



A Resurrection of Laneways:

Toronto's Activation of Public Space Through Lanes

A Major Research Project by: Holly Carrie-Mattimoe

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To my roommate who bought this poor graduate student the much needed pints on the weekends, this one's for you.

Special thanks to mother, father, and brother. Your support means the world to me. This was made possible through the weight of your love and my desire to make you proud.

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1.0 Introduction:

A journey through Toronto's untapped and underutilized Laneways

The intention of this research is to examine the viability in activating Toronto's neglected laneways. Behind the densely populated streets of Toronto's downtown core, lie arguably one of its most underutilized assets: its laneways. Dimly lit, and typically filled with rubbish, these are spaces with potential. This research focuses on Toronto's possibilities in the creation of laneways as a legitimate urban space; forgotten spaces with the potential to stimulate growth and create lively, safe communities. The literature will examine current policies that may hinder the widespread use of, or lead to the neglect of these spaces, as well as draw conclusions about possible policy and cultural shifts with the potential to revive and create an adaptive laneway culture.

With urban intensification on the agenda set out by the Places to Grow Act (2006), laneways are becoming a legitimate option not only for development opportunities, but as expansive linkages to the public realm. This paper will tackle the difficulty in "planning for the unplanned"; and the development of these spaces into livable, walkable, playable laneways while keeping in mind that a little grime, and a little glitz, may very well make for an excellent cohabitative relationship. Laneways will not, and should not, be a one-size fits all solution, their beauty lies within its adaptive and ever-evolving nature. While this paper calls for a resurrection of these forgotten, underutilized appendages within our city, we must be certain in our vision; there is a glimmer in that grime, and there is beauty in the unplanned, forgotten spaces that are our laneways. This is not an effort to chase out the original inhabitants, who are in many ways creators of this space, but a plea to shape these laneways into a multi-functional adaptive space.

“This network of laneways is so important to a city and the urban explorer. A deviation off the beaten path allows for the discovery of the cities hidden potential, its gritty reality.”

Clement | 2008

This research will delve into the endless possibilities and forms that Toronto's laneways may come to be as an additive to our public realm. Micro-retail, dining, and temporary multi-use spaces, will be a key development in the creation of vibrant community laneways. Shaping the laneway as a destination and a motive to linger, will be the catalyst for the strengthening of laneways as viable public space. The birth of markets, cafes, and patios will not only add people and a sense of purpose, but service the community and spur economic growth at the same time. While not all laneways are shaped in a way to allow for intensification or certain forms of development, linear parks and the addition of green space can be an affordable option for the regeneration and ecological resurgence of these urban spaces. Laneways may serve as a place for community gardens that will foster social cohesion, community building, and integration as a unique way to conquer the neglected laneway while bringing together diverse multicultural communities.

It is important to note here, that although this paper will not focus on laneway housing specifically, the addition of housing in laneways will only help to strengthen these linkages into the public realm, and serve as a tool to drive political will in the addition and creation of services such as hydro, waste management, and public safety, along with a cultural shift in the way we perceive and relate to these territories.

The desire to embark upon this research, is to set forth, and draw conclusions on how we can promote and improve the neglected resource that is our laneways in the City of Toronto. Case studies from around the globe were analyzed on policies and practices that restrict, and those that promote the intensification and vibrance of laneway space across the globe as a tool to drive change back home in Toronto. The intent of the research is to build off existing literature on laneway activation, and strengthen the narrative for these spaces to become a part of the public realm in a positive sense, while maintaining its unique informal spirit, and to support the ongoing efforts to create diverse, multi-functional, evolving public space in Toronto.



Toronto | 2017
Image By Holly Carrie-Mattimoe

2.0 Methods:

Dissecting current and future possibilities

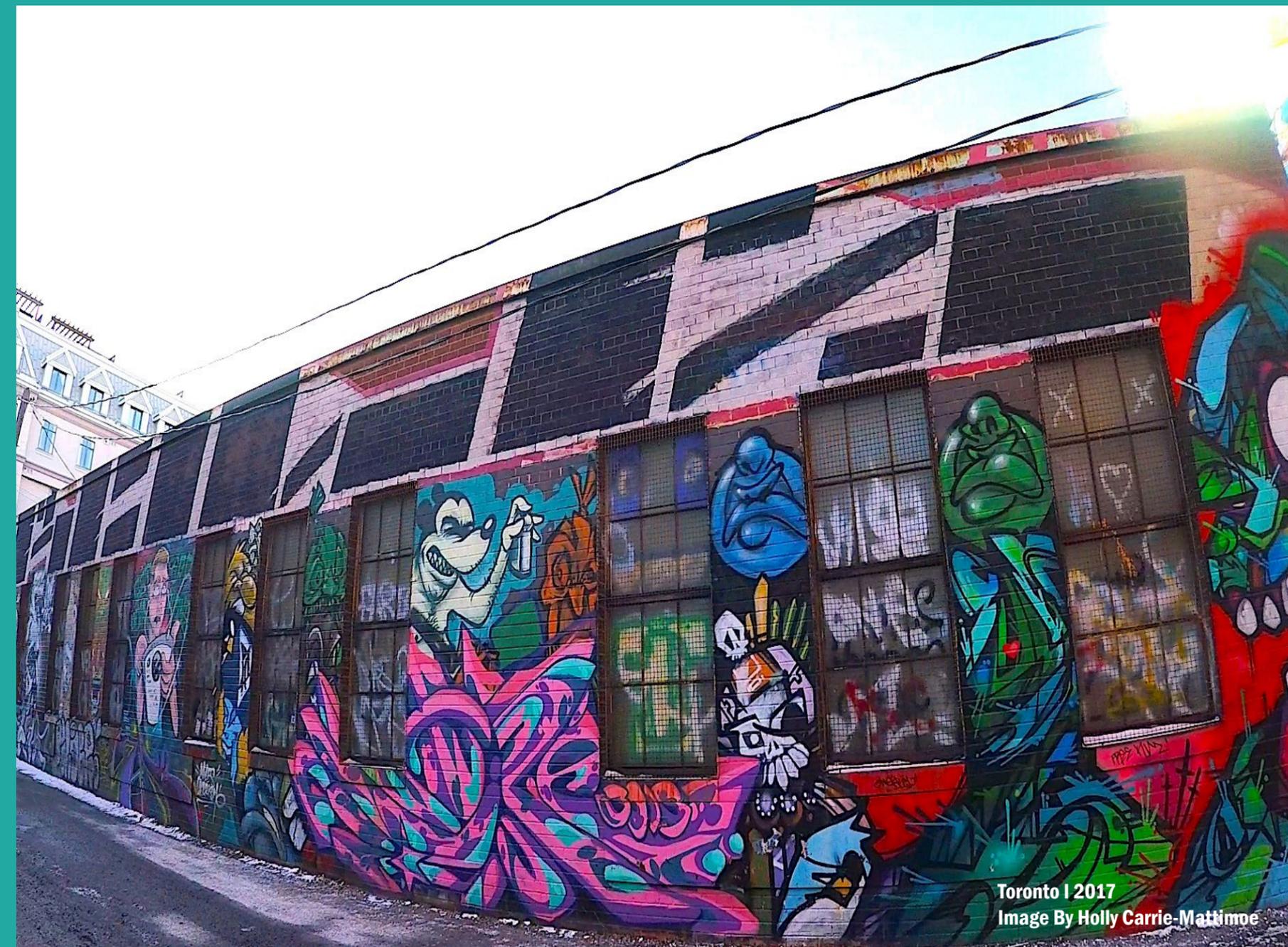
This paper aims at uncovering the space in our urban centres that remain underutilized and forgotten, the territory that is right in front of us, or perhaps from our current planning patterns and cultural understanding of public space, it remains behind us. But nevertheless, this is a space, and a piece of the public realm that is full of potential waiting to be realized.

Through uncovering layers of the history in our laneways, such as their initial purpose, physical shape and size, our social understanding of, and how we as a society begin to use or move through this space, we'll start to be able to analyze the evolving form of laneways. Moreover, we can begin to formulate ideas and opportunities that we as planners, architects, and urban designers can plan to better utilize these spaces in today's intensifying urban areas. To understand the complexities of the laneway, how it was shaped and used over the years, I have embarked upon an in-depth literature review that has formulated the basis for an evaluation tool in which each case study city and the city of Toronto, is analyzed through this lens.

Following direction from "The Craft of Inquiry" (Alford, 1998) research questions have been formulated as "entry points" and as a tool to investigate the following inquires in laneway analysis. 1. What impact do policy changes and political will have on the evolving form of laneways? 2. What are some best practices of laneways across the globe, and what are key

indicators of "success" derived from past research literature? 3. Where is Toronto comparative to global approaches of laneway activation, and how does this impact the ways in which people interact and perceive laneways in the City? In order to answer these specific questions the research is centred on secondary sources with a focus on studies that touch on policy, success indicators, and cultural practice shifts in regards to evolving laneway space. Photographic research (Collier, 1986) was an additional method used in the analysis and observation of laneway uses in the City of Toronto. Photographs are shown throughout this report to allow the reader to visualize the laneway territory unique to Toronto's city centre.

The cities of Montreal, Vancouver, and Melbourne were selected for the purpose of a comparative analysis to determine opportunities and gaps in Toronto's expansive laneway network. These particular cities were chosen based on similarities in size and population density (City Mayors Statistics, 2016), but mainly as a way to showcase a scale of progression in laneway activation. Through the exploration of these cities, it has become clear the trajectory and path that each city is on, as well as opportunities that are not yet realized by some. Furthermore, it is my intent to contrast these approaches to the City of Toronto in order to determine recommendations and next steps for Toronto's activation of these neglected territories. For a quick demographic look



into these urban centres, see the table below. I focused primarily on city centres as this research will prove the value in dense urban living and the impact of utilizing laneways in these close knit communities.

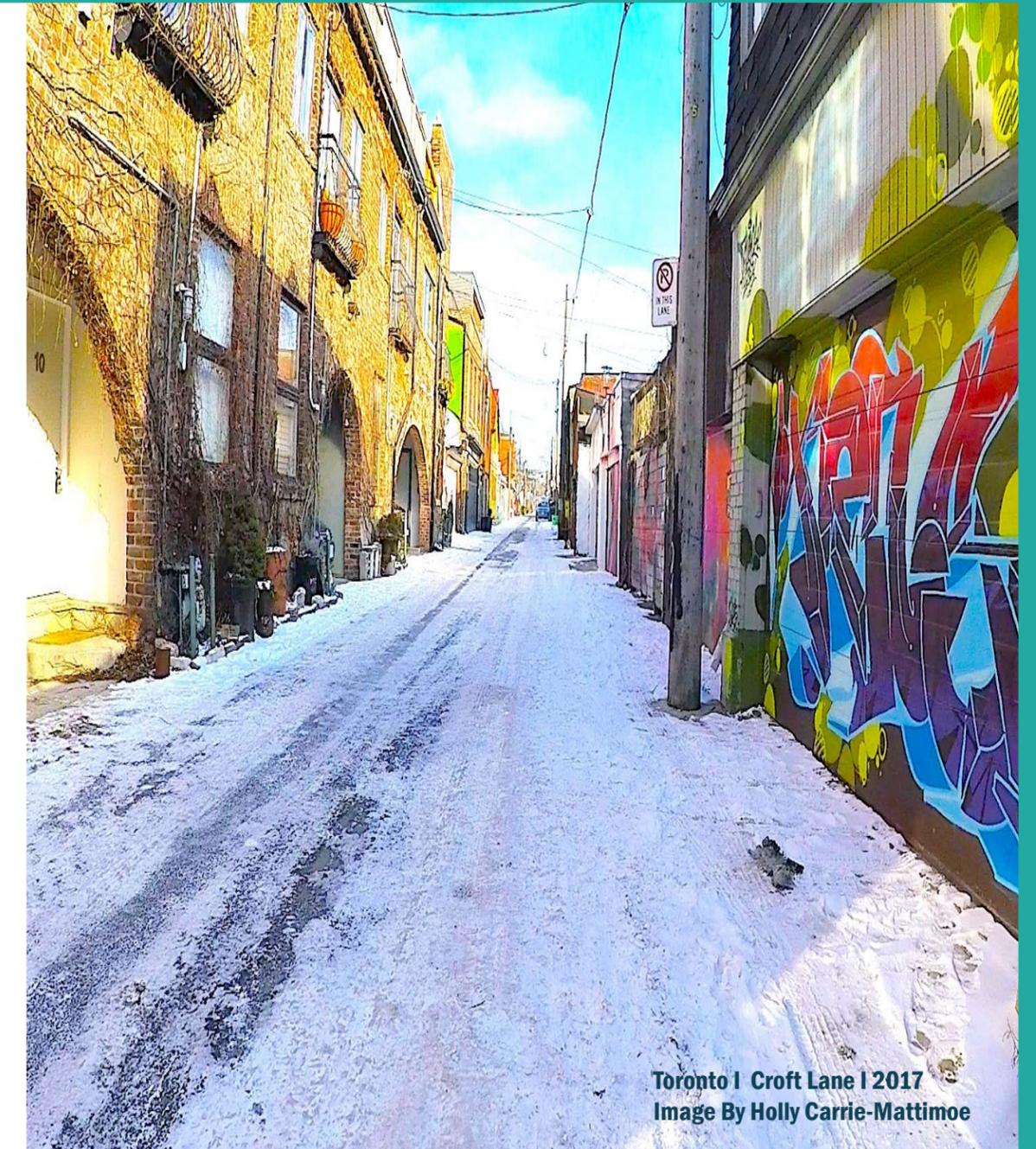
City Proper	Population	Population Density	Area
Toronto	2,731,571	4,149/km ²	630.21 km ²
Montreal	1,704,694	4,662/km ²	431.50 km ²
Vancouver	631,486	5,492/km ²	114.97 km ²
Melbourne	127,742	3,569/km ²	36.2 km ²

