suburbs of Toronto (Etobicoke, Scarborough) and four surrounding suburban municipalities (Mississauga, Brampton, Richmond Hill, and Markham) (Fig. 9.1). Chinese and South Asians are by far the two largest visible minority groups throughout Canada and have developed the most sizeable and visible retail and ethnic-oriented community facilities in Toronto. This chapter focuses on four Chinese and four South Asian case studies selected from the retail clusters and businesses explored in the larger study (Fig. 9.1). I investigated the eight case studies with approximately 1800 businesses through field observations, secondary

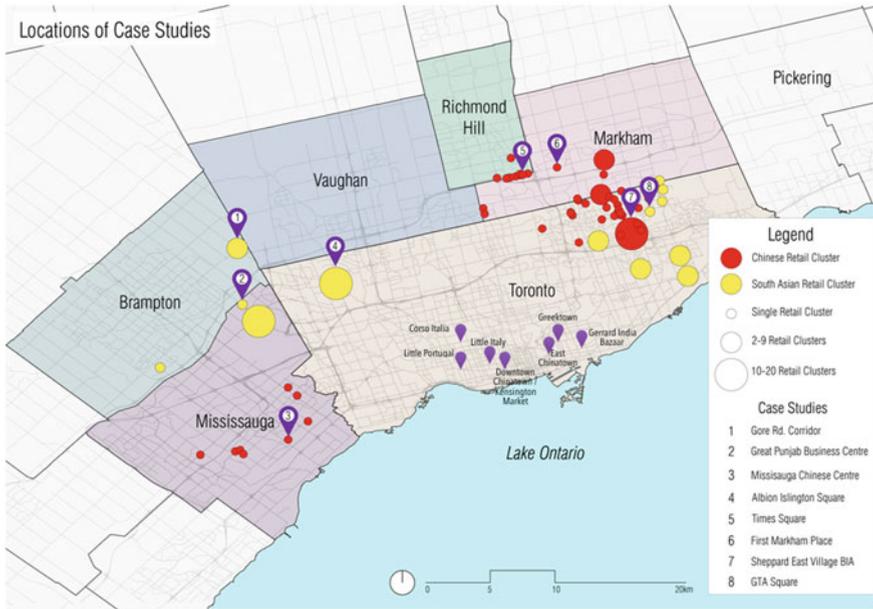


Fig. 9.1 Locations of case studies

archival research, 77 semi-structured interviews/focus groups with city planners (9), entrepreneurs (mostly immigrants) (58), Business Improvement Area (BIA) managers (3), religious and community leaders (4), and developers (2) and one architect (1), as well as 81 intercept surveys with shoppers.

Most of the ethnic business interviewees (a balanced mix of owners and employees) worked full-time, used the retail space on a daily basis, and tended to share similar experiences of the space. Interviewees were asked about their business location preferences, business history, neighborhood characters and changes, use of and attachment to the space, co-ethnic business concentration, and relationship with customers and municipal officials. Other interviewees were either familiar with a particular retail place and/or involved in the development of the area; their comments were helpful to understand the spatial and physical outcomes of immigrant entrepreneurship in the studied suburban places.

As a comparison, studies of eight urban ethnic enclaves in Toronto, including my prior research, were reviewed and synthesized; these include Kensington Market, Downtown Chinatown, East Chinatown, Gerrard India Bazaar, Little Italy, Corso Italia, Little Portugal, and Greektown (Fig. 9.1). The following discussion summarizes the key findings on the dynamics of immigrant entrepreneurship in both urban and suburban settings, its spatial and physical outcomes, and its effects on city building.

