

Main Street as Old Growth Forest
uses analogies from the environmental,
conservation and ecology movements
to describe the value of our rapidly
disappearing Main Streets with regard to
their types, states, complexity, diversity,
and other attributes.

Main Streets that are still the retail core of their communities (steady state)
are compared to those in decline or rehabilitated through preservation.



Catherine Nasmith is a practicing architect; president of the
ACO Toronto Branch; Jane Jacobs prize winner (2010) and publisher of
Built Heritage News. She has been observing
Main Streets since the 1980's.

A photograph of a lush green forest. In the foreground on the left, a large, thick tree trunk leans slightly to the right. The forest floor is covered in green undergrowth and a dirt path leads into the distance. Tall, thin trees rise in the background, their leaves creating a dappled light effect. The overall scene is vibrant and natural.

OLD GROWTH

What is an Old-Growth Forest?

Old-growth forests are characterized by a number of structural and ecological features. The most obvious feature is the abundance of huge, old trees that tower far above the lower levels of the forest.... Because of the great length of time that it takes for these forests to evolve, we often think of them as unchanging environments. On the contrary, the old-growth forest is a very dynamic system in which constant changes are taking place; large and small scale disturbances change the structure and composition of the forest, renewal and recycling of young and old trees continually revitalizes the forest, and the lives of the inhabitants are continually reshaping and responding to it. All of these processes result in the diverse and highly productive ecosystems we call old-growth forests.