Although these city centres show a range in population and area, population density remains relatively constant (City Mayors Statistics, 2016). A main argument for the necessity of activating laneway space throughout this research is due to the intensification of urban centres and the need to find space, and our ability to create place for our community members to live, work, and play. While Melbourne may at first glance appear like an outlier within this data set, it is often seen as an innovative driver and leader in laneway activation (O’Loan, 2016), which will thoroughly be discussed in the case study analysis. Investigating the many forms and shapes that laneways take in these cities help to guide the research in developing indicators of what successful laneways look like, and how they

can be evaluated as such. Therefore, they help to form a vision for the City of Toronto that will aid in the activation of public space within its underutilized laneways. While conversations of laneway revitalization and development are becoming more prominent, a growth in supportive literature and innovative visions will be key in delivering logistical options for the future of public space in our Cities laneways.

Limitations in this research may be a lack of primary quantitative data. With the scope and timeline of this research paper, primary quantitative data and field research (Neuman, 2011), was unfeasible at this time. It was my initial intention to create a “successful laneway” indicator tool discovered and derived through the literature review and global case studies. With the development of this tool the aim would then be to evaluate current laneways in Toronto and quantifying how interventions of laneway space alter the ways in which people interact with the laneway itself. In this sense, I would be able to quantify data such as a change in the number of people walking/cycling in the lanes from one intervention to the next, or analyze if certain policy changes affect the number of motor vehicles using and disrupting laneways for pedestrians and cyclist users. With that said, this paper was able to contribute essential arguments, analysis’, and precedents for the activation of these unclaimed and underutilized territories. This is a single research piece that adds weight to a larger body of literature that continues to grow and become increasingly more influential on policy makers and urban dwellers alike.

What was feasible in the scope of this project was to undergo qualitative analysis guided through Neuman’s (2011) nonreactive research and secondary analysis methods, and to draw on my own experiences through walking, cycling, photographing, and living in Toronto’s laneways. With 4 years experience using laneways as my literal front door, I am able to bring forth a different perspective than others who have been cultured into a different understanding of laneways altogether. As a laneway resident myself, living in a lane has opened my eyes to the shaping of our city, how we sanction certain spaces for specific and “acceptable” uses, and how that reflects upon our understanding of that space. This research will rely heavily on this new perspective of laneways along with secondary source research and qualitative analysis with evidence to suggest successful actions in the creation of laneways that improve the public realm safety, sociability, mobility, and economic life.



Toronto | Croft Lane | 2017
Image By Holly Carrie-Mattimoe

3.0 Literature Review: Justification for Laneway Activation



Toronto | Laneway House | 2017
Image By Holly Carrie-Mattimoe

To help facilitate this research, past literature and academic articles will be an essential tool used to gain insight into “Best practices” of the ever-evolving laneway space. Planners, Architects, and Urban Designers alike all play a role in the transformation of our cities; as such, their documented work becomes a guiding hand to inform future initiatives that may challenge and expand Toronto’s Laneway activation possibilities. While laneways across the globe have only recently begun to be recognized as useful city space with the potential of transforming how we live, play, and move through urban centres, literature surrounding these relatively new initiatives is too in hiding; tucked away behind the overshadowing documents of urbanization focused on the front facades of our streetscapes. In a sense, this piece of literature thus becomes ever more timely, in an urban climate on the brink of re-thinking how, and who, we plan cities and spaces for, laneway infrastructure may be the missing link in the stagnant public realm.

3.1 Indicators of ‘Success’

Realizing the forgotten space behind your home, or apartment building is one thing, but understanding its possibilities and potential becomes ever more difficult. What does it mean to have achieved a “great laneway” or a “successful” public space for that matter? If we as Planners, Architects and Urban Designers are new to the transformation of laneways into viable public spaces, how do we know what they should or shouldn’t look like? Or how individuals and communities can and can’t interact with that space? Andrew Woodhouse (2011) answers these questions through his research creating a dataset that measures the vitality of laneways based on different characteristics of the laneways themselves.

In an attempt to mimic, or recreate laneway “success” seen in Melbourne, the Study focuses on the ability to activate Brisbane’s laneways following the implementation and intervention of public policy seen in Melbourne and the desire to create a more vibrant public realm through its laneways. The result of his research (2011) suggested that characteristics most closely related to the success and vitality of lanes are permeability and accessibility, an absence of vehicular traffic and good environmental quality. The framework of his investigation drew on previous conclusions of what common stipulations are in the creation of successful public spaces. These gathered characteristics from renowned planners, urban designers, and architects are identified on the following spread and acted as a tool to guide this research through its analysis in the approach and scale of each case study city.

Guidelines for Success:

1 Safety

Mixed land-use with attractions at different times of the day and night to facilitate lively, viable and safe city streets (Jacobs,1961; Whyte,1988; Coupland,1997; Mehta, 2007).

2 Environment

High environmental quality including features such as the presence of vegetation and seating (Coley et al., 1997; Kuo et al.,1998; Abu-Ghazze,1999; Brown et al.,2007; Abu-Ghazze,1999; Mehta, 2007; Zacharias et al.,2004),The absence of graffiti and other features of a neglected environment,such as dirt and grime, broken windows,vacant blocks and prostitution (Ross and Jang,2000; Callinan,2002; Palmer et al., 2005; Kerkin,2003; Miceli et al.,2004; Brown et al.,2007).

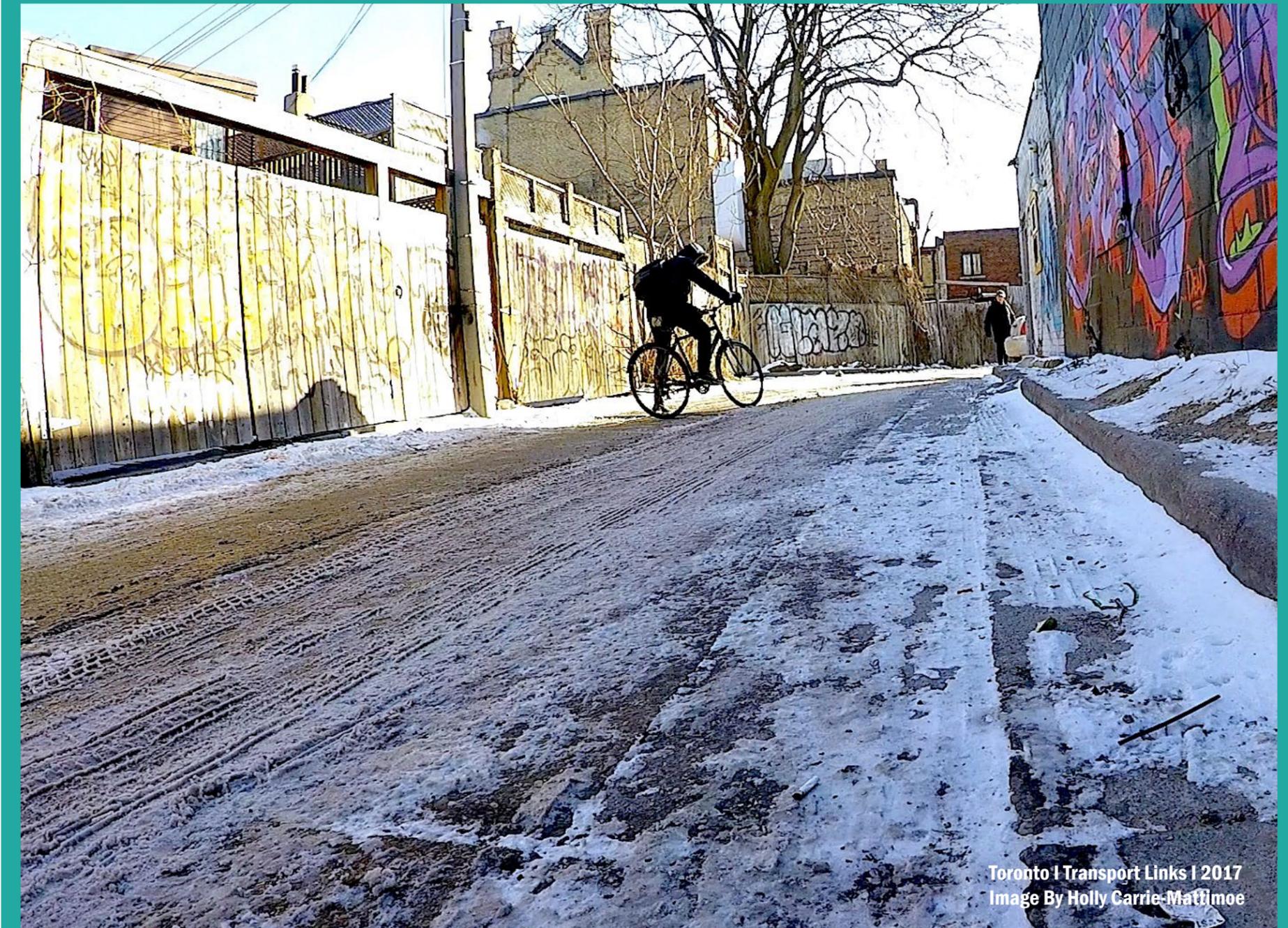
3 Pedestrianization

Pedestrian permeability and accessibility,including small block sizes and wide pavements. This relates not only to usage of the laneway itself but also the degree to which the laneway is embedded in the broader pedestrian movement economy of the city and its proximity to high use pedestrian thoroughfares (Hillier and Hanson,1984; Hillier,2002; Hillier and Netto, 2002; Gehl,1987,1989,2008; Engwicht,1992;Siksna,1997; Montgomery,1998). A preponderance of fine grain land-uses to add diversity and vitality by encouraging density and associated pedestrian activity (Montgomery, 1988; Southworth,2005; Mehta,2007; Gehl et al.,2006). Variety in built form and facades including architectural style, age and scale of buildings, this facilitates an appealing environment that can engage with pedestrians at an appropriate scale. Also,buildings of different ages for a range of rent prices supporting mixed land uses (Jacobs,1961,Whyte 1980; Gehl,1987, Gehl et al.,2006). An absence of motor vehicles that generally detract from pedestrian usage of space (Gehl, 1989; Engwicht,1992; European Commission, 2004; Southworth,2005).

