



November 21, 2019

Regent Park and Cabbagetown: Past and Future

This talk is based on research for Laura and Robert Johnsons' recent book *Regent Park Redux: Reinventing Public Housing in Canada (2017)* which evaluates one of the biggest experiments in public housing redevelopment from the tenant perspective.

Abstract

At the middle of the 20th century the lands west of the Don River and south of Bloor Street were a district of small factories and working-class settlement. This was a low-to-middle-income neighbourhood, consisting mainly of one- and two-story homes, many in poor condition. The Cabbagetown that Hugh Garner described referred mostly to the blocks south of Gerrard and east of Parliament Streets, but housing stock and socio-economic conditions were fairly homogeneous over a much larger territory to the north and west. In the following decades different parts of the district diverged: Garner's old neighbourhood became Regent Park, Canada's first and largest public housing development, while the blocks to the north underwent private renovation, becoming the Cabbagetown of today. Efforts are now underway to redevelop and redefine Regent Park as a mixed-income neighbourhood. Planners are trying to address the complaints and failings of the old Regent Park while preserving and enhancing its positive features. Three phases of the twenty-year project are now complete. This is an opportunity to take stock of what has (and hasn't) been accomplished, and to anticipate future opportunities and challenges. Our discussion will also raise questions about the past and future relationship between Regent Park and today's Cabbagetown.

Join us for a fascinating insight into this ongoing project and a discussion.

Moderator:

Gale Moore is the Chair of the CPA & a retired UofT faculty member (Sociology) & former librarian. Her research interests are at the nexus of society & technology. Gale has published widely in several fields including sociology, computer science, and design.

Panelists:

Robert Johnson is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Toronto. He spent most of his career studying and teaching Russian History. He has always had a side interest in urban history and urban planning, dating from an urban redevelopment internship during his undergraduate years. He is especially interested in the preservation and repurposing of former factories and commercial structures—in Toronto and numerous sites in the USA and Europe. He has written about markets, public spaces and street life in Russia. He and Laura have lived in Cabbagetown since 1973.

Laura C. Johnson is Professor Emerita at the University of Waterloo School of Planning. Social planning is her area of research and teaching specialization. She has authored several books and numerous articles on families, neighbourhoods, and housing. In 2004 she received the American Planning Association's National Women in Planning Award. Laura's work on Regent Park addresses her long-term interest in housing as a family support. Her 2017 volume *Regent Park Redux: Reinventing public housing in Canada*, co-authored with Robert Johnson, follows some 50 Regent Park households through their experiences of displacement, temporary housing, and resettlement in a newly rebuilt Regent Park community.

Stephanie Fernandes holds an MA in Planning from the University of Waterloo. She was part of the interview project on which *Regent Park Redux* is based. She is also an experienced solid waste management professional with a demonstrated history of working in municipal government. Her work has included leading waste reduction programs using a collaborative and community-based model to support building a 'reduce, reuse and repair' culture.