

Industries, schools are tough mixture

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and Dundas Sts. W. on the south and west, the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks north of Dupont St. and Lansdowne Ave. on the east.

In the quarter-mile area, about 6,000 residents live amidst 24 industries — six of them on Toronto's list of major polluters.

Since the late 1800s, before the era of modern urban planning, homes and industries grew up side-by-side, backing onto each other. And this is the root of the problem. Ontario environment ministry officials say. Pollution is not a problem where strict zoning separates industries and homes.

The Junction is unique because of the number of industries among only 6,000 residents in a tiny area, but the conflict is common to many older neighborhoods where people and industry must co-exist.

Jobs or clean air

However, Spitzer's bottom line is that the children will be better off if the parents are employed.

"If it's jobs versus clean air, I'd have to say children are less well off if their parents don't have jobs," Spitzer said.

Even the official voice of the Junction residents agreed with that.

"I don't want a ghost town. And I know that many of the companies can't afford to install the type of pollution controls we need," said Michael Homs, president of the Junction Triangle Watchdog Committee. "We don't want to run out the companies."

"We just want to live in a healthy community."

Toronto Mayor Art Eggleton said it is unfortunate that the controversy has erupted just as Toronto is seeking ways to hold on to industrial jobs.

"This is a very difficult problem to grapple with," he said.

"But there is no perfect solution. All we can hope for is something better than we have now."

However, there is another view.

Victor Viggiani, principal of St. Luigi Separate School in the heart of the Junction, thinks industry should accommodate people's health, not the other way around.

"Why should industry dictate the academic and social structure in the area?" he said.

"Rather than having the population disrupted and children's lives disrupted and parents and other individuals being blamed for chasing people out, it should be the other way around."

"I would fight against that as long as I am assigned in this area," he said.

"There's something in the air,



Star reporters Walter Stefaniuk, left, Paula Todd and Alfred Holden spent more than a week in the Junction Triangle talking with hundreds of residents and executives.

we feel it in our throats. You feel dizzy; you get headaches. You know what it's from, but they just ignore us," Viggiani said.

Viggiani has been at St. Luigi for two years and he notices more than a foul odor in the air — the paint on his 1980 Capri has "literally been attacked" by chemicals in the air, he said.

St. Luigi is one of four schools located in the Junction.

All have struggled with continuing health complaints from their students.

St. Luigi and Perth Avenue Public School are housed in the same building, just 240 metres (787 feet) from the Glidden paint factory. Students are continually reporting sore throats, headaches, nausea and dizziness, among other symptoms.

Principals said they sometimes have to keep windows sealed in the summer, despite the heat, because the pollution makes the children sick.

In January, about 67 students and four teachers from Perth were forced to cut short a skating field trip to local Campbell Park after only 20 minutes outdoors.

Evasive odor

"The teachers noticed quite an odor and felt that they better get kids back as soon as possible. There were complaints of nausea and headaches," said Perth principal Don Blue.

That evening, 13 students and teachers reported stomach aches, headaches, dizziness and fatigue. Two students and a teacher — with better than average attendance records — were not well enough to come to school next day.

But ministry officials failed to trace the incident to a specific factory.

Two weeks ago, seven teachers and more than a dozen students complained of dry throats, headaches, nausea and vomiting at St. Luigi. Two kindergarten children had runny noses. Principal Viggiani called the fire department, but by the time they ar-

rived, the noxious odor had disappeared.

According to Blue, that seems to be one of the biggest problems in the Junction.

"In many cases the odor doesn't last longer than 10 or 15 minutes. That troubles me because it has to be tested right away. By the time the fire department gets here, it has dissipated or been carried away by the wind."

John Shepherd, vice-president of Nacan Products, an industrial glue maker, said the sickness may have been more imagined than real.

"It could have been psychosomatic. There's been so much publicity, and people are most impressionable — especially children — that that's a consideration hard to resolve." He said the symptoms they reported aren't generally attributed to pollution.

Father Michael Barida, principal of St. Josaphat, another school in the Junction, lives in Etobicoke, and "wouldn't even consider living in the Junction neighborhood."

"I extremely rarely had headaches until I got here. Now I get them frequently and it's a relief just to go home at night to get out of this air," he said.