9.4 Historical Development Context

Toronto is a city of neighborhoods, many of which have been shaped by successive waves of immigration and reflect various immigrant settlement trajectories. Ethnic succession is typical in these neighborhoods, despite remarkable intergroup differences in terms of immigration history, cultural preferences, and group characteristics. For example, Kensington Market, one of Toronto's multicultural landmarks, has become home to many waves of immigrants throughout the past century, from early Jewish, British, and Irish settlers, to post-war Portuguese, Italian, and Eastern European immigrants, to Asians and Latin Americans in recent decades (Li 2015). These ethnic demographics have shaped the area's unique cultural character through ethnic businesses, immigrant-centered institutions, and marked eclectic imprints in the urban landscape. Its built form is typified by residences that have been converted into mixed-use commercial structures, an open-air market, irregular street patterns, sidewalk sales, and informal design. Kensington Market is now known as a Bohemian district, beyond its multicultural history; it is famous for its eclecticism and its diversity of retail offerings (Cochrane 2000).

Other neighborhoods share similar succession and adaptation processes. Corso Italia was transformed from the pre-war Little Britain to the post-war Little Italy and was later a destination for Portuguese and Latin American immigrants (Buzzelli 2001; Zhuang 2015). Gerrard India Bazaar was originally a European commercial strip, which began to be replaced by South Asian businesses in the 1970s (Hackworth and Rekers 2005). The two Chinatowns in the inner city of Toronto emerged as a result of urban renewal in the 1960s, which displaced the Chinese community from the original Chinatown location; Chinese businesses have adapted to an unfamiliar business environment and declining neighborhoods, and have revitalized the local economy in conjunction with more recent Vietnamese immigrants (Lai 1988; Luk and Phan 2005; Zhuang 2017b).

In contrast to traditional ethnic enclaves, where ethnic businesses are generally supported by a co-ethnic residential population, Toronto's urban ethnic neighborhoods tend not to be dominated by an ethnic group. Their residential population does not necessarily resonate with their commercial identity and name branding, nor do they provide complete institutional infrastructure to support the needs of ethnic communities, as illustrated by urban neighborhoods in the inner city, including Little Portugal, Greektown, Gerrard India Bazaar, Corso Italia, and Little Italy. Further, the ethnic packaging of these urban business areas has functioned as a branding mechanism, leading to gentrification in nearby residential areas (Hackworth and Rekers 2005; Teixeira 2007; Zhuang, 2015, 2017b). Social diversity in these neighborhoods is increasing as more immigrants are now moving to, or settling directly in, the suburbs.

Compared to their urban counterparts, suburban ethnic retail clusters have a much shorter developmental history. The Chinese and South Asian case study neighborhoods presented in this chapter have emerged since the 1980s and late 1990s, respectively. The Dragon Center, marketed as the first suburban Chinese shopping mall in

North America, was built in 1984 along Sheppard Avenue East in Scarborough, an inner suburb in the east end of Toronto (Liu 2019). Many more Chinese/Asian-themed malls emerged in the following two decades in outer suburbs such as Times Square in Richmond Hill and First Markham Place in Markham. South Asian communities have followed the footsteps of their Chinese counterparts, forming sizeable suburban retail clusters, mainly in the forms of readapted retail strips and plazas since the late 1990s (Zhuang 2017a, 2019; Zhuang et al. 2015). The GTA Square presented in this chapter opened in 2008 and is the first South Asian/Tamil indoor shopping mall in the Toronto region.

Ethnic succession mostly occurred in Toronto's inner suburbs, such as along Sheppard Avenue East in Scarborough and Albion Road and Islington Avenue in Etobicoke, where mainstream post-war strip malls were readapted by immigrant businesses. New ethnic retail developments typically emerged in outer suburbs on land previously zoned as agricultural or industrial, such as Mississauga Chinese Centre and Great Punjab Business Centre in Mississauga, Gore Road Corridor in Brampton, and Times Square in Richmond Hill. In contrast to urban business enclaves, suburban ethnic businesses are generally located in close proximity to concentrations of co-ethnic residences. Most of the neighborhoods examined in the case studies are dominated by minority populations, which have largely exceeded the city average and in some cases account for 50% of the local population (Table 9.1).