The three Categories, Safety, Pedestrianization, and Environmental quality are used throughout this research and will be a useful tool when analyzing laneway activation in our three case study cities. Woodhouse's (2011) research of prevalent indicators in 'successful' public spaces serves to support this investigation of laneway activation. However, I will challenge the argument against the presence of graffiti and a little dirt and grime, which arguably are a staple and welcoming characteristic of a "lived-in" laneway. This paper will challenge "one-size fits all" planning, showing a successful laneway is one which evolves and adapts, taking shape in many forms such as a well known tourist site, or a path less travelled, vibrant and alive, or seemingly dead, silent, or riddled with the noise of a bustling city. At first glance, juxtaposing Toronto's Laneways to that of Woodhouse's (2011) characteristics of successful laneway indicators, Toronto seems far from achieving its full potential in its laneway culture (Laneway Summit, 2016). A Conference (2016) held in Toronto hosted by a local organization "the Laneway Project" brought forth a panel discussion on the vast opportunities for improvement to our public realm throughout our forgotten laneways. This timely publicly accessible conference provided useful insight into the current cultural realities and desires of Toronto's urbanites on their laneway space, and will be used to support claims for the demand of revitalizing these territories.

“Here, the city’s laneway systems are recognized as a legitimate and potentially vast urban ‘resource’ offering a new, incremental urbanism.”

Chong & Shim | 2004



Toronto | Transport Links | 2017
Image By Holly Carrie-Mattimoe

3.2 Supportive Linkages

City planning officials may also use laneways as a tool to challenge traditional models of transportation and street planning, and as Torontonians battle with sharing user space within our congested street network, laneways may open up a new world for commuters.

A resource that weighed heavily on this research was by Brigitte Shim and Donald Chong (2004). This literature albeit brief, contains important observations of the ability to intensify laneways from an architecture and Planning perspective within Toronto. It discusses Toronto's policies in relation to the development of laneway housing as well as the use of laneways as green space and pedestrian transportation routes. In addition, Toronto's Complete Streets Guideline was too recently released in February 2017 and serves to support the notion set by Shim & Donald (2004) surrounding the useful implementation of laneways in our public realm. Both bodies of work point to possibilities that with increasing demand for living and working in the downtown, laneways can serve as supplementary routes (mainly for pedestrians and cyclists), to commute to and from their destinations. As roadways become increasingly congested and ROW (Right of Way) widths a prominent issue in the design of multi-modal streets; an interconnected system of laneways may provide a viable option for commuters (City of Toronto, 2017).

Toronto's Complete Streets Guideline was too recently released in February 2017 and will be assessed on its ability to create positive changes to our cities streetscape and cultural understanding of movement through urban centres. At the surface, the Complete Streets Guideline has laid groundbreaking protocols that include language in creating multi-use laneway space. To highlight some of these positive guides that the mandate introduces to our understanding of laneways, the City recommendations are displayed to the right. (City of Toronto, 2017)

Minimize cut-through motor vehicle traffic and design for slow vehicle speeds.

Anticipate and accommodate through-access by pedestrians and cyclists and use of lanes as informal public spaces.

Provide adequate lighting for personal security.

Mixed-Use Lanes can also offer unique opportunities to create active spaces for retail or other commercial users, and become part of a vibrant pedestrian network.

Residential Lanes have the opportunity to become attractive public spaces that support informal play and social interaction.

Mixed-Use Lanes do provide some opportunities to introduce stormwater control measures

Although space for tree planting is limited, Residential Lanes do provide opportunities to introduce green street design elements and planting to create more inviting and useful spaces.



Toronto | 2017
Image By Holly Carrie Mattimoe

3.3 From Space to Place

As timely as this guideline may appear, we must acknowledge that it is indeed 'just' a guideline. These suggestions are not written in stone, and more notably, they are not written in our by-laws and planning policies. While this is just that, a guideline for what planners, architects, and urban designers wish our streetscape could become, it allows for possibilities of the "grey space" to naturally evolve and become what the users, and the humans of Toronto want and need. Gordon (2013) describes this as "Do-It-Yourself Urban Design" in this sense, enabling urbanites to take back the back alleys for pedestrians, for play, and for culture to erupt. So will this be the ignition for the laneway cultural shift we've been waiting for? Only the test of time will tell if this revolutionary guideline will transform our cities landscape, public space, and cultural understanding of this expansive hidden resource of a pedestrian and cycle friendly transportation network currently posing as back alleys.

Creating walkable or cycle friendly laneways doesn't just start and end at design; a culture shift must occur in order to create a sense of safety, pride, and accessibility, leading to the prevalence of the community using and enjoying these once neglected spaces. How does a city begin to change the public perception of laneways, from an unflattering and unkempt alley, to a lively and vibrant public space that may eventually become a destination point, rather than a shady shortcut?

To start to piece together how we can shape a community's understanding of useable public space, Chris Turner's (2012) article describes Melbourne's shift from an "empty useless city centre" to a vibrant, sustainable, buzzing city. It was described as a miracle transition for Melbourne all thanks to the laneway. With the assistance of world renowned urban design consultant Jan Gehl, Melbourne was able to restructure itself from an "empty useless city centre" into a pedestrian-first urban hub. Further discussion on specific policy implementation and answers to "how" this fascinating transformation came to be will be further discussed through Melbourne's Case study exploration in section 5.3. However, this article feeds the argument for Toronto to follow Melbourne's path in the revitalization of laneways in the pursuit of achieving similar social and economic benefits that Melbourne has experienced from its laneway revitalization efforts.

When communities buy-into the idea of laneways as real cultural space, social, economic, and environmental benefits become remarkable byproducts of placemaking. All of a sudden a community is opened up to the possibilities and access to green space, community engagement opportunities, cultural spaces, shops, and dining opportunities (City of Melbourne & Gehl Architects, 2004). These spaces that were once reserved for the one or two "hip streets" in an urban centre, are possible in our very own backyards. The unused space, is slowly evolving into a cultural network of place.

“Unlocking these assets is a key part of creating safe, accessible spaces for residents to enjoy.”

Toronto Councillor Mary-Margaret McMahon | 2017



Toronto | Local Artist Photoshoot | 2017
Image By Meaghan Peckham Photography

3.4 Adaptive, Flexible, and Temporary

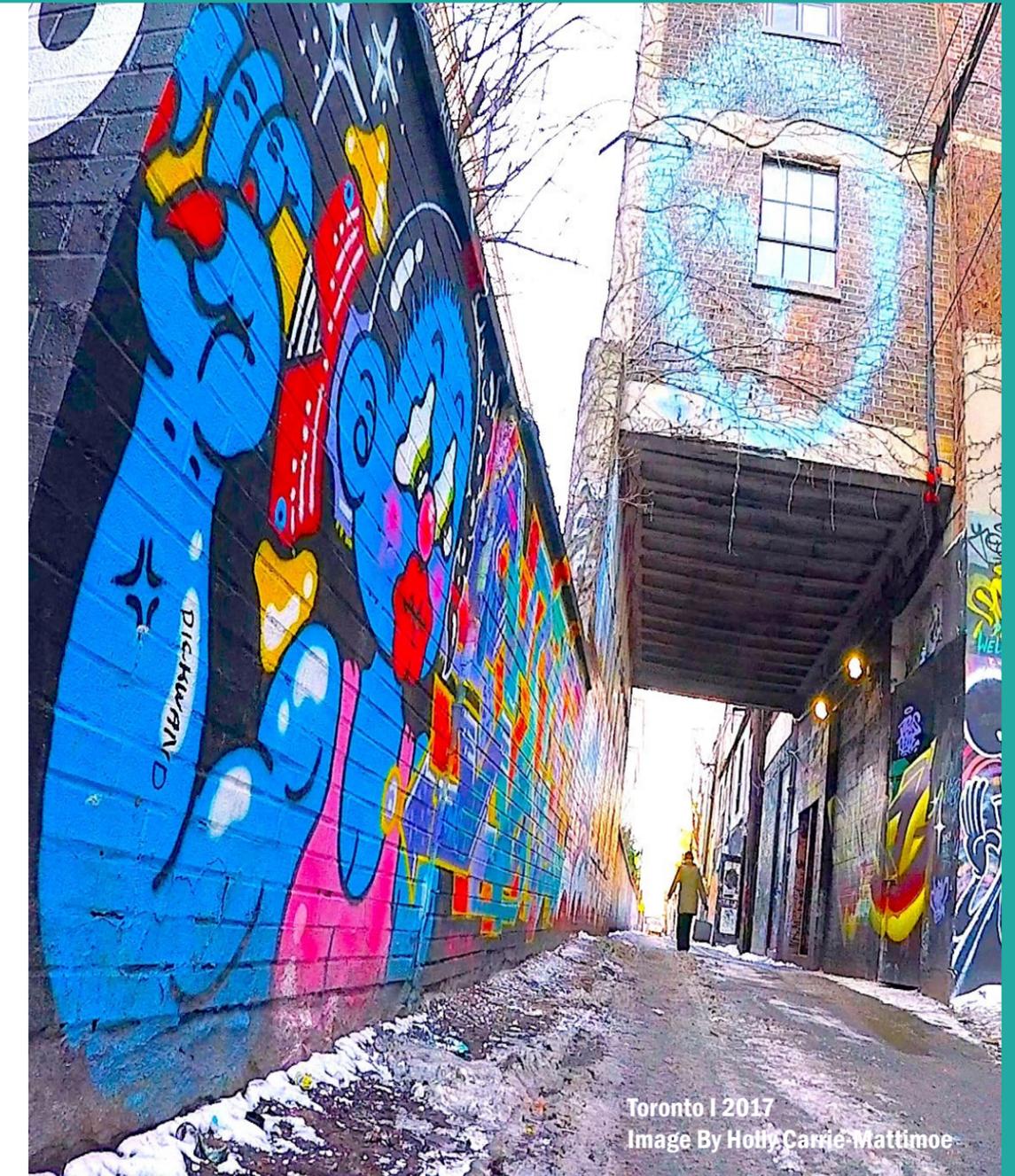
This is where the grey area comes in. The discussion on the subjectivity of 'beauty' and planning for the unplanned. How do we activate spaces without regulating and planning them to their demise? Julia Nevarez (2006) grapples with this contradictory subject arguing that "While providing an ideology of improvement, the aesthetics of order relinquishes the possibility of difference and dissent by regulating it with anticipation" (Nevarez, p.154). While this paper thus far has largely been advocating for the creation and development of these elaborate, vibrant, bustling laneways, perhaps what has been missing is the purposeful consideration of the value in "loose space" (Franck, 2007).

Not all laneways can, and should, be in an urban centres tourist guide's "must see" list. The path less travelled, or the spot less seen, creates its own unique charm and value to our neighbourhoods. Often times, these are the places for those that truly are apart of these neighbourhoods (Jacobs, 1969). These spaces are for the everyday grind that city dwellers know. The smell of freshly sprayed paint, the scurrying rodent, and the milk crate that has been fashioned into a restaurant cooks break chair. Believe it or not, these spaces are valuable, they are real, and they are adaptable to each user that enters the space (Henneberry, 2017, Gehl 2012). These laneways are not sterile, they exude a sense of freedom and flexibility, if only temporary, that's rarely a concern; the urban dweller knows how to make the most of even a single stroll down a 'grey' lane (Carter-Shamai, 2016).

“The possibilities for difference that public space affords seem to pose threats and thus in many instances are contained, pre-empted or disciplined.”

Nevarez | 2006

There is much to be said for the unplanned spaces in our cities, similarly, substantial literature is forming on these adaptive, evolving, and transient areas in our cities cores. Sam Carter-Shamai (2016), examined the value and uniqueness to this forgotten resource. He writes, "that the truest most authentic representation of what Toronto is can be found in not on the front streets and main boulevards but behind, in the neighbourhood alleyways and the forgotten landscapes where average Torontonians are able to express themselves and navigate the layers of their own narrative" (Carter-Shamai, 2016, p.37). Exemplifying that true capital (or the real value in our urban landscape 9) is not one found in the nearest Saks Fifth Avenue or Louis Vuitton, but flourishes through a city's ability to explore and empower the cultural capital, the human capital (Reijndorp, 2014). Our concealed places, undistinguished laneways, and other inconspicuous spaces of our city have the unpredictable power to provide multi-purpose, loose, and adaptive spaces for every human and creature who dare explore (Franck, 2007, Turner, 2012, The Laneway Project).