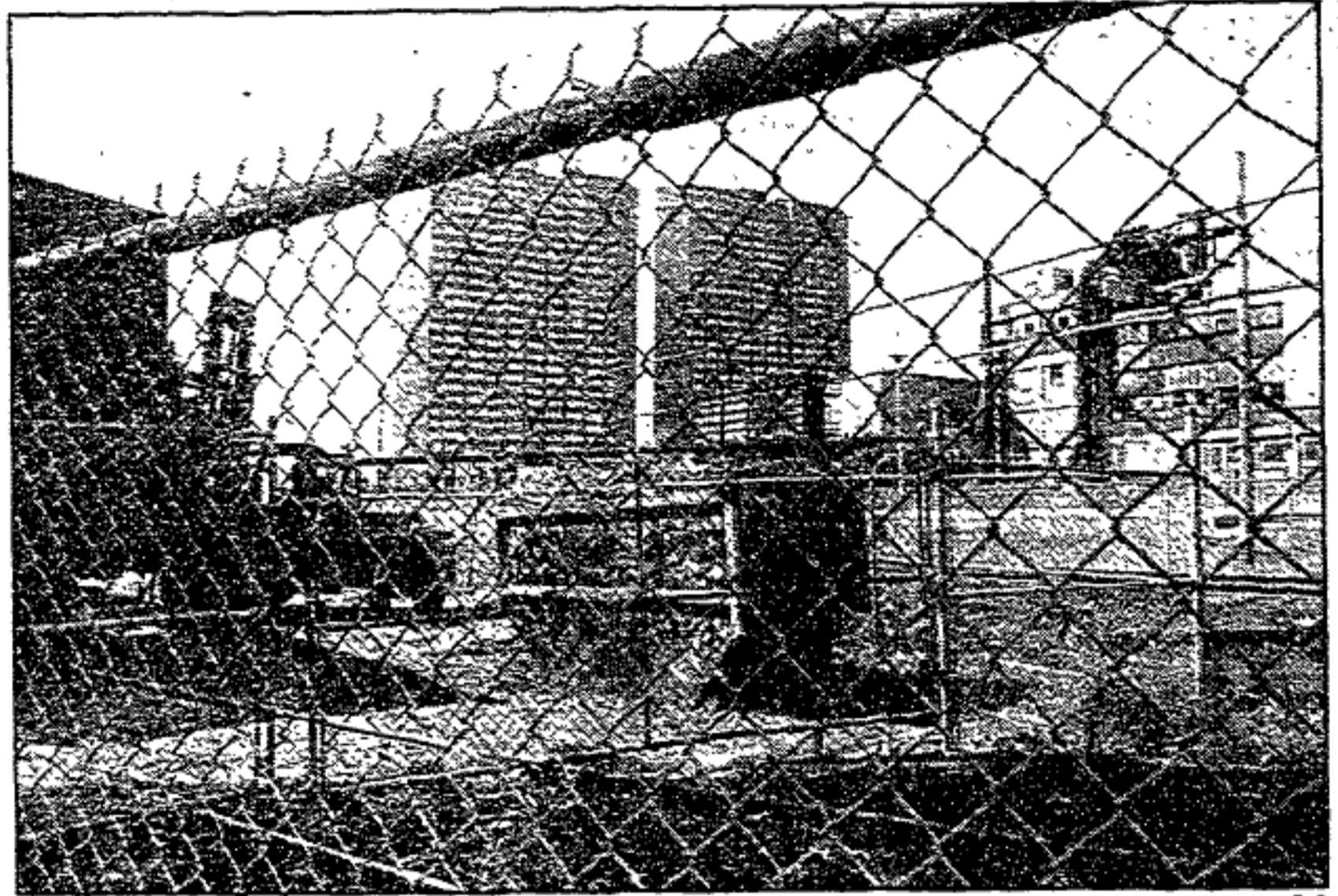
St. Rita's Separate School is at the northwest corner of the Junction, but its principal said there have been no noticeable health problems.

Same problems

St. Josaphat is just around the corner from St. Luigi Separate School and Perth public school. Like the children at St. Luigi, St. Josaphat students are feeling nauseous, get rashes, headaches and have many nosebleeds.

"These are spontaneous nosebleeds. With no explanation, the nose will just gush. These children are not knocking around in the playground, they're just sitting in class," Barida said. A nosebleed is reported about once every two weeks, which is more frequent than he's seen in other schools, he said.

All but five of St. Josaphat's 266 students are bused in from other areas in Toronto and Barida said some physicians have discouraged parents from sending allergic children to his school. Some parents have been forced to



Shared accommodation: Industries and homes sit cheek by jowl in the Junction Triangle area of Toronto. Children of the area play amid a maze of industrial fencing, railway tracks and odors from the chemicals used in the manufacture of, among other things, paint, ink, and industrial glue.

transfer their children after their health began to deteriorate.