Temagami, Ontario

**MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST**

FIFTH STREET

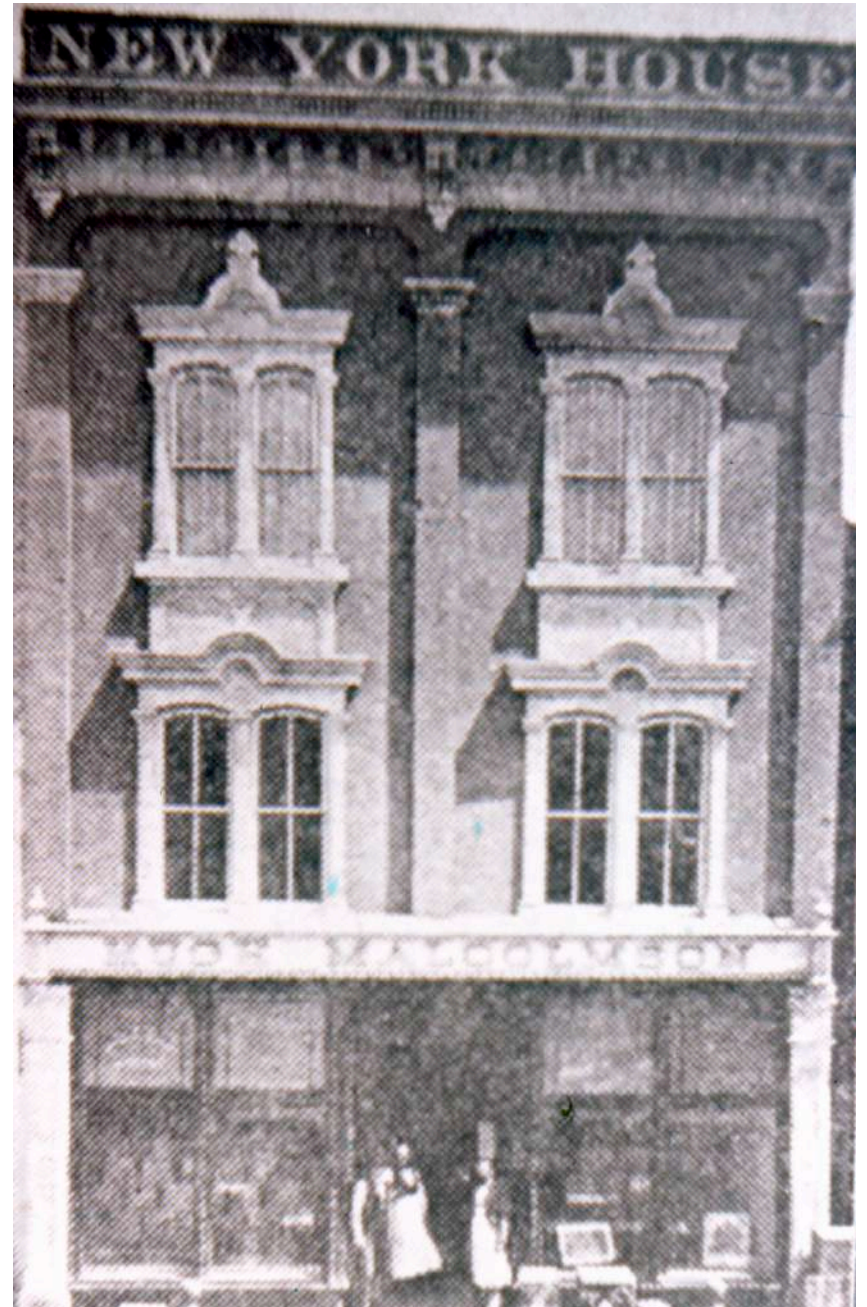




CATHERINE
N. SMITH
ARCHITECT

MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST

HUGH
MALCOLMSON'S
GROCERY 1912



**MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST**

**CHATHAM
ONTARIO, 1912**



A photograph of a forest floor. In the center, there are several young pine saplings with vibrant green needles. They are surrounded by various broadleaf plants with large, green, ovate leaves. Some of these leaves show signs of insect damage, with small holes and yellowish-brown spots. The ground is covered with a layer of brown pine needles and fallen leaves. Several thin, greyish-brown branches are scattered across the scene. The overall lighting is natural, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

**DIVERSITY
AND
RANDOM
SELECTION**

**MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST**

**CHATHAM
ONTARIO, 1913**





**MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST**

**DUNDAS WEST,
TORONTO**



**RARE AND
ENDANGERED
SPECIES
SYMBIOSIS
INTER-
DEPENDENCE**



MAIN STREET AS OLD GROWTH FOREST

RARE SPECIES

- Current Building Codes make it impossible to replace this stock
- A small Main Street building contains enough embodied energy to drive around the world 5 times.
- Throwing such a building away undoes the environmental benefit of recycling over 3 MILLION pop cans!
- World Watch estimates we will have run out of many building materials by 2030
- Building waste makes up 20-35% of landfill





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N. SMITH
ARCHITECT

MAIN STREET AS OLD GROWTH FOREST





**THREAT/DECLINE/
RENEWAL**



**MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST**

**QUEEN ST. EAST,
TORONTO**





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**MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST**

**QUEEN ST. WEST,
TORONTO**





**MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST**

**INCREMENTAL
INTENSIFICATION
QUEEN ST WEST,
TORONTO**



A photograph of a lush forest floor. In the foreground, a large, moss-covered log lies horizontally across the frame. The ground is covered with various green plants, including large-leafed species and ferns. The background is filled with numerous thin tree trunks and dense foliage, creating a sense of a thick, mature forest. The text "STEADY STATE" is overlaid in the center of the image in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

STEADY STATE

**MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST**

**HANOVER,
ONTARIO**



**MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST**

**HANOVER,
ONTARIO**





CATHERINE
N A SMITH
ARCHITECT

MAIN STREET AS OLD GROWTH FOREST

STABILITY



MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST

KENSINGTON
MARKET, TORONTO
ONTARIO

NEIGHBOURHOODS

La Palette's move marks the end of an era

They helped make Kensington what it is today. Now, the French bistro and its firebrand owners are decamping to Queen West

TABASSUM SIDDIQUI

From the outside, the unassuming little restaurant near the corner of Augusta and Oxford gives no sign of the importance it's brought to bear on the neighbourhood over the past ten years.

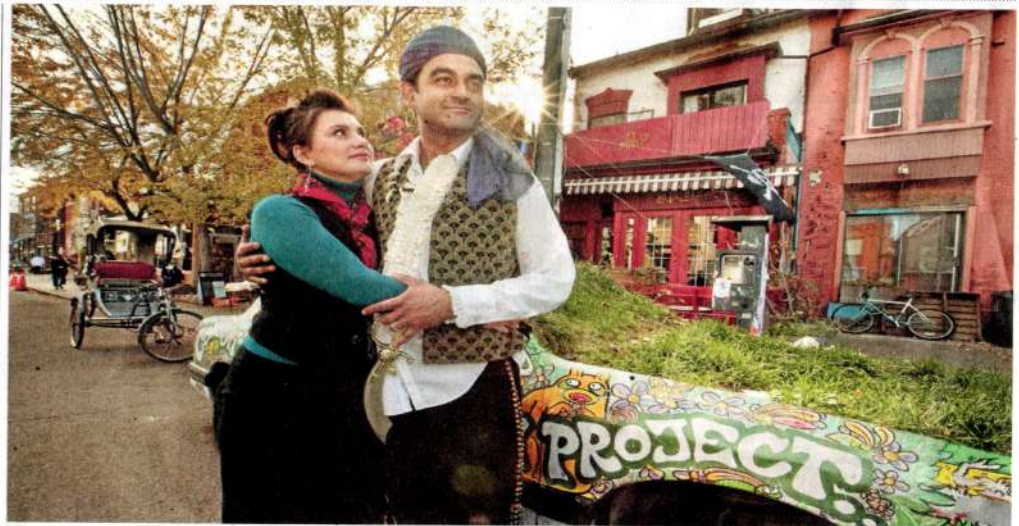
But French bistro La Palette has not only proved that fine dining (the best steak frites in town) was possible in the Market, it has also refined Kensington's identity as a socially charged, community focused neighbourhood.