9.5 Spatial Outcomes

Kaplan and Li (2006) noted that the spatial concentration of ethnic businesses creates a unique resource, or a form of 'spatial capital,' which ethnic entrepreneurs can collectively utilize and maximize to make their retail places more attractive to customers through identifiable signage, window displays, branding, and promotion. The urban enclave case studies all have a high degree of spatial concentration: for example, the numbers of ethnic businesses in Downtown Chinatown, East Chinatown, and Gerrard India Bazaar have grown to 700, 140, and 130, respectively, and largely feature retail and food-related businesses (Luk and Phan 2005; Zhuang 2019). This concentration is not static—it is still evolving over time. For example, inter-group successions have occurred in both Chinatowns, where many of the merchants are of Vietnamese-Chinese origin or Mandarin or Minnan dialect speakers from Fujian province, replacing the earlier Cantonese-speaking merchants from Hong Kong and Guangdong province (Silva 2017; Zhuang 2017b). The 'Vietnamization' of Downtown Chinatown has been particularly significant: in 2003, 24.1% of the businesses were classified as Vietnamese (Luk and Phan 2005). Gerrard India Bazaar continues to diversify its businesses operated by South Asian entrepreneurs from various countries in the Indian subcontinent and other regions, as well as entrepreneurs who are not South Asian (Zhuang 2017b). Trendy boutique shops and specialty businesses (toy store, art gallery, antique store, cafes) with no ethnic content have recently opened in the area (Beveridge 2017). These potential gentrifiers were lured by the area's

Table 9.1 Top 3 ethnic origins in case study neighborhoods and municipalities

Municipalities and case study neighborhoods	Population	Top 3 ethnic origins
Toronto	2,503,000	English: 13.8% Chinese: 12.5% Canadian: 10.8%
Thistletown	9928	East Indian: 19% Italian: 16% Canadian: 9.7%
Sheppard East Village	34,964	Chinese: 53% English: 8.3% East Indian: 7.9%
GTA square	17,881	East Indian: 46.6% Sri Lankan: 38.2% Tamil: 13.6%
Brampton	433,806	East Indian: 25.8% Canadian: 13.3% English: 12.9%
Gore Corridor	11,648	East Indian: 50.7% Jamaican: 6.4% Canadian: 4.3%
Mississauga	668,599	East Indian: 14.9% English: 12.8% Canadian: 10.6%
Great Punjab Business Centre	24,363	East Indian: 39.8% Jamaican: 7.2% Canadian: 6.1%
Mississauga Chinese Centre	25,861	English: 13.9% Canadian: 11.9% Scottish: 10.8%
Markham	261,573	Chinese: 35.5% East Indian: 11.3% English: 10.1%
First Markham place	12,157	Chinese: 64.3% East Indian: 8.6% English: 5.9%
Richmond Hill	162,704	Chinese: 22.3% Italian: 12.9% English: 10.9%
Time square	15,716	Chinese: 47.2% Jewish: 8.8% East Indian: 7.6%

unique South Asian identity and the relatively low real estate prices (Hackworth and Rekers 2005). Collectively, the spatial concentration of ethnic businesses plays an important role in branding the area, but ethnic identity can also be diluted through the process of commercialization (Schmiz 2019; Zhuang 2015).

The larger study of suburban ethnic retailing revealed that spatial concentrations can act as placemakers to animate, urbanize, and sustain suburban ethnic retail facilities (Zhuang 2017a, 2019). Unlike urban ethnic enclaves, which are generally located on main streets, conducive to pedestrian activities, and well connected to public transit and facilities, suburban ethnic retail clusters are generally car-oriented and lack accessibility and connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods. Despite these disadvantages, when asked about their location preferences, most of these suburban entrepreneurs prefer concentrating with other co-ethnic businesses rather than in a mainstream shopping strip or mall. Most said that their business would be unnoticeable in any conventional shopping center because everything is the same; in contrast, ethnic retail places are unique—and they have contributed to that uniqueness by creating a sense of place. They also said that by concentrating with other co-ethnic businesses, they saw market potential with a large customer base (co-ethnic and/or non-co-ethnic) in the area—an important factor that outweighed other factors like affordable price or distance from home. Many entrepreneurs did not live in the same area as their business; some had made their business location decision based on the settlement pattern of the co-ethnic community, following them to places where they tended to concentrate. One owner of a large chain Chinese restaurant shared their business location strategy after expanding into Scarborough, Markham, Richmond Hill and beyond:

In the last decade, we chose restaurant locations based on the settlement pattern of Chinese immigrants. We predict the development trend for the next 3–5 years. Now we have 8 locations. We expand our business based on the proportion of the [Chinese] population. But we need to strategically plan for expansion ahead of time. We can't wait until the population goes up; otherwise, it will be too hard to find a suitable location.