Toronto | 2017
Image By Holly Carrie Mattimoe

4.0 Planning and Policy Framework: Liberation vs. Restriction of the Law

There are many policies that both encourage and limit the viability of intensifying laneways. The Places to Grow Act (2006) calls for the annual intensification of a 40% increase in built up areas. Intensification, defined as the development of a property, site or area at a higher density than currently exists through redevelopment, including the reuse of brownfield sites; the development of vacant and/or underutilized lots within previously developed areas; infill development, or the expansion or conversion of existing buildings (based on the Provincial Policy Statement, 2014). While this seems promising, City policies and bylaws are currently restricting and offer challenges in the development and intensification of laneways. Intensification targets have arguably had unintentional impacts on Toronto's affordable land market, as such, neighbourhoods are grappling for what valuable public space is left. Creative and adaptive space will become a vital feature in our urban centre and laneways can be the forgotten linkage that we need. The question remains, what are we waiting on, why do laneways continue to be stagnant unused space? The answer may lie in our cultural understanding of what public space looks like along with our limiting policies and political will.

Many physical and cultural barriers lie ahead of Toronto in order for its laneway culture to be thought of as exploding with vibrancy and life. By highlighting some of the current policies seen throughout the city we will begin to understand how and where we can take steps to address gaps in policy and implementation of planning principles to recreate the three categories seen in Woodhouses (2011) research of Safety, Pedestrianization, and Environmental Quality.

Since most laneways in Toronto do not have service connections, laneway houses, cafes, and potential micro-retail shops would need to be serviced via connections that are located on the main street proving costly for developers (Vijayakumar and Collins-Williams, 2015).

Ontario's building code says that low-rise housing [or micro-retail shops and cafes] must provide access for fire department equipment by street, private roadway or yard. This access must account for the weight of fire-fighting equipment, the location of fire hydrants, as well as the turning and parking requirements of fire vehicles (Vijayakumar and Collins-Williams, 2015).

Waste collection and emergency vehicles also require access routes that are at least six metres wide. Where many laneways in Toronto are too narrow to accommodate these vehicles (Vijayakumar and Collins-Williams, 2015).



Toronto | 2017
Image By Holly Carrie-Mattimoe

Toronto Councillor Joe Cressy describes these restrictive policies as “more hurdles than roadblocks” (Pigg, 2015). Noting that the issue of accessibility concerns surrounding fire truck access has been dealt with on Toronto Islands with the use of smaller fire fighting equipment (Pigg, 2015). What is needed next is the political will and public support to bring forth policy changes and creative solutions that would encourage and propel the movement of resurrecting Toronto’s laneways into a legitimate urban space that adds to our public realm rather than remain an embarrassing blemish behind the rows of beautiful facades lining our streets.

In contrast to Toronto’s limited policies, Woodhouse (2011) highlights the City of Brisbane, Australia and their direct and purposeful motive in the creation of planning policies addressing laneway activation. “Brisbane City Council recently launched its own Vibrant Laneways strategy as part of the broader planning framework to enrich the urban fabric and liveability of Brisbane city centre” (p.292). Important to note here, a main takeaway of Woodhouse’s literature was political will and policy implementation having a predominant effect on the overall outcome and success in the integration of laneways into the public realm.

What is left for urbanites in Toronto is a long and arduous process of navigating the “grey” policies that exist in regards to what is permitted and “socially” acceptable uses of this space. Local organizations and planning firms have thankfully attempted to fill this gap in policies, and push for their resurrection and accessibility. Evergreen Brickworks recently published their Laneway Consultation Report (2017), outlining current cultural and social understandings of laneway space, how this space is perceived by communities, and what improvements Torontonians believe would make lanes more attractive to everyday use. Whereas “The Laneway Project” has developed a laneway Manual that outlines specifics on policies and practices that enable laneway activation as well as highlighting some barriers that persist in policy. These are highlighted on the following page and serve to support the need for more finite policy implementation of this expansive “grey resource”.

While local organizations and urban activists alike are challenging the status quo of these territories and revitalizing communities, political support would go a long way in this process. With intensification targets needing to be met in the City of Toronto, we can only hope that politicians will ignite a cultural shift, creating possibilities for more flexible, and evolving public spaces geared toward an array of uses.

Laneway ownership

Public laneways are owned by the City, and takes responsibility for maintaining them in a state of good repair.

Public laneways are public rights-of-way, and you must always obtain a permit to do projects in these spaces.

Private laneways are owned by private landowners, usually as part of an adjacent property or properties. Aside from city-wide requirements for emergency access, revitalization of these laneways is more flexible. (The Laneway Project)

Access requirements

Several City divisions, including Solid Waste Management, Toronto Fire Services and Infrastructure Services, have minimum requirements for the laneway width that must be left clear at all times so that they are able to access laneway infrastructure and adjacent properties. The ease of accommodating these requirements is affected by the laneway ROW width, its length and whether it is a dead-end or a through-route. (The Laneway Project)

Active local organizations

Engaged and organized local BIAs, Neighbourhood Associations, community centres and recreational groups can help to support laneway revitalization. (The Laneway Project)

State of repair

The shape that the laneway is in affects the first steps of a laneway revitalization project – a community cleanup might be a priority, while an already well-maintained laneway might be the sign of an engaged local individual or organization that can act as a partner for further improvements. (The Laneway Project)

Right-of-way (ROW) width

The width of the laneway between adjacent property lines determines how much space you have to work with. There are five standard widths for public laneways in the city, and any number of widths for private laneways. (The Laneway Project)

Adjacent open spaces

Laneways that can enhance the open space network by providing a safe and attractive route between nearby parks and/or privately-owned public spaces (POPS) are great candidates for revitalization. (The Laneway Project)

Edge conditions

The “walls” of a laneway greatly affect its character and feel, and can vary from parkland to blank concrete walls, murals, fire escapes, garage doors, asphalt and gravel. (The Laneway Project)

Permit requirements

Any work that makes temporary or permanent changes to or requires temporary or permanent setup in a public right-of-way (like a publicly-owned laneway) requires a permit or permits from the City. Work in a privately-owned laneway typically does not require a permit, unless that work includes the construction of a building. (The Laneway Project)

Upcoming neighbourhood developments

Planned local developments, including transit upgrades and repairs, new buildings, and upgrades and repairs to streets, sidewalks and laneways can catalyze and act as partners in the revitalization of local laneways. (The Laneway Project)

Pedestrian / bike routes & desire lines

Laneways that can help to connect local and city nodes, or can bridge gaps in the network of pedestrian and bike lanes and trails, are great candidates for revitalization. (The Laneway Project)

5.0 Case Studies:

Paving the way Through Success Stories



Montreal | 2016
Image By Alexi Hobbs

Inspiration can be found throughout the world; an archetype, a cultural standard, or simply a vision, are regularly used as a guiding hand to shape our own backyards. As such, this research has used the following case studies in Montreal, Vancouver, and Melbourne to inform Toronto's gaps and opportunities within our neglected back alleys. Moreover, the case studies will show a progression from Montreal's introduction of laneway greening, to Vancouver's greening and pedestrianization, and finally Melbourne's all encompassing system of lanescapes. Using Woodhouse's (2011) lens of public space "Success Indicators", we are able to explore and analyze how the case study cities lanes stand up to these indicators and provide valuable places for people, while enriching the urban fabric of city centres.

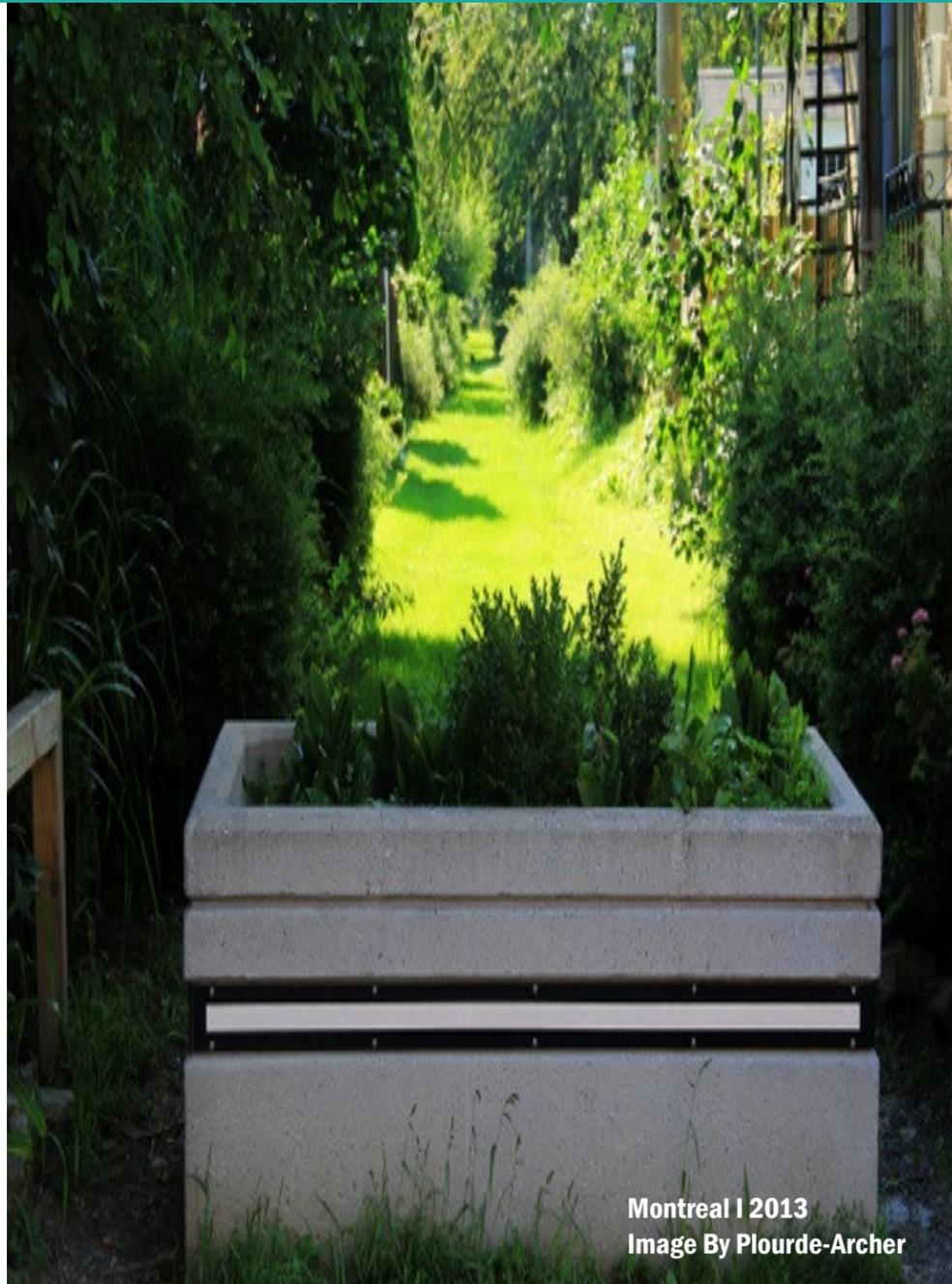
“Culture is rooted in territory and shaped by its relationship with nature. Conversely, territories themselves are human and cultural constructs. Land use mirrors the evolution of a society's lifestyle and values, which is reflected in the importance ascribed to preserving natural and cultural heritage and in the expressions of creativity that arise in response to a place's natural and cultural characteristics.”

Government of Quebec | 2012

5.1 Montreal Ruelle Verte



Montreal's green laneways have received praise and attention by its residents, for its commitment to create a sustainable urban centre through environmentally friendly and community building initiatives, (Freehill-Maye, 2016). In addition, the Ruelle Verte program performs well and is in essence what Woodhouse (2011) describes as "high environmental quality". These impressive laneways as we will continuously discover, do not happen 'accidentally'; public support and political will are critical in kickstarting change and implementing this movement. For a hundred years what has seemed to be the standard in laneway development in our 'automotive cities' has been to throw down cement in a haphazard manner and call it a day. This predominantly due to laneways being introduced to service just that, the car or service vehicle. But slowly, humans are starting to realize that the city should not be built primarily for the motor vehicle, but for the very people that live within it. Planning and building for humans, has the capacity to expand social, environmental and economical advantages to our cities (Gelh Architects, 2004), and in Montreal's case, their green laneway initiative has already spurred social cohesion amongst neighbours and seen positive environmental impacts .