Andrea Sinhura, 10, of Kennedy Park Rd. used to take the bus every morning to St. Josaphat, but she transferred to St. Demetrius on LaRose Ave. last year because her parents feared for her health. She suffered from constant nosebleeds.

"It started happening every day," said her mother, Lesia. "Once, on a hot day last year, it bled for two hours." As well, Andrea's hair lost its lustre and fell out for the five years that she was at St. Josaphat.

Problems stopped

"Since changing schools, all of Andrea's medical problems have stopped."

Sinhura said she talked to a pediatrician about the symptoms but "was told there was nothing that could be done. I was told nothing could be proven. Andrea is slightly allergic and he thought that might be making things worse. But she never had nosebleeds or hair loss before she went to St. Josaphat."

Many parents want to keep their children in the school because it's one of only two trilingual Metro schools, providing French instruction and a heritage language program in Ukrainian. It's also next door to the St. Josaphat Cathedral which serves the Triangle's Ukrainian population. It's a game of Russian roulette for parents who must judge whether the educational benefits outweigh the possible health dangers.

Not being able to prove it's air pollution that is hurting their children doesn't stop parents from believing it.

"You know your child," said

Donna Pahuta of Babypoint Crescent. "If they don't have the symptoms at home and they only get them when they go to school, you understand that the air is affecting them."

This is the last year any of Pahuta's four children, aged 6 to 11, will be bused into the Junction Triangle. Eye irritations, rashes, headaches and nausea have forced the Pahuta's to withdrawing their children from St. Josaphat.

"We're no longer dismissing these health problems as neurotic or social complaints. Someone is always coming home with something wrong... When our kids are particularly sick, we hear from other parents that theirs are too. There is some consistency," she said.

Parent guilt

Pahuta wonders, though, how long she and her husband Zenon "will be overwrought with guilt that we didn't get them out sooner. We were always hoping that the school would move, but we've just come to the end with this," she said.

"But what if they find long-term effects? How will we deal with that guilt?" she asked.

Metro separate school trustee Walter Melnyk has suggested that children be bused out of the area, but residents, principals, and municipal politicians are opposed.

"Something like that is really going to impact on the community. Taking children out of the area is going to cause other problems. Who could safely transport them?" said Perth principal Don Blue.

Some children go home for lunch; busing would mean a longer day. "This would mean a big

change for many, especially the young kids," said Blue.

And many of the older children take younger ones to and from the half-day kindergarten program. Families would have to arrange alternate supervision.

Many parents who want their children to go to a trilingual school such as St. Josaphat have only one option: To send their children to the already overcrowded St. Demetrius on LaRose Ave.

Already full

"We already are full here," said principal Sister Rachel Tataryn. "We want to maintain our programs but if they keep sending us children, it will deteriorate."