However, not all entrepreneurs were in favor of the spatial concentration of co-ethnic businesses. When asked how they evaluated their retail cluster, some raised concerns about the lack of variety and diversity of businesses and customers, stating “after all, we’re in Canada. It’s multicultural.” One example is the GTA Square in Scarborough, which was initially developed by Chinese investors. One merchant of Tamil origin commented: “They built for their [Chinese] community but the tenants are Tamil. It turned into a space for Tamils. So the Tamil people developed the character [of the mall].” The merchant added that since then, “too many stores are Tamil stores, [including] hair salon, jewelry, shopping, cafeteria; everything is Tamil people-owned. All the people like that are coming here. This is only Tamil community people in the mall.” Two other Tamil merchants agreed that they need to bring in businesses and customers from other cultural backgrounds.

These findings related to the location preferences of ethnic entrepreneurs in the suburbs—that they are largely associated with spatial concentrations of co-ethnic businesses—are similar to those observed in Downtown Chinatown, East Chinatown,

and Gerrard India Bazaar. These decisions maximize spatial capital, thereby benefiting individual businesses and also helping create a sense of place. The suburban settlement patterns of co-ethnic communities help explain why Chinese and South Asian businesses are located in proximity to neighborhoods with high concentrations of co-ethnic residential populations, as shown in Table 9.1.

9.6 Physical Outcomes

The eight urban ethnic enclaves in the inner city are all located along major Avenues, as defined in the City's Official Plan: Dundas Street, Gerrard Street, College Street, Queen Street, Danforth Street, and St. Clair Avenue West. These Avenues are generally well supported by public transit (subway, streetcar, bus) and public infrastructure and services (libraries, community centers, parks), and include mixed residential, commercial, employment, and institutional uses. Thus, the Official Plan classifies these as mixed-use intensification areas that are a priority for urban growth and infrastructure improvement. Ethnic businesses operating on these Avenues greatly benefit from urban density, mixed land uses, and existing public infrastructure. The relatively wider sidewalks on these Avenues allow for a variety of pedestrian and commercial activities, reflecting the cultural needs of many immigrant businesses: patios, street displays and sales, public arts, street performances, and festivals. As vital public spaces, these main streets have been the target for public investments, especially through streetscape improvement and capital projects, and are often under the management of locally formed business associations or Business Improvement Areas (BIA) in partnership with the City. The City and the business community tend to share common interests in terms of the public realm, and immigrant entrepreneurs tend to have a strong say in the processes of streetscape beautification, infrastructure improvement, and tourism development. Examples include: building the Chinese Archway in East Chinatown, debating the streetcar right-of-way in Corso Italia, creating Pedestrian Sundays in Kensington Market, and organizing street festivals and cultural parades (Chinatown Festival, Taste of the Danforth in Greektown, Dundas West Fest in Little Portugal, Taste of Little Italy, Corso Italia Fiesta, Festival of South Asia in India Bazaar) (Li 2015; Zhuang 2015, 2017b). All of these street improvements and placemaking activities were funded through the BIA levies, matching funds from the City, and fundraising efforts of the business community. Unique cultural identities are manifested through store signage, architecture facades, displays of cultural goods and foods, mural projects, public arts, and everyday social interactions on the street.

In contrast, suburban enclaves have significantly different physical outcomes, with three main types of built forms: strip malls with parking at a storefront and abutting the street, plazas with a parking lot in the middle, or at the back, and enclosed indoor shopping malls (Linovski 2012). My larger study of ethnic enclaves revealed that 47 of the 112 suburban ethnic retail clusters in Toronto are located in outer suburbs, and most of these (35 of 47) were built from scratch on agricultural or industrial lands

(Zhuang 2019). Because of the segregated land uses and the car-oriented infrastructure (surface parking, under-utilized sidewalks, wide roads, limited public transit), suburban ethnic retail facilities are not conducive to pedestrian activities and social interactions, and lack connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods.