Montreal | 2013
Image By Plourde-Archer



Montreal | 2013
Image By Plourde-Archer

Grassroots organizations and community groups have powered Montreal's changing laneway landscape. "Block by block across 19 boroughs, residents have gathered to beautify their alleys. Community groups pushed for the official designation, and in 1997 the city started funding the effort, typically granting \$10,000 to \$20,000 per block" (Freehill-Maye, 2016). Following the official designation of the first 'Ruelle Verte', laneways have been un-boxed; bursting with flavours, smells, and possibilities. This is community building, and this is the future of lanes.

Laneways have quickly become community hubs and gathering places. A space to meet a stranger, and a place to work together as community members to upkeep and feel ownership of this once derelict, neglected, concrete strip (City in Green, 2012). Moreover, Bike tours throughout the city have expanded their routes to include laneways as part of a defining cultural narrative. Because of these social, and environmental impacts resonating within the most intimate of communities, Montreal's Green lane scene has multiplied by unprecedented numbers. 62 green lanes were recorded within Boroughs across the city prior to 2010 that number has since swelled to over 250 official green laneways in 2016 (Freehill-Maye, 2016).

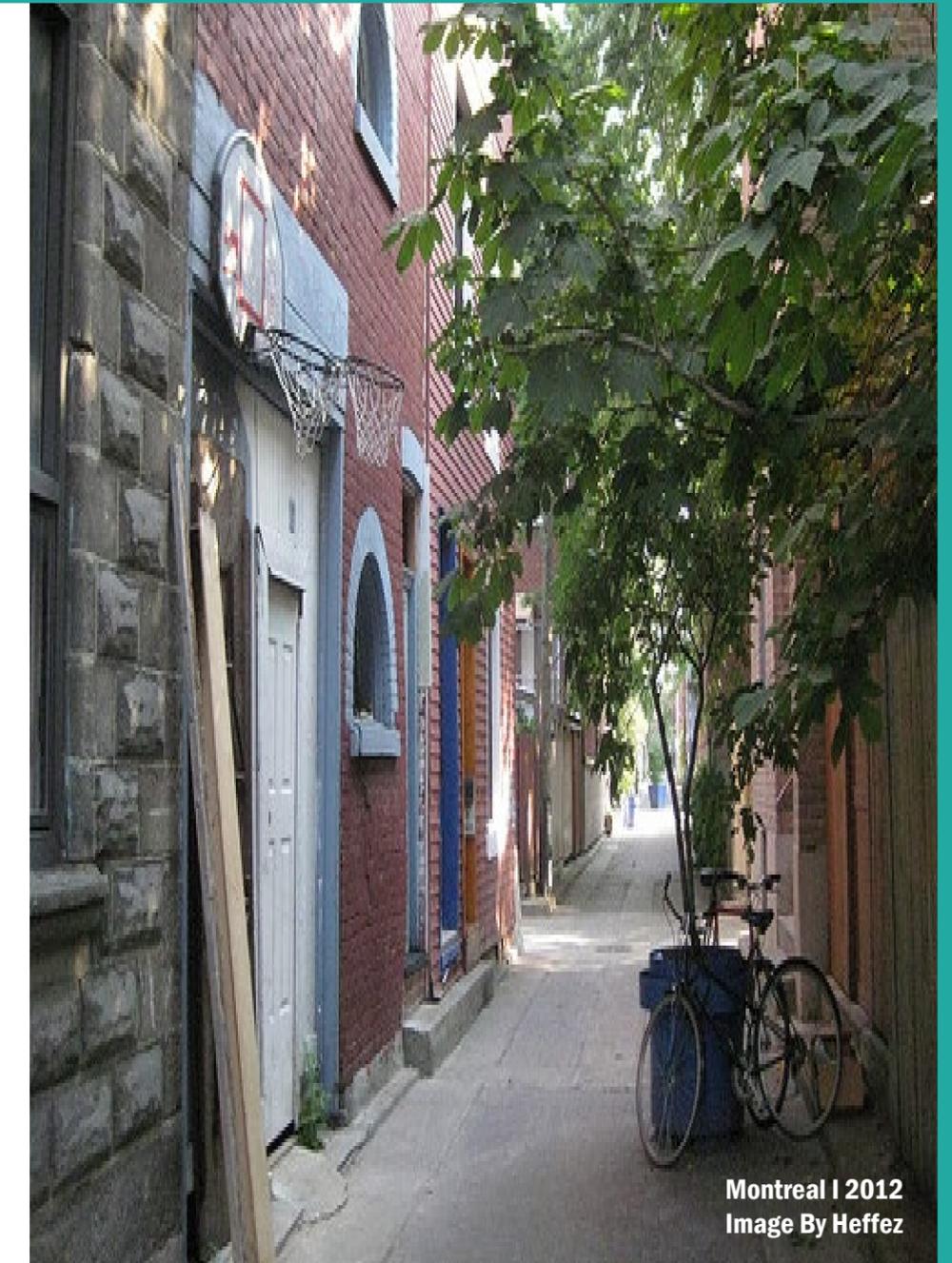
It's no accident that a sense of laneway pride and recognition has developed throughout Montreal, the implementation of city and provincial policies alongside active local greening initiatives have driven this cultural and ideological shift. The province of Quebec drafted "Agenda 21 for Culture" (2012) which set forth a guideline and placed importance on urban areas to create spaces that foster and empower cultural stimulation and growth (2012). The agenda states, "Given the interdependent relationship between culture and the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, cultural action and policies at all levels must reflect an integrated vision that seeks to establish complementary and mutually compatible development objectives. Furthermore, culture must play as significant a role in policy and major initiatives at the local, regional, and national levels as it does in international relations (Government of Quebec, 2012, p.7). This standard set forth by the province has remarkably trickled down to the city of Montreal's planning policies which have placed importance on laneway activation as a key area to build diverse community relations, and spur creativity and culture. Branches of Montreal's government such as the "Eco-Neighbourhood Program" and the "Ruelles Verte Program", have provided the funding and planning expertise to local neighbourhood groups who have the desire to undertake a laneway greening project (Ploudre-Archer, 2013).

“The first step was to green the alleyway. Now the project is to have a better life with the neighbors.”

Freehill-Maye | 2016

“A population's quality of life depends in large part on its cultural land use practices, as expressed in heritage, public art, design, architecture, and landscapes. All of these elements contribute to individual and collective well-being, foster a sense of belonging, and help make the environment more attractive.”

Government of Quebec | 2012



Montreal | 2012
Image By Heffez



Montreal | 2013
Image By Plourde-Archer

To underscore how impactful Montreal's initiative has been for its communities and environments, districts have doubled their Ruelle Verte budgets while remaining unable to keep up with demand. This however, does not deter or stop greening from happening. While Montreal has an official policy and criteria to designate a lane as a 'Ruelle Verte', these policies don't detract from the authentic social interactions that are afforded through laneway greening. "Even though local government and environmental organizations help to fund and operate the project's layout and initial construction, citizens who live around it are responsible of the day to day upkeep of the green alleyway" (Plourd-archer, 2013). This to some would seem like work, but to the urban city dweller bombarded with a concrete grey commute, playground, and backyard, community greening projects are a welcomed adventure.

This is simply the first case study city in this exploration and begins to show how simple and small interventions of space can bring large positive environmental and social impacts on communities. Along with showcasing a vision for Toronto's laneway greening opportunities, Montreal's policy implementation provides depth to the argument for the development of supportive policies, and governmental programs that help facilitate and foster social cohesion, community building, and greening plans.

5.2 Vancouver Laneways



The City of Vancouver was a critical piece in the exploration and analysis of laneway opportunities. In a red hot housing market similar to Toronto's, it became evident that laneways had not only been looked to for an alleviation in affordable housing, but as a relief to the intensifying city and diminishing open space (Fraser, 2016, Pigg 2015). Vancouver and Toronto's housing markets share many similarities, yet Vancouver arguably is facing an even greater housing crisis (Gordon, 2016); thus, their efforts in laneway activation were considered a precedent and vision in this research for the future possibilities of Toronto's lanes.

As we take a look at Vancouver's progression of Laneway activation, it takes a similar approach to Montreal, in that 'Greening' or environmental desires becomes the initial and driving force. In 2002 a pilot project unfolded to reimagine the stagnant back alleys in Vancouver's urban landscape. With wonderments such as, "What if there were a way to add green space without bulldozing any buildings? Or, What if adding that green space promoted alternate densification methods?" (Yerman, 2013) The answer remains in



Vancouver | 2013
Image By Yerman



Vancouver | 2013
Image By Nelms

the lane, and Vancouver's "Country Lane" pilot project unfolded with the conversion of a handful of standard back lanes into breathtaking natural landscapes (City of Vancouver, 2002). Unfortunately, sources pointed to the lack of political will and funding as to why the pilot project was not carried out into a full force Country Laneway bonanza (Yerman, 2013). That doesn't mean however the laneways were not a complete success. Again, as we saw with Montreal's rejuvenated and "greened-up" laneways, the Country Lanes transformed neighbourhoods past the superficial beauty of the space, but fostered community building and engagement (Hutchinson, 2013). The City councils report (2002) stated, "As the intent of this design is to provide a greener and more natural appearance, the additional vegetation may require increased maintenance from property owners to keep the lane aesthetically pleasing." By developing the foundation for laneway greening while placing responsibility over small maintenance and upkeep tasks, the City of Vancouver enabled residents to take ownership over this communal space, reinforcing community building initiatives and neighbourhood pride (Hutchinson, 2013).

“His grassy back lane has brought together his east side community. Neighbours are expected to maintain the strip, which Mr. Klassen regards as an amenity, an extension of his backyard; he calls it a “thin park.” He spends about 30 minutes each month mowing his share of grass, and says other homeowners do the same. It’s kept clean. “It’s not a place where people feel they can dump their old couches and garbage,” he says. “It became a gathering place for many us over the summers. We’ve held barbecues there.”

Hutchinson | 2013



Vancouver | 2013
Image By Nelms

Fast-forward to 2017, and you may be able to hear the rumbling of voices calling for the City of Vancouver to reignite this lost Pilot Project (Yerman, 2013). This time around, with laneway activation projects expanding across the globe, Vancouver has begun paving (or seeding) the way (Vancouver Public Space Network, 2014). While the laneway greening brings together the community and lends environmental benefits to the city, this report has yet to point to the economical benefits of laneway revitalization (Chan, 2013). Grassroots organizations such as “Livable Laneways” are pushing the boundaries of cultural conceptions of the back alley (Glover, 2013). These concrete pathways are moving more than just service vehicles, they are being transformed into pop-up shops and civic space for markets (Kronbauer, 2013). Now, this ‘loose space’, even if temporary, becomes a destination point, a place to linger and discover rather than avoid at all costs. These temporary micro-markets are beginning to fuel the local economy, while expanding the social and cultural realm of its community (Binks, 2017).



Vancouver | 2013
Image By Liveable Laneways

“In a city with soaring commercial rents, alleyway laneways could one day be a viable, less expensive option for shops, businesses, and restaurants. Perhaps it could even become part of the bike lane network? It’s time to get a little creative.” Chan | 2013



Vancouver | 2013
Image By Kronbauer

5.3 Melbourne Laneways



Lastly, to highlight the final progression in this case study analysis, Melbourne has evolved into an internationally renowned city for its (re)activation of laneways (O'Loan, 2016). While this title may often be given to the Country of Australia as a whole, I would argue this is in due part to the precedent set forth by Melbourne in which all other cities are waiting to mimic. The city has shown initiative both publically and politically, The cities lanes have been repurposed and revitalized unlike those seen throughout Montreal and Vancouver. These are spaces that have been integrated so finely into the urban fabric of the city, that it becomes a natural entity of the physical and cultural construct of the urban centre (Gehl Architects, 2004). They are both quaint and elaborate. In this urban landscape, laneways evolve and adapt growing into their individual unique form, like a teenager finding their confidence (Australia Tourism).