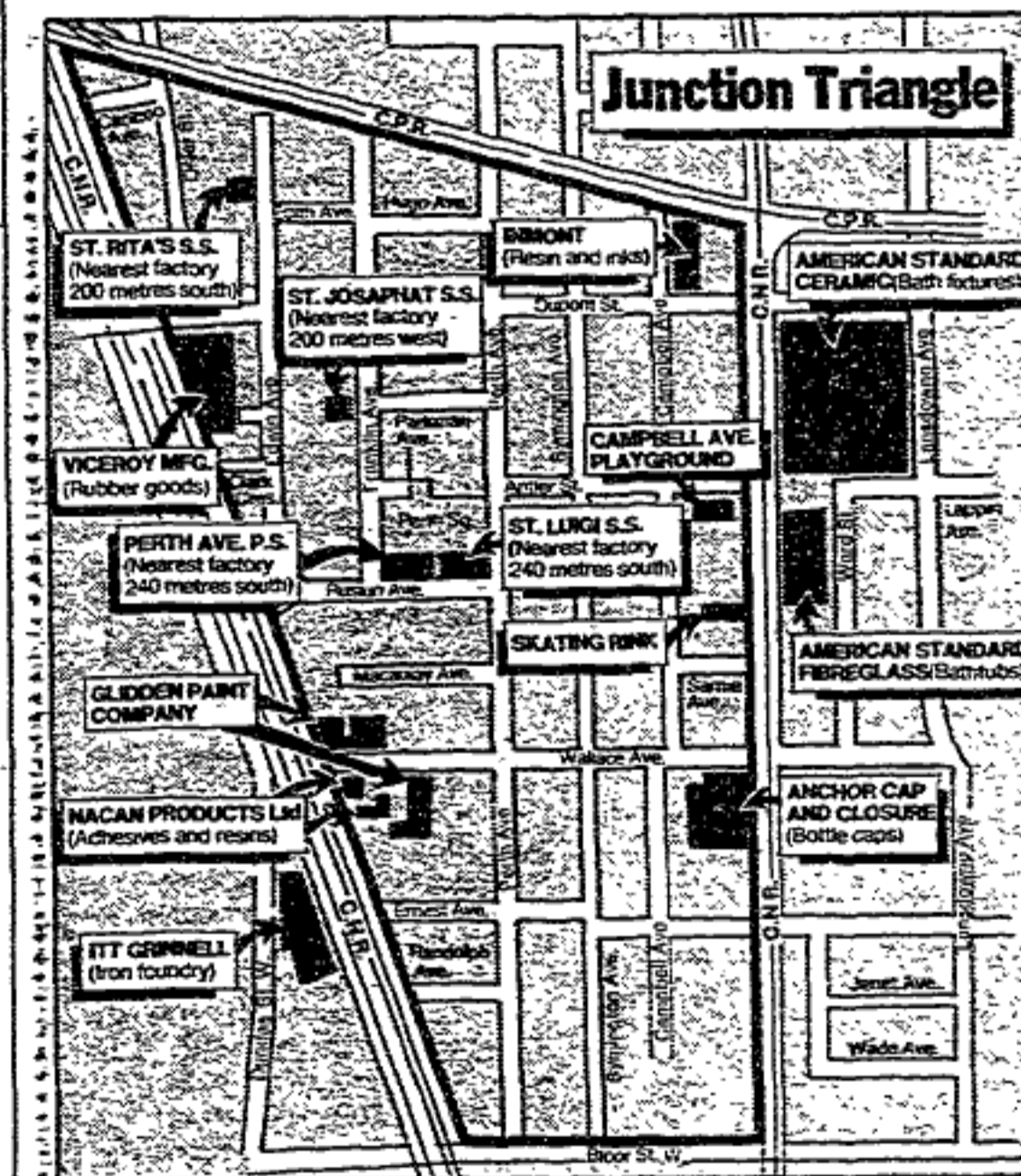
School board officials say busing is technically feasible, but would be costly.

"We're talking about \$300,000 a year to bus the 641 students at St. Luigi and St. Josaphat," said Des Borge of the Metro Separate School Board. "And space is tight in the city. The nearest space is in Etobicoke."

Ron Halford, operations director of the Toronto board, estimates it'd cost \$900 a day to bus Perth Ave. school students elsewhere. But he said there is potentially space at neighboring schools within walking distance of the Junction.

The mystery of the Junction is that continual monitoring of the air pollution index shows that while the Junction is one of the worst areas in Toronto, readings there generally are not as high as in the downtown core.

The Spitzer report also called for government guidelines to step up reduction of the types of pollution that affect the quality of life.



The Triangle: Map shows the proximity of industries to the area's schools. All except St. Rita's Separate School in the northwest corner have experienced health problems among students.

We're doing our best, companies say

By Alfred Holden Toronto Star

Nacan Products vice-president John Shepherd leans back in his chair in the adhesive plant on Wallace Ave. in the Junction Triangle and glances out the window.

"I breathe the same air as Junction residents," says Shepherd, whose softspoken manner and plain office seem at odds with the company's image as a corporate villain, one of the area's worst polluters.

He and managers of the Junction's 23 other industrial plants, say they are ordinary folks who understand fully the concerns of residents.

But at the same time, they say they too feel like victims. Not of acrid odors and belching smoke, but of misunderstanding, and, at times, misinformation.

They acknowledge that there have been spills, intolerable odors, and reasons for concern in

the past; they say they are embarrassed and do not reel off excuses.

Nacan paid a \$17,000 fine after an employee trying to cover up a production error dumped 757 litres (200 gallons) of vinyl acetate and butyl acrylate into neighborhood sewers.

But they say — and offer millions of dollars spent on pollution controls as evidence — that great strides have been made recently and the air quality now is, if not always pure, well within safe health limits.

But to their chagrin, they say, this isn't always the perception, because of the nature of the chemicals they use.

"You can't handle chemicals

without the potential of some odors, but just because there is an odor, it doesn't mean it's harmful," Shepherd said.

The companies have mixed feeling about doing business in the Junction. They say if they could rewrite their history, they'd locate elsewhere.

But the economics of moving now "are terrible," and "we intend stay," he said.

"It would cost between \$10 (million) and \$15 million to move us out, and we're one of the smaller plants. I estimate it would cost \$200 to \$600 million to move all the companies out. Divide that by 6,000 residents and that's a lot of money per resident."

He said Toronto doesn't need more vacant industrial space or loss of jobs.