Although suburban settings do not tend to encourage a vibrant public realm with sidewalk activities and pedestrian-friendly uses, ‘urban’ dynamics were observed in some of the sites, with pedestrians and cyclists frequenting shopping areas. This phenomenon was likely driven by the ethnic-oriented institutions and public infrastructures in and around the shopping areas. For example, the Gore Road South Asian business corridor in Brampton was not developed until after a Hindu temple was built in the area in 1995 as the result of land expropriation and relocation to make way for the construction of a toll highway. At the time, it was the only building in the area and was surrounded by farmlands. Over the next two decades, Brampton experienced significant population growth, mainly driven by immigration: according to the 2016 Census, 52% of Brampton’s population was born outside Canada. In response to increasing demands, new subdivisions were built in the area, along with South Asian businesses and other ethnic-oriented institutions. Currently, the Gore Road Corridor contains four ethnic retail plazas with about 300 businesses, and also has three Hindu temples, one Sikh gurdwara, one Islamic center, two churches, one Sikh private school, two banquet halls, and two community centers (one ethnic-oriented and one public); all of these meet the various religious, educational, and community needs of nearby residents, many of whom live within walking or cycling distance. The intercept surveys with 10 shoppers in the area revealed that only four drove there and nine were frequent users of the space, visiting the corridor almost on a daily basis to access shopping, personal, and community services, and daily religious practices.

Interestingly, a small public community center converted from a heritage schoolhouse has become a vital community hub in the area, despite its small capacity (50 people). It provides various programming at specified times, including yoga, seniors and kids’ lessons, and Sunday church services for a church. It also serves as an important community focal point for a group of 30–40 Sikh senior men who frequent the main activity hall and kitchen facility from about 12–4 pm on weekdays. Most of them are local residents who walk, cycle, or use a wheelchair to access this place of social gathering, along with their daily routines of shopping in the plaza and/or praying in the gurdwara. They play cards and board games, chat, and cook and eat together. Recognizing the specific needs of this community, the City of Brampton has waived fees for these seniors. In this case, the ethnic retail plazas, ethnic-oriented institutions, and public services complement each other, serving as a catalyst for transforming the entire corridor and contributing to the building of an institutionally complete community.

Similarly, in my larger study of the 112 retail clusters, ‘suburban urbanism’ is also noticeable in the Steeles Corridor at the borders of Toronto and Markham (Zhuang and Chen 2017). For three decades, the area has been a battleground for the development of Chinese malls and plazas. It now has about 900 Chinese businesses concentrated in the area and attracts considerable automobile and pedestrian traffic. Although the area does not have religious or community facilities like the ones in the Gore

Corridor, it is only steps from a high-rise Chinese seniors' home, as well as regional train and local bus stops, making the shopping area accessible and connected with the surrounding neighborhoods. A survey of 154 immigrant businesses in the three most popular Chinese malls in the Steeles Corridor (Pacific Mall, the then-named Market Village, and Splendid China Tower) revealed that public transit is a key determinant of business location decision (Zhuang and Chen 2017). Field observations in the area indicated that the area was accessed by various modes of transportation including walking, biking, and transit; a high volume of pedestrians were using the sidewalk despite its rough surface and no maintenance, and random bicycle parking was commonly observed near mall entrances due to the lack of bike racks. These findings indicate that public infrastructure to support urbanism is insufficient to meet demand in these public and semi-public spaces.

Suburban urbanism is also reflected in the built form of the three Chinese malls identified above. Pacific Mall, as a flagship Chinese retail mall, has drawn significant media attention and academic research not only because its modern style was at odds with the surrounding rural small-town landscape in the early 1990s, but also due to its innovative condominium ownership (owned, rather than leased, by individual businesses), compact retail unit size (averaging 200 ft²) and the resulting increased demand for parking, and controversies over racial tensions (e.g., 'White flight') (Zhuang 2013). This new retail form represents the aspirations and lifestyles of many Asian immigrants, who are more accustomed to residential and commercial property ownership and compact and highly dense built environments. The mall is marketed as the largest Chinese condominium mall in North America, and its nearly 300,000 ft² retail space draws visitors from near and far: it was granted designated tourist attraction status, allowing it to open year-round including statutory holidays. The then-named Market Village was a leasehold Chinese shopping mall sharing the same land parcel as the Pacific Mall. It was demolished in 2018 for the redevelopment of a new shopping complex, the Remington Center, which is currently under construction. What is interesting and creative about the new development is its pedestrian-focused urban-style approach promoting walkability, compactness, and mixed-use. Major design features include separate automobile and pedestrian traffic (underground parking to make ground space for pedestrians), connection with mass public transit (e.g., integrated commuter train and bus stations with the mall), high density, mixed commercial and residential uses, and investment in public spaces with landscaping and public amenities (e.g., seating, water fountain, skating ring) (Zhuang and Chen 2017). This urban-style approach was endorsed by the City of Markham and was later followed by the developers of the adjacent Pacific Mall and the Splendid China Tower, who also proposed similar mega-scale, mixed-use, high-density redevelopment of the existing retail facilities.

If built, the three redevelopment projects will bring nearly 2 million square feet of retail space to the area, which will again significantly change the physical suburban landscape. When the Market Village and Pacific Mall were first developed in the late 1980s and mid-1990s, respectively, they changed the nostalgic small-town atmosphere in the area; when the Splendid China Tower was first developed in the early 2000s, it replaced a suburban big box store (a mainstream hardware chain): the

Chinese-themed mall served as a strong cultural expression, as reflected by its name and symbolic facade. Overall, these Chinese businesses have transformed conventional suburban areas by injecting new economic opportunities and creating new retail forms and urban dynamics in response to the community's unique cultural needs. These are good learning examples for suburban municipalities as they tackle planning priorities such as placemaking, suburban retrofitting, and community building.

9.7 Implications for Municipal Planning

The 16 case studies presented in this chapter have demonstrated that urban versus suburban settings differ significantly in terms of the spatial and physical outcomes of ethnic entrepreneurship, meaning that the ways urban ethnic entrepreneurs exert their influences in city building may not be applicable in a suburban context. For example, in urban enclaves, the BIA program is a popular and important form of business partnership with the City: this kind of program helps build public awareness of the public realm and effectively allocates public resources to support the long-term development of business areas, ethnic or non-ethnic. This is not the case in the suburbs: most suburban immigrant businesses are only associated with private developments: strip malls, shopping plazas, or shopping malls. In interviews, immigrant entrepreneurs often reported interactions with other businesses, customers, landlords, developers, management office staff, and community leaders, but rarely with municipal officers or decision-makers such as planners and city councilors. Most immigrant entrepreneurs have little or no connection with municipal staff and lack access to recourses and guidance, which may impede their participation in city building. As a result, only three out of the eight suburban business clusters form a BIA (i.e., Albion Islington Square, Sheppard East Village, Great Punjab Business Centre).

Differences between urban and suburban businesses are also reflected in the different municipal representatives who interact with the business community. Urban case studies revealed that in the BIA program, the City is normally represented by Economic Development Officers, who play an active and important role in working directly and closely with the business community in relatively small-scale improvement initiatives. In contrast, city planners tend to be reactive in facilitating the development of urban ethnic retail neighborhoods, due to a lack of policy support and the rigid legislative framework. Unlike Economic Development Officers, who work outside of a legal framework, "planners are in an awkward position; they cannot initiate ethnic retailing, which is up to ethnic retailers, nor can they decide when and to what degree they should become involved, yet, they are being accused of passivity mainly reflected in their technocratic approach and inexperience in planning amidst diversity" (Zhuang 2013, p. 109). In contrast, suburban ethnic retail areas are dominated by private developments, and there is a lack of public investment in the public space, despite the strong community need for spaces and services as evidenced by the urban dynamics of the Gore and Steeles Corridors. Moreover, once these private suburban spaces are built, planners have very limited involvement in improvements.

This finding reveals the need for planners to be preemptive and proactive in order to provide a better vision for suburban ethnic neighborhoods. They should promote a vision that is culturally sensitive, people-focused, accommodating in terms of flexibility, and socially, economically, and physically sustainable. Currently, planners lack sufficient policy and institutional support to be proactive at the forefront of city-building and planning for diversity. The Municipal Official Plans in each studied municipality generally acknowledge the increasingly diverse demographics, but no explicit policy statements or guidelines are provided for planners in terms of how to better serve the needs of diverse communities and thereby direct future growth in urban and suburban settings.

In conclusion, planners are currently constrained in terms of effective public engagement efforts and their capacity to accommodate cultural needs for suburban spaces, infrastructure, and services in the city-building process. With the increasing numbers of immigrants settling in suburbs, more ethnic-oriented business and community activities are anticipated, and the design and development of suburban retail spaces to meet their diverse needs and facilitate meaningful city building will become critical to suburban municipalities.

9.8 Conclusion

Extensive research has explored immigrant settlement in both the urban and suburban contexts, focusing on the social and economic outcomes of immigrant entrepreneurship. This chapter used eight urban ethnic enclaves of different ethnic groups in the inner city of Toronto and eight Chinese and South Asian suburban clusters to explore the spatial and physical outcomes of immigrant entrepreneurship and the effects of such outcomes on city building.

The urban enclaves share few commonalities with their suburban counterparts, even when they involve the same immigrant groups such as the Chinese and South Asians. They differ significantly in terms of city-building processes and mechanisms, the role of immigrant entrepreneurs, and their need for spaces, infrastructure, and services. Therefore, planners and policymakers need to be aware of the many differences between urban and suburban communities and among different groups: what is successful in one setting or with one group may not work in another. Any future policy interventions should be tailored to the unique characteristics and needs of local businesses.

Today's immigrants are increasingly bypassing the inner city and settling directly in the suburbs. What has remained challenging is how to best understand immigrant entrepreneurial experiences and outcomes in suburban spaces. The eight suburban case studies presented in this chapter offered empirical knowledge about suburban settlement trajectories of Chinese and South Asian communities and their developments of ethnic enterprises. They also provided important lessons for suburban municipalities to consider municipal governance, policies, infrastructure, and service provisions required to facilitate and support immigrant entrepreneurship.

The case studies also revealed urban-style dynamics in certain suburban areas, demonstrating that some suburban spaces can be enhanced via the joint efforts of developers, immigrant entrepreneurs, and community members. All of these stakeholders critically influence suburban spaces by playing a prominent role in planning, designing, modifying, and managing retail spaces. Municipalities should consider building partnerships with private developers and negotiating retail developments in exchange for community benefits such as transit, public spaces, public facilities, and infrastructure.

Overall, the case studies explored here demonstrated that suburbs are increasingly no longer ‘sub’ urban spaces. Rather, these immigrant neighborhoods provide the needed infrastructure and services to support institutionally complete communities, creating vibrancy and leaving long-lasting imprints on suburban landscapes. Many municipalities are now prioritizing suburban retrofitting for the next several decades, but they should also prepare for the continuous demographic shifts caused by global migration, and consider how to effectively engage immigrant entrepreneurs and communities to participate in the city-building process to help reach common goals. For example, pedestrian activities were observed in certain suburban cases despite the car-oriented design, and interviews revealed that immigrant entrepreneurs and community members want better pedestrian-oriented designs and amenities to meet their needs. This pedestrian-oriented focus also reflects the unique social and cultural needs of ethnic communities—both urban and suburban—which distinguishes ethnic retail clusters from their mainstream counterparts.

These findings will inform municipalities about how immigrant communities utilize urban and suburban spaces, the importance of effectively engaging them in city building, and the pressing need to revisit municipal planning policies, initiatives, and programs to address the differing needs of various ethnic communities. A closer examination of how local places affect immigrant entrepreneurship, and vice versa, is needed to inform decision-makers about long-term development and enhancement of retail places and the surrounding neighborhoods.

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