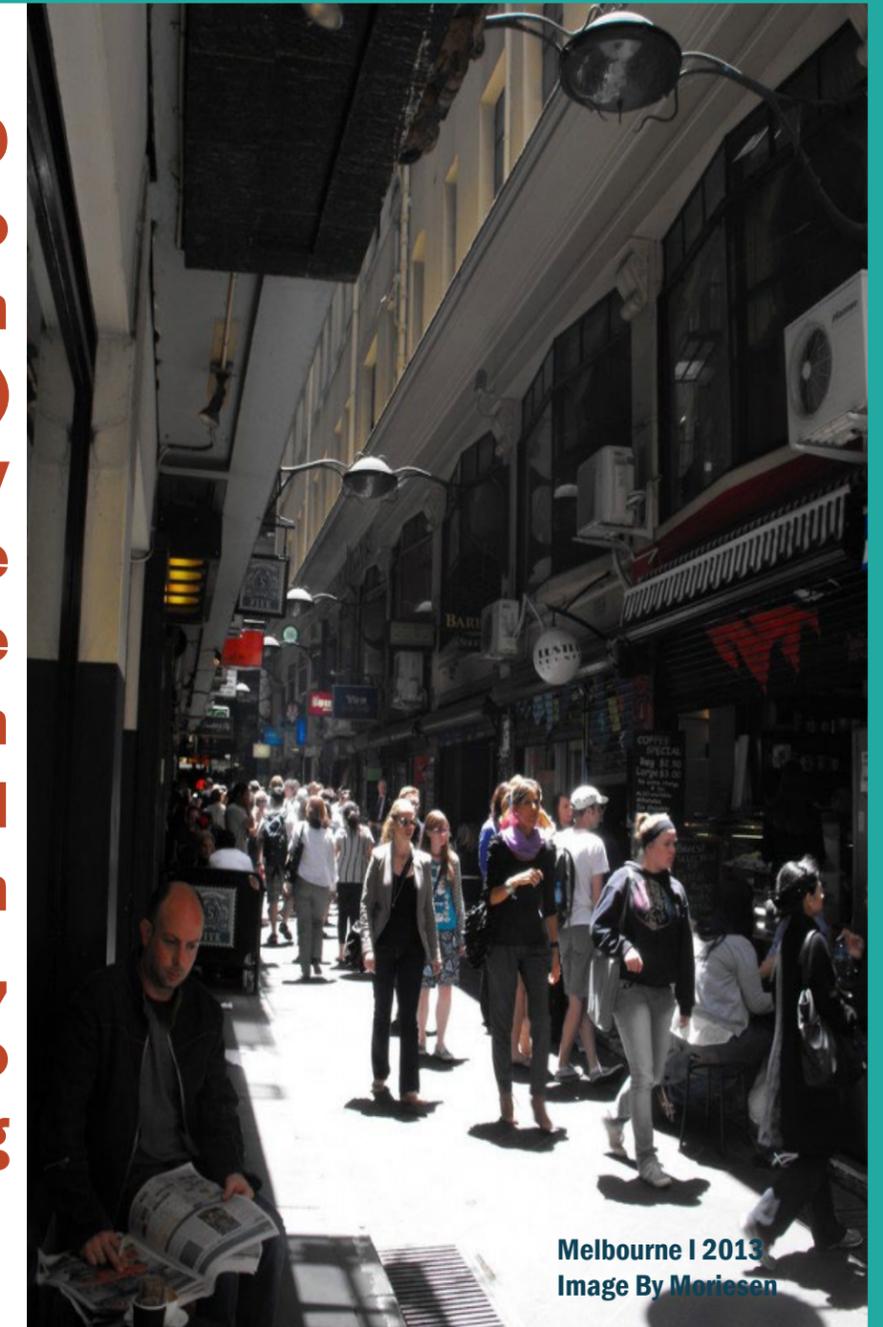
While Montreal's and Vancouver's approaches are worthy of recognition, Melbourne has arguably mastered the activation of lanes in its most real form. These spaces are not sterile, they are impeccably beautiful in their ability to encourage graffiti, 'hole in the wall' dining experiences, and stumbling wanderers at all hours (Oberklaid, 2015). There still remains the charming mystery, and the ability to perform the temporary, while seeming attractive enough to linger. This precedent has set forth impressive examples of how we can, and why we should, look to the lane to (re)create and introduce our own cultural narrative into this "free" and waiting laneway space.



Melbourne | 2015
Image By Oberklaid

“With an estimated 844,000 people (the equivalent to one-fifth of the population of metropolitan Melbourne) visiting the central city everyday, laneways are an important public space asset. The revitalization of laneways has helped to repair missing links in the pedestrian network, providing unique routes to support increased walking activity.”

Oberklaid | 2015



Melbourne | 2013
Image By Moriesen



Melbourne | 2015
Image By Silltoe

The city of Melbourne is ahead of the globe in its ability to activate their laneways and (re)create public space while keeping its rough urban authenticity (Oberklaid, 2015). These lanes hold their true grit while allowing a little glamour; walking the line of planning for the unknown and unanticipated. They have been developed just enough to scare the rodents, and deter the dumping of couches and other unwarranted debris, while keeping the charm of a secret passageway, and a hidden gem (Turner, 2012).

Oberklaid (2015) points to 5 main interventions and initiatives that led to the rise of Melbourne's laneway success highlighted on the following page.

1 Policy Reform

The City of Melbourne has taken enormous strides in drafting policies and implementing projects that create liveable, vibrant public spaces through lanes. The Love your Laneway Program has shown “improving local amenity through a community-based approach leads to reductions in waste, litter, and stormwater pollution. More vibrant laneways also discourage anti-social behaviour, attract increased numbers of people to the area and provide ideal settings for an expanded range of social and cultural activities (City Of Melbourne, 2016). The program works with local communities to seek areas for opportunity to improve the public realm in Lanes. In addition a “green your laneway” pilot project was spearheaded by the city to increase the environmental quality of the downtown core (City of Melbourne, 2016). As well as a “Minor Streets and Laneways” guide to address planning concerns surrounding the development of cafes throughout their laneway network (2016).

2 Fostering Activity

In the 1990's, similar to Toronto, Melbourne was struggling with encouraging its residents to stay, and to live in the city centre. “The City introduced the ‘Postcode 3000’ initiative in the 1990s, which sought to transform the stagnant business district into a 24-hour city by encouraging people to live in the center” (Oberklaid, 2015). This led to the activation and rejuvenation on street level, which quickly bled into the laneways.

3 Laneway Development

A cultural shift and understanding of laneway space has led to both the desire by community members for the development of laneways, and developers realizing the potential and opportunity to activate this once neglected backspace. “The Melbourne Planning Scheme provides guidance for development on laneways to support their diverse servicing, social, cultural, and economic functions. It classifies the quality of laneways, identifying many that would benefit from upgrades to enhance the pedestrian experience (Oberklaid, 2015)

4 Supporting Art and Culture

Public art was promoted, yet is thought of as temporary, creating layers of history in a changing and adapting environment. Laneways in Melbourne have successfully transformed the city's landscape and culture from an unwanted eyesore, to date night destinations, and playing an integral part in the urban identity of the City, all while boosting its sociability and economy.

5 Public Life Research

Melbourne is one of the only cities in the world who conducts research on pedestrian activity and the success/failures of its public space. As previously mentioned renowned architect Jan Gehl helped Melbourne with the revitalization of its urban centre which included a “groundbreaking” study entitled “Places for People” (2004 & 2014) which focused on the quality of public space and human activity in the central city” (Oberklaid, 2015).



Melbourne | 2015
Image By Audrey Voyage

“Although largely a product of the Victorian era, Vancouver could certainly attempt to mimic the success of Melbourne, Australia’s vibrant, colourful, and culturally important laneways. It truly adds a whole different dimension to the urban experience. In Melbourne’s case, it has more than 2.5-kms of laneways and it’s largely vibrant with people around the clock.”

Chan | 2013



Melbourne | 2014
Image By Piovesan

6.0 Claim the Lane: Toronto's Responsibility to Laneways

It's now Toronto's turn. It's time the city round the corner from the beautiful front facades we so meticulously plan. We must turn the corner and open our eyes to the blank space, the forgotten territory within our urban hub. Endless possibilities wait in the darkness while Torontonians clash at city hall fighting for more right of ways in our streets, more areas to play in our parks, and more patios to bask on in our short yet exhilarating summers. Thus far, this research has gathered literature and precedent examples around the globe showcasing the raw potential and advantages to laneway activation in urban centres. It is time that Toronto take a stance on livening the public realm, turn policy into action, and community initiatives into real works of art and public space for all.

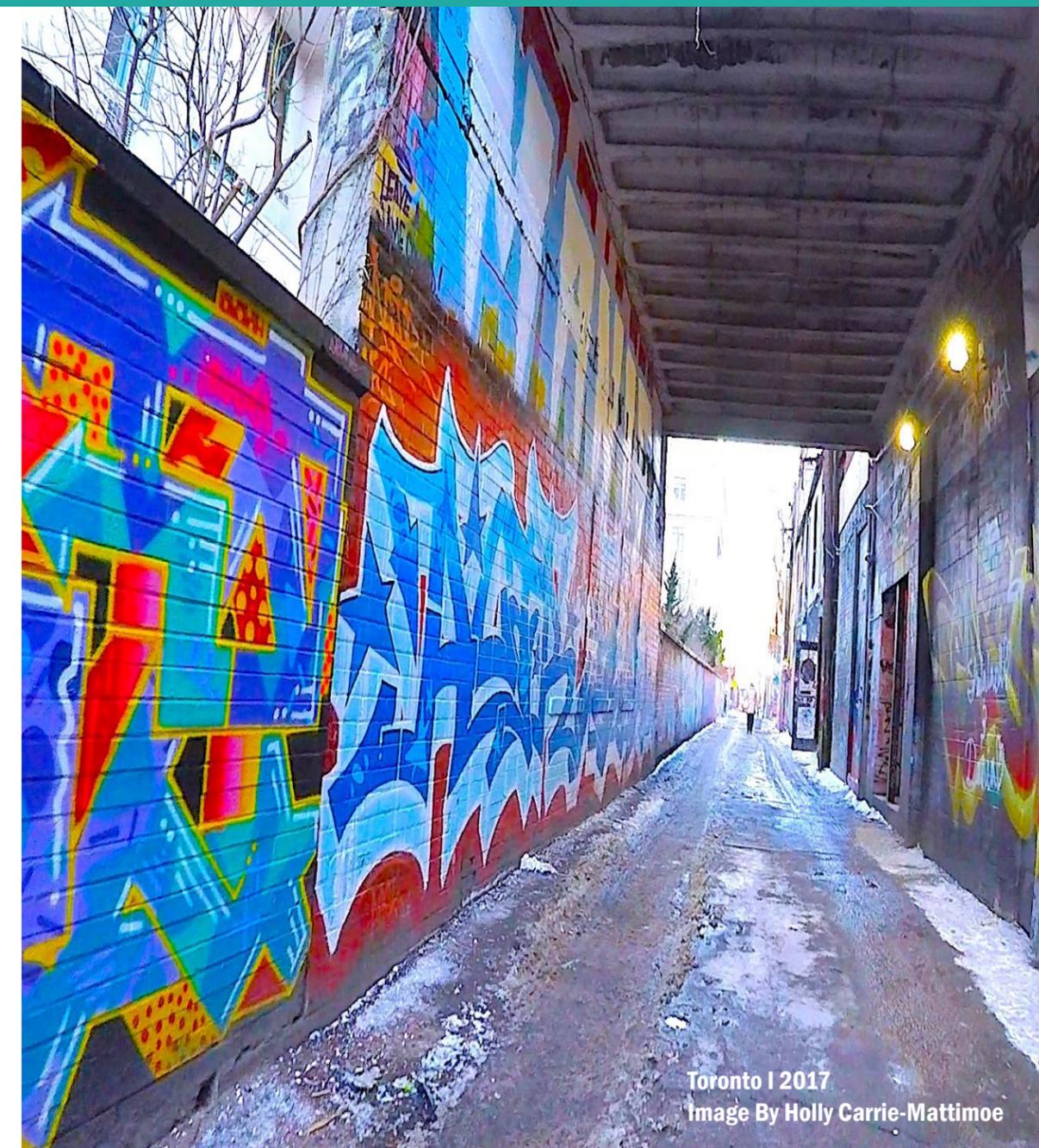
Admittedly, Toronto is not a world leader in public laneway activation, yet I would be Mindful not to discredit the many initiatives and steps that local NGO's along with a handful of councillors have taken to manifest a vision for the future. "The Laneway Project" mentioned previously in this research, works with local communities to help foster and lay the groundwork for community building initiatives and placemaking opportunities through environmental puncture projects, Laneway Masterplan Developments, Laneway Greening, and "Laneway Crawls" Bringing community celebrations into the lane. Evergreen Brick Works along with, Lanescape, Councillor Mary-Margaret McMahon (Ward 32, Beaches-EastYork) and Councillor Ana Bailão (Ward 18, Davenport) underwent a laneway suite consultation process with community members on the



Toronto | 2016
Image By Holly Carrie-Mattimoe

potential for laneway housing in Toronto in which a summary report was delivered on the current attitudes towards laneways and future visions (Evergreen, 2017). The process now must be to incorporate these initiatives with successful steps and policy implementation taken throughout precedent cities. Noting again, there is no one-size fits all solution, but the ability to incorporate similar projects and initiatives will lay the foundation for Toronto's own unique laneway culture to thrive.

A first step would be to mimic laneway greening pilot projects seen throughout Montreal and Vancouver. Expanding on the work of "The Laneway Project", City led policies and projects would help with funding gaps and broaden the scope of greening initiatives reaching a wider audience while strengthening public support. This initial step will bring members of the community as well as adventurous outsiders into the public realm of laneways allowing the users to determine the future changes to this space.



Toronto | 2017
Image By Holly Carrie-Mattimoe

The Future of Lanes

Careful not to discredit the work of Toronto's activists fighting the good fight in our backyards and our underutilized public space, this research has established many future objectives and possibilities that Toronto's lanes should consider in taking shape over the next decade. Reiterating the battle for public space in our encroaching urban hub, laneways will provide much needed relief and escape from the concrete jungle represented through the following models:

Linear Parks and Green Space

Greening laneways is virtually universal. Not all laneways are shaped in a way to allow for intensification or development; However, linear parks and the addition of green space could be an affordable and viable option to the regeneration of these urban spaces. Discussed as the potential initial step in Toronto's laneway resurgence, greening can be an "easy win" with stakeholders. A place for community gardens that will foster social cohesion and integration is a unique way to conquer the neglected laneway, in an urban centre. Laneway greening is arguably the best practice for community building initiatives and creating a sense of ownership and pride throughout this public space (Hutchinson 2013). Moreover, the addition of green space aides in water retention and overall positive environmental impacts for our city (Gehl Architects, 2004).

Micro-retail/Dining/ and Multi-Use Spaces

Don't be afraid to encourage the temporary, pop-up markets are an excellent way to show the community what laneways can become, even only for a weekend. This is where implementing a pilot project to assess the viability of temporary markets or cafe spaces through laneways can be implemented. Retail, dining, and overall multi-use spaces, will be a key component in the creation of vibrant laneways (Oberklaid, 2015). Following examples seen throughout cities such as Melbourne Australia, creating the laneway as a destination and a motive to linger, will be the catalyst for the strengthening of laneways as vibrant public spaces. Small multi-use spaces will not only add people, businesses, and housing to the space, but service the community and spur local economic growth.

Transport Networks

Get Creative! Laneways provide important linkages and thoroughfares for people and cyclists and is recommended by the Complete Streets Guideline (2017). Think about adopting a plan that restricts service delivery times for trucks and deters through traffic, seen successfully implemented in Vancouver and Melbourne (Chan 2013, Gehl 2004). Mitigate automobile traffic to encourage pedestrians and cyclists to take a safe shortcut on their way to work or play (City of Melbourne, 2016). This is an affordable alternative to restructuring of major street networks, the laneways are already constructed. Design a community engagement strategy that reaches out to communities similar to Evergreen Brick Works laneway suites engagement process. Invite pedestrians and cyclists into the lane by making the space more visible and accessible, allow for a cultural shift to naturally take over. Our laneways provide an attractive alternative to the fight for space on busy vehicular roadways and could perform in much the same way as sidewalks with the addition of retail, dining, and patios opening their back (front) doors, mimicking the lanes in the City of Melbourne.

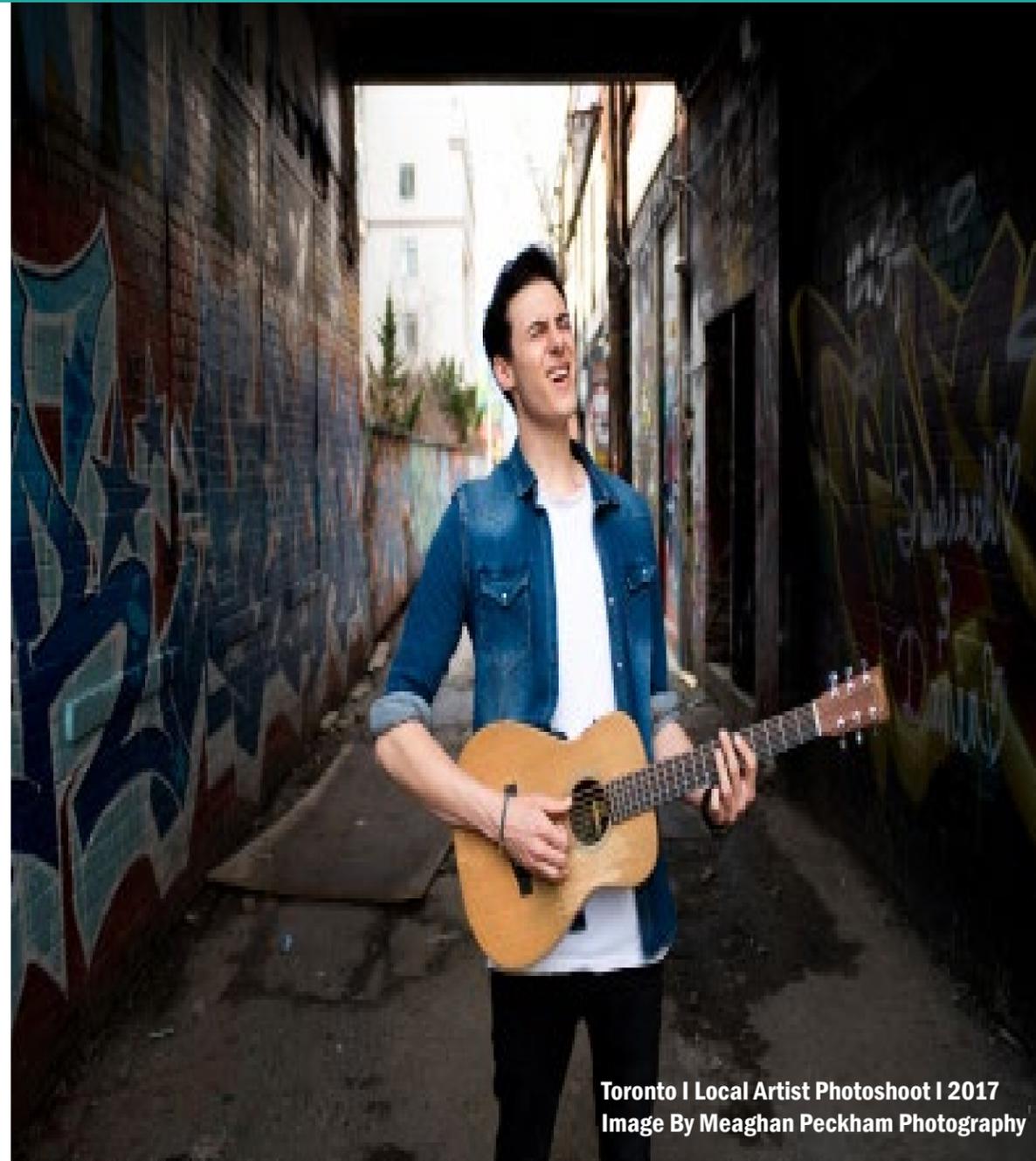
Housing

The development of Laneway housing is becoming a hot button topic in the City of Toronto. While housing prices continue to increase, and affordable housing is limited, laneway housing may be our answer (Landscape). Laneway housing can create an alternative for the cities affordable housing crisis, while remain a viable option to intensify a neighbourhood without creating medium to high-rise buildings in low-rise communities. Local organization 'Landscape' currently is working diligently to create solutions to laneway housing while 'grey policies' persist in Toronto. A Laneway housing framework is currently being drafted, and it can not come soon enough. In addition, the increased human presence in lanes naturally creates a sense of community, belonging, and "normalized" cultural narrative for laneways to be adopted as a safe and viable public space alternative (Vancouver Public Space Network, 2014).

Public Safety

Without a sense of safety laneways will remain untouched. Being careful not to create a completely sterile and artificial environment, plans should adopt light fixtures to improve visibility and discourage illicit behaviour (Woodhouse, 2011). Moreover, with the adoption of laneway activation plans public safety in laneways becomes less of a concern (Laneway Summit, 2016). When we name lanes, claim space, and open our doors to the surrounding environment, all of a sudden we have eyes and ears on the lane. With the presence and sense of regeneration, laneways will no longer be a place to avoid due to "shady" activity, but a place to belong and cherish at all hours. This was proven through Melbourne's 'postcode 3000' initiative (Gehl Architects, 2004), driving change through the presence of a 24 hour accessible and vibrant city.

Furthermore, the 2017 Complete Streets Guideline was a groundbreaking resource that specifically included laneways. To elevate the effectiveness of this report, actions should be taken to use this guide as a framework in the adoption of laneway pilot projects. Seen throughout the case study research, pilot projects were a remarkable tool used by Cities to create temporary experiments with the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of these public realm changes. Reports quantifying environmental, social, and economic changes to the urban landscape through temporary projects also serve to strengthen public and political support. While following precedents around the globe is a useful tool to initiate public, private, and political interest in this forgotten territory, it's important that we then allow the everyday urbanite, to mold these spaces to fit within the cultural urban fabric of our city.



Toronto | Local Artist Photoshoot | 2017
Image By Meaghan Peckham Photography

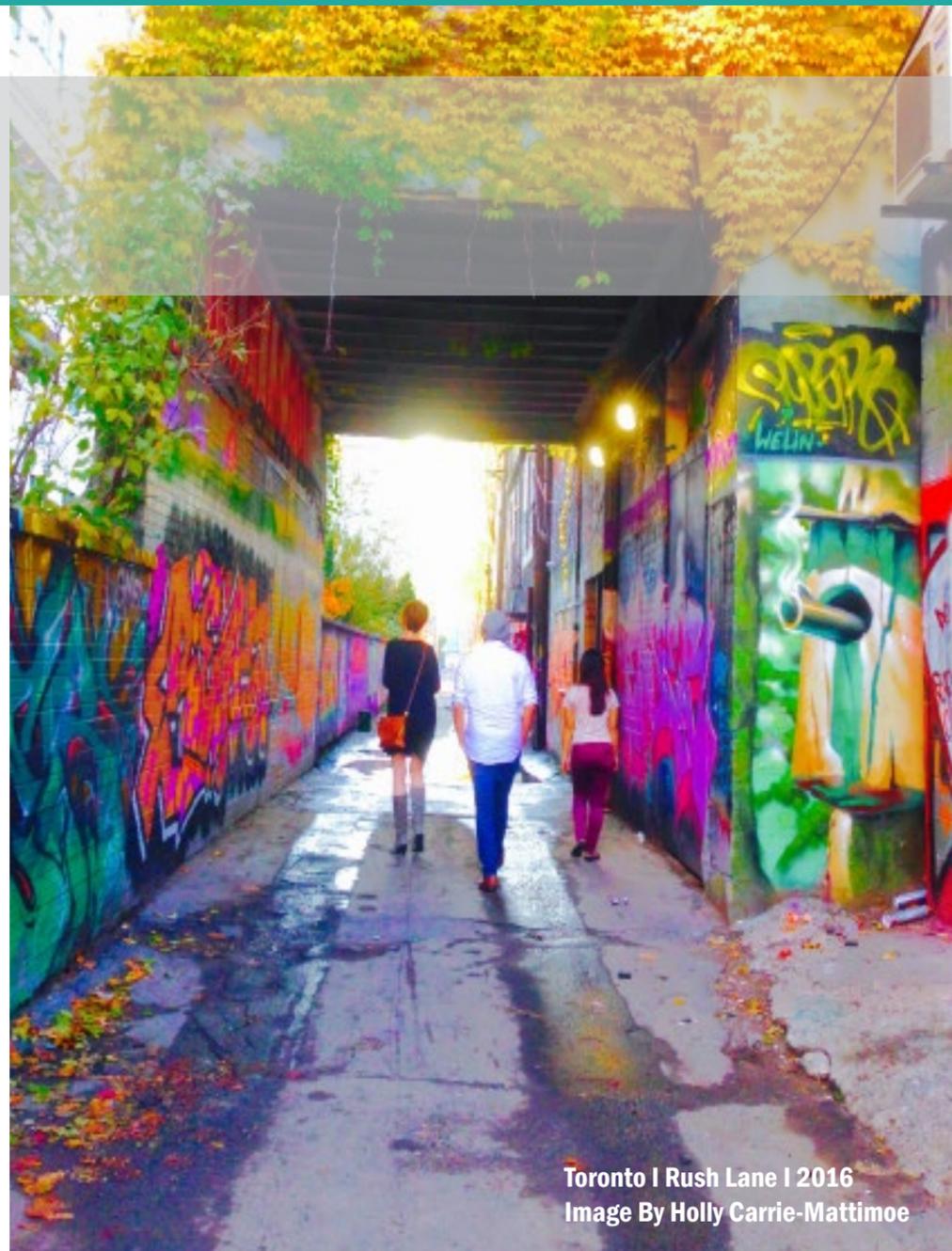


Toronto | Cultural Icons | 2017
Image By Holly Carrie-Mattimoe

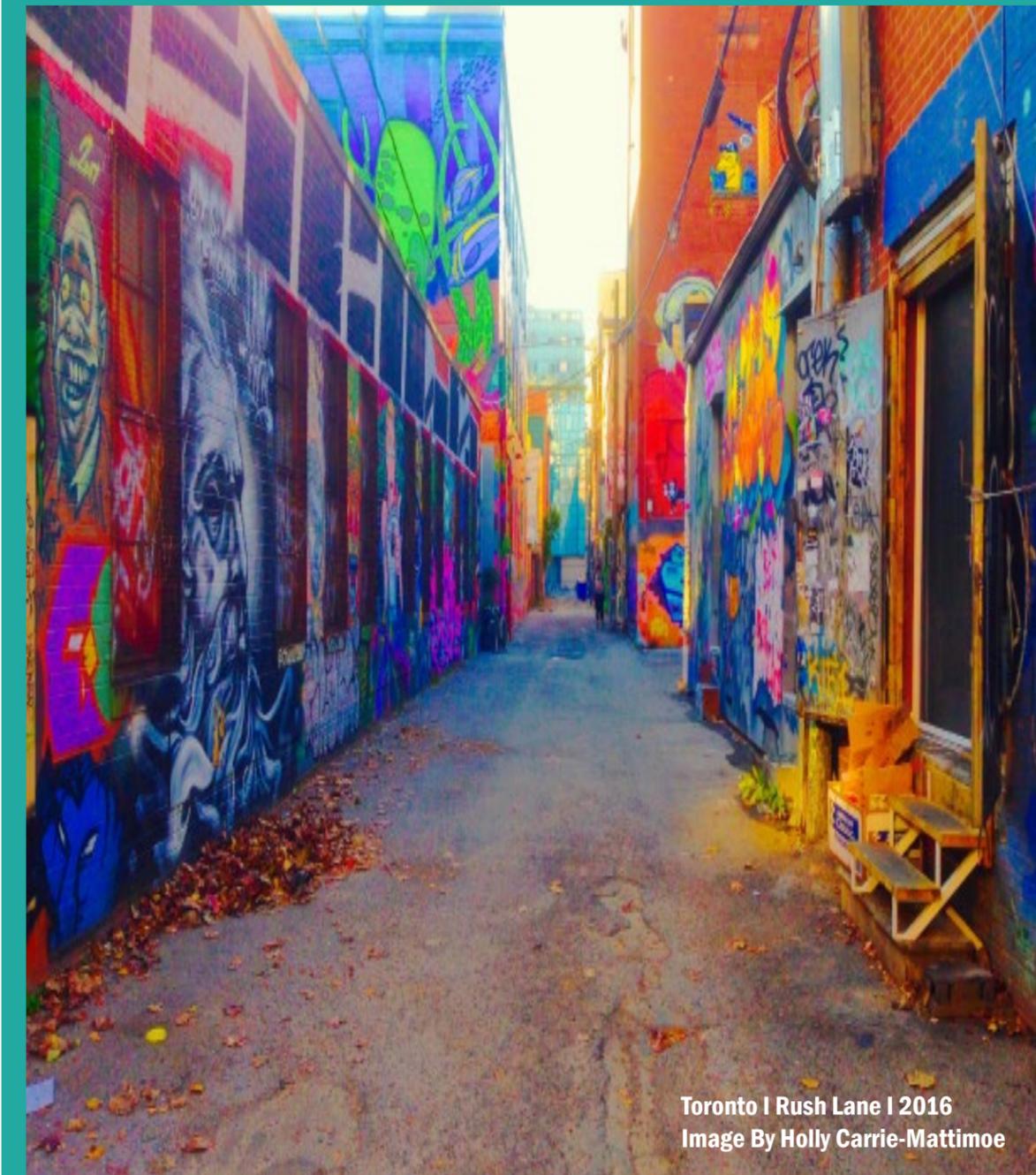
7.0 Conclusion: Steps to Laneway Heaven

This timely piece of research aimed to contribute to a continuing literature and narrative surrounding the utilization and evolution of laneways within urban centres. Merely a part of a larger movement, laneway research will continue to build momentum for our cities to operate differently, and to start a cultural shift in the way we understand and move through these urban territories.

Planners, architects, urban designers, policy makers, and the urbanite all play a vital role in Toronto's evolving city. Public space is at a premium while laneways remain virtually untouched and underutilized. Moreover, continued pressure to develop and intensify around previously built up areas create tension within our streets and public right of ways. It is the laneways turn to be looked to for relief and a welcomed improvement to our public realm. The future of Toronto's public space is hidden behind our homes, condos, and work spaces in all its glory; waiting for multi-use markets, transit corridors, additional housing, linear parks, and endless possibilities afforded to unplanned loose space.



Toronto | Rush Lane | 2016
Image By Holly Carrie-Mattimoe

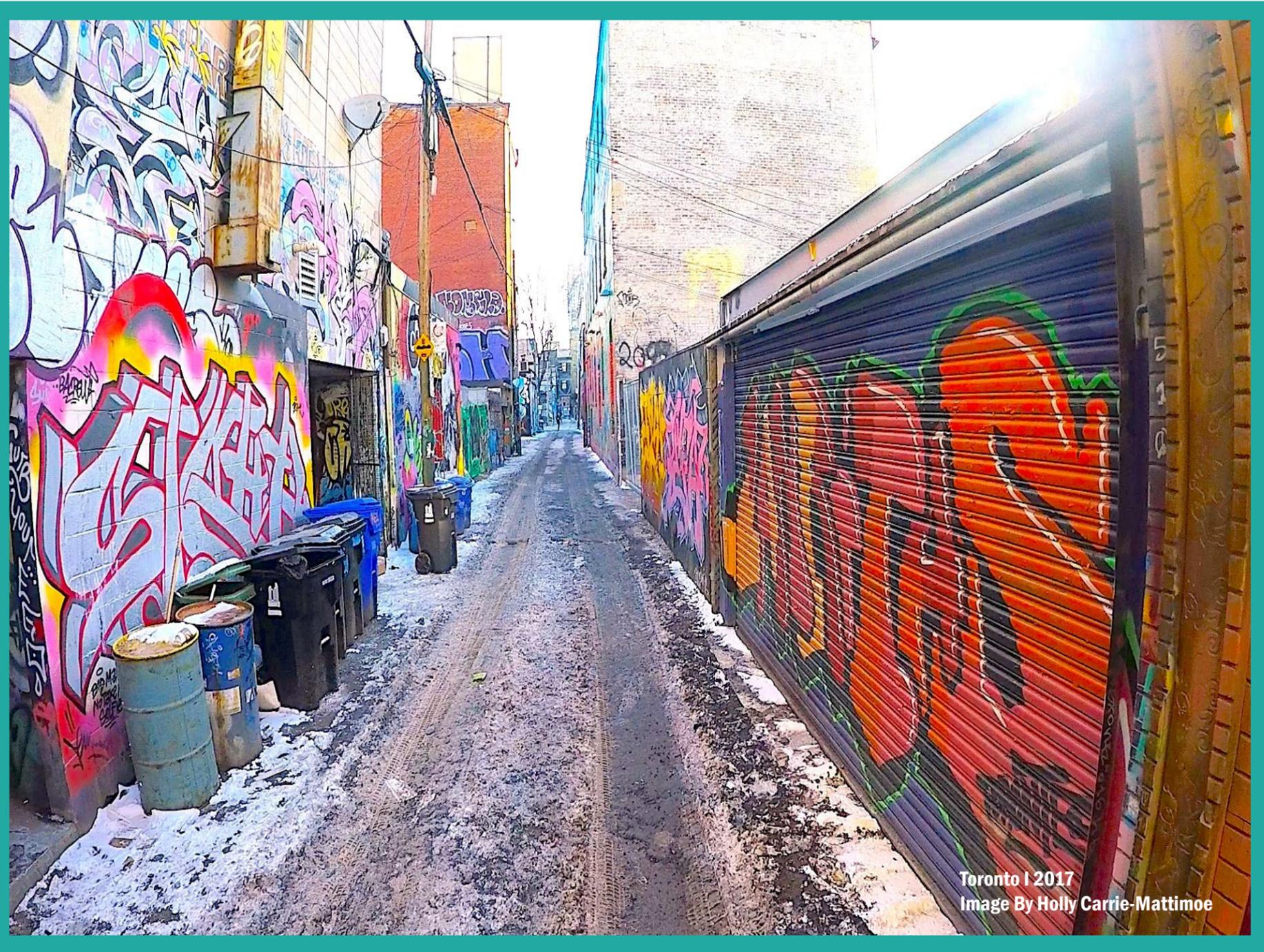


Toronto | Rush Lane | 2016
Image By Holly Carrie-Mattimoe

Woodhouse's (2011) framework of 'successful' public spaces was a useful tool in the evaluation and analysis of global case studies. However, I would encourage other planners to undertake similar studies to enhance our knowledge on the usefulness and potential that lies within our own back alleys. Laying the groundwork for future laneway success indicators and adaptable planning and design frameworks is what this research intended to inform.

Through the scope of this research it became clear that more direct policies need to be developed and implemented in City of Toronto's intimate neighbourhoods that bring stakeholders together to achieve a similar objective of improving the public realm socially, economically, and environmentally. Laneway Greening, development of a public laneway framework, and the implementation of pilot projects were found to be the most successful tactics in the resurgence of neglected lanes, and is recommended as the initial steps in Toronto's activation process.

As our city continues to evolve, and we begin to realize the value in planning for people and culture, laneways have the potential to empower the everyday urbanite. If this research has accomplished one thing, I hope it be inspiration for the urban dweller to discover, to explore, and to venture into our unique and expansive laneways; welcome to the new public realm, make it yours.



Toronto | 2017
Image By Holly Carrie-Mattimoe



Toronto | 2017
Image By Holly Carrie-Mattimoe

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