"We contribute a lot to the city. You need a mix of jobs to keep a city viable, and you need people living and working in the downtown."



Shepherd

Junction kids 'look healthy' Brandt says

The Grade 6 pupils at Perth Ave. Public School in the Junction Triangle were trooping back from swimming period when they met Andrew Brandt, Ontario's environment minister.

He was on a walking tour to look at the effects of industrial pollution on the neighborhood.

Virginia Jendruszka of the Junction Triangle Watchdog Committee plucked her son, Jeffrey, 12, from the group and told Brandt he'd been suffering from severe stomach pains for three years. Doctors say there's a remote possibility that it might be linked to air pollution, she said.

Brandt nodded. "Show him your rash," she told Jeffrey.

"It's almost gone," Jeffrey said, shyly rolling up his left sleeve to display a slight reddishness on his upper arm.

"Does anybody else have a rash?" Brandt asked the pupils.

Two or three children raised their arms. Several others called out that they had friends who did.

"Well, you all look healthy to me," Brandt said. "Keep up the good swimming."

A block later, Lenora Taylor, 13, of Perth Ave. snuck along on the tour, telling Brandt she'd been feeling too ill that morning to go to school.

He asked her what was wrong. She told him that in the four years she'd lived in the area she'd been bothered by dizziness, sore throats, nausea, headaches, itchy skin "and it hasn't been getting any better."

"Okay," Brandt said. "Try to get back to school. You look pretty healthy to me, kiddo. At least you don't smoke."



Brandt

A day of smells in Junction Triangle

The anatomy of odor complaint investigations for Feb. 21, 1984: One day in the life of the Junction Triangle.

6.15 p.m.: A complainant on Wade Ave. reports an odor like rotting fruit.

6.39 p.m.: Reports of a chemical odor come from Annette St. and Indian Grove.

7.01 p.m.: Odors of rotten fruit reported on Antler St.

7.21 p.m.: Odor like plastic noted on Ward St.

8.05 p.m.: Odor on Edith Ave. like something burning gave one complainant a headache.

The environment ministry's duty officer dispatched the Toronto Fire Department to the scene immediately on receiving the first complaint.

At 7.93 p.m. the fire department confirmed that odors were detected. A ministry inspector was sent to the scene. He arrived at about 7.40 p.m.

Invisible menace attacks nose and eyes

By Paula Todd Toronto Star

Chemical emissions in the Junction Triangle may sometimes be invisible, but their presence can be felt in the nose, eyes and lungs. Residents are engaged in a constant fight to make authorities believe they are suffering real health problems.

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den plant on Wallace Ave.

Walking along the pleasant, tree-lined streets in the Junction is a precarious business. At one moment, the sweet scent of lilacs; the next, sharp, intense and full-bodied odor of something like industrial oil wafts up from the sewers.

Leaning over the sewer, the stench is unbearable. Immediately, the nose starts to tingle, eyes water and nausea wells up. An hour later, the reward of an evening's stroll was a painful headache which lasted more than five hours. And the pollution count in the Junction was low that day.

Children living near the Glidden and Nacan factories have done their best to find a playground in the industrial wasteland.

"We play hiding against the side of Glidden," said 9-year-old Stephanie White, who lives on

Wallace Ave., just two doors from the paint-producing plant and across the street from Nacan, which manufactures industrial glues.

"We don't have anywhere else to go except at the top of the street so we go over near the paint. It's really smelly. It stinks. My nose always gets runny over there," she said, "but it's a good place for hide-and-seek."

Grace Medeiros, 15, and Elice Cordova, 14, are neighbors and live only a few houses from the factories on Wallace Ave. They said the air smells "every day" but "we're kinda used to it."

Medeiros said she gets "coughs, colds, itchy skin" and agreed with Cordova that they both "get a lot of headaches."

"It's from the stuff they put in the air. You can smell it, but what can you do?" Medeiros asked. "It comes out of the sewer especially, and sometimes you

can't walk over the Wallace Bridge (beside the Glidden factory), because it's too hard to breathe. But that's how it is."

Black snow

They may tolerate the smell, but "black snow in the winter" does get the girls angry.

"Every winter, for as long as there's snow, it's like a gray color near Glidden," Medeiros said. "They dump chemicals into it all the time right near the (Wallace) bridge. It smells terrible, but we play around there anyway."

Since March, Junction resident Elke Homs of Antler St. and a member of the Junction Triangle Watchdog Committee has been conducting a survey of approximately 700 households in the area. She is attempting to gauge community awareness of the pollution and determine how many residents plan to move from the area because of the odors.