So many are asking what it means that, just as owners Shamez Amlani, best known in the neighbourhood as the brainchild behind the Market's hugely successful monthly Pedestrian Sundays event, and his wife Maria Litwin should be celebrating the restaurant's tenth anniversary, they're instead preparing to close its doors at the end of the month.

The establishment's impact on the area has been huge. Veronica Laudes, owner of the successful tapas bar Torito just up Augusta Avenue, says, "Shamez took us to where we are today - before, we were nothing."

Inspired by the lively European boites they'd stumbled upon during their travels, Mr. Amlani and Ms. Litwin decided to open La Palette in Kensington Market in 2001, transforming the shabby-but-intimate space into one of the coziest, most romantic little bistros in the city.

But what started out as a reasonable monthly rent of \$1,500, amortized over the first five years, has since ballooned to over \$4,000 today, a problem many in



Maria Litwin and Shamez Amlani, pictured here on Halloween, brought the neighbourhood together, say locals. JENNIFER ROBERTS FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

LAST MEALS

After a decade in Kensington Market, beloved local French bistro La Palette couldn't leave without a celebration of its time in the neighbourhood.

"We can't fit enough people in this room to have everyone



The more popular the Market becomes, the more successful the businesses here become, the higher their rents are

restaurant quickly became the community's de facto clubhouse, bringing the neighbourhood together.

"The Market had been in a slump," she says, "and Pedestrian Sundays and La Palette helped reinvigorate the area.... Everyone

Pick, who is the man behind many upscale overhauls in the Market (and who infamously made a failed bid to have a Starbucks installed there) abruptly hung up on a reporter asking him about the neighbourhood. Ms. Laudes and other Kensing-

**MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST**
GUESS WHERE?





PROTECTED

MAIN STREET AS OLD GROWTH FOREST



**MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST**

**RESTAURANT ROW
KING ST. WEST**



A wide-angle photograph of a vast field of purple flowers, likely a species of knotweed, stretching to the horizon. The sky is clear blue with a few wispy clouds. In the background, a dense line of green trees is visible. The text 'INVASIVE SPECIES' is overlaid in the center of the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

INVASIVE SPECIES



**MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST**

**QUEEN ST. EAST,
TORONTO**





CATHERINE
N.A. SMITH
ARCHITECT

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**YONGE ST.,
TORONTO**





CATHERINE
N. SMITH
ARCHITECT

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OLD GROWTH FOREST**

**YONGE ST.,
TORONTO**





CLEAR CUT

**MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST**

**BRANTFORD,
ONTARIO**



MAIN STREET AS
OLD GROWTH FOREST
YONGE STREET





CATHERINE
N. SMITH
ARCHITECT

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LESLIEVILLE., TORONTO





CONSERVE?

MAIN STREET AS OLD GROWTH FOREST

KEY FINDINGS

- Older, mixed-use neighborhoods are more walkable
- Young people love old buildings
- Nightlife is most alive on streets with a diverse range of building ages
- Older business districts provide affordable, flexible space for entrepreneurs from all backgrounds
- The creative economy thrives in older, mixed-use neighborhoods
- Older commercial and mixed-use districts contain hidden density



Older, Smaller, Better

Measuring how the character of buildings
and blocks influences urban vitality

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY MAY 2014



www.preservationnation.org/greenlab



THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

MAIN STREET AS OLD GROWTH FOREST

STRATEGIES

- Conserve existing small lots - maximum not minimum lot size and buildings on Main Street
- Amend laws that automatically join adjacent lots when purchased by new owners
- Planning and heritage focus on retention and reinforcement of existing fabric, institutions, housing and local business
- Amend Building Codes to permit new “Main Street Buildings”
- Retail condominium in new development





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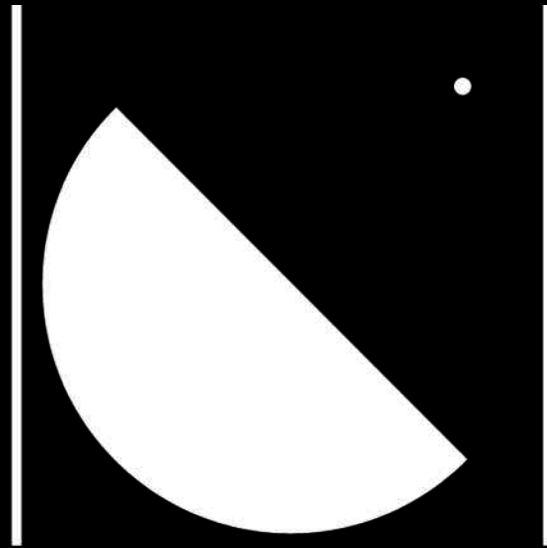


OCCUPY BLACK FRIDAY

VOTE WITH YOUR DOLLARS
TO RECLAIM THE SPIRIT
OF THE SEASON
AND

**REOCCUPY
MAIN STREET**

BUY LOCAL



CATHERINE
N A S M I T H
A R C H I T E C